



# Phenomenological Studies: The Role of Social Support in Shaping the Self-Acceptance of Isolated Junior High School Students

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## Abstract

The phenomenon of students being isolated by peers in Laboratory Junior High School shows the importance of understanding how individuals build self-acceptance in unsupportive social situations. This study aims to uncover the dynamics of self-acceptance in individuals with different levels of social support. A qualitative approach with phenomenological methods is used in this study. Participants were selected based on their experiences of social isolation and differences in levels of social support. Results show that despite limited social support, individuals can still develop self-acceptance through personal reflection and emotional experiences. In conclusion, self-acceptance is a personal process that does not depend entirely on social acceptance.

Keywords: social support, self-acceptance, isolation, junior high school students

## 1. Introduction

Adolescents are an age group that undergoes important physical, emotional, and social development. According to Santrock, in this phase, children need peer acceptance which plays an important role in the formation of identity and self-esteem (Asyia, et al., 2022). School as the main social environment for adolescents also influences the development of these relationships. Even so, not all students gain a supportive social experience at school. Some students experience social isolation, in the sense that they are not included in the group or have been shunned by their peers. This exclusion can be active in the form of rejection, or passive in the form of abandonment and not being invited to interact (Rubin et al., 2009). A similar thing can be seen at UM Laboratory Junior High School, some students seem isolated in the classroom environment. They are just alone without interacting with their friends, few of their classmates make an effort to try to interact with these isolated students. Such conditions have a great risk of disrupting the social and psychological development of students.

Students who experience social exclusion generally show symptoms such as low self-confidence, social anxiety, and reluctance to participate in class activities. The psychological impact of social exclusion cannot be underestimated, as it can affect learning motivation and involvement in school activities (Syahrudin, et al., 2025). In the long run, this condition can even contribute to the emergence of mental health problems such as depression. Therefore, early intervention is very important, one of which is through a social support approach. Social support serves as a source of external strength that helps individuals cope with psychological pressure and is important for individuals because it can help in raising the spirit to return to various activities in life (Acoba, 2024). This form of support can

be emotional, informational, or practical support provided by people around you. In the context of school, social support can come from peers, teachers, counselors, and family members. Such support can help students feel accepted and valued even if they experience exclusion. With this study, the researcher wants to look further at the role of social support in fostering self-acceptance in students who are socially isolated.

Self-acceptance is a positive attitude towards oneself that concerns awareness and acceptance of aspects of oneself, both positive and negative aspects of oneself. In self-acceptance itself there are several scopes in it, namely; unconditional self-worth, independence from other people's standards, and undistorted self-perception (Abharini, 2023). Self-acceptance is grouped into 2 types, namely passive self-acceptance and active self-acceptance. Active self-acceptance contains activities, integrity, autonomy and self-value embraced by a person, while passive self-acceptance contains intrapersonal regress and personality stagnation. (Pilipenko, 2021). Many previous studies have discussed self-acceptance, for example a study conducted by (Mardiyanti & Purwaningtyas, 2021) which found that self-acceptance is very much needed by a person who steps on early adolescence because with self-acceptance a person will have good self-acceptance so that he can accept himself without any conditions or any views either from himself or from those around him. This is in line with one of the scopes discussed above, in self-acceptance itself, which is the unconditional self-worth that a person must have.

Previous studies have shown that social support has a significant role in improving adolescent well-being. Students who feel supported by their environment tend to have better resilience to stress. They are also better able to deal with social conflicts and build healthy relationships in the future (Wu, et al., 2024). However, most previous research has been quantitative and has focused on the relationship between support intensity and student wellbeing. There have not been many studies that explore how these experiences of support are understood and interpreted by students who are directly excluded. In fact, the subjective interpretation of support can be very different from one individual to another (Pastimo & Muslikah, 2022). Therefore, a qualitative approach is needed to gain a deeper understanding of students' personal experiences. In this case, the phenomenological method was chosen because it is able to reveal the essence of one's life experience holistically. This method allows researchers to dive into participants' inner world directly through their own narratives.

Phenomenology focuses on meanings that arise from an individual's subjective experience of an event or situation. Using this approach, researchers can understand how excluded students interpret the social support they receive or do not receive. This research also allows researchers to explore the sources of support that students consider most meaningful, as well as the barriers they feel in accessing those supports. This is important because of students' perceptions of availability and effectiveness support can affect the extent to which they feel motivated to overcome their social problems (Rahma, et al., 2020). In addition, the phenomenological approach provides space for voices that are often marginalized to perform. In this case, the excluded student becomes the subject who is positioned as an "expert" of the Experience alone. The knowledge gained from their narratives can be used to design more contextual and empathetic interventions. It also opens up opportunities for schools to build a more inclusive culture.

Through this study, the researcher seeks to delve deeper into how social support is experienced, felt, and interpreted by junior high school students who experience social exclusion. The main focus lies in students' subjective perceptions of the forms of support they find most helpful. This study does not aim to measure the quantity of support, but rather to understand the quality of such experiences from an individual perspective. Thus, the results of the research are expected to be the basis for the preparation of psychosocial intervention programs that are more humane and relevant for students in schools. In addition, the results of these findings can also make a theoretical contribution to the development of studies on social exclusion and psychosocial support among Indonesian adolescents. This research also opens up a space for dialogue between educators, counselors, and education policymakers regarding the importance of attention to excluded students. Support is not only in the form of policy, but also in the form of a more personal and empathetic approach. By understanding their experiences, we can build a more supportive and equitable school environment for all students.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Design and Procedure

The approach used in this study is a qualitative phenomenological approach. According to Moleong (2008), research that relies on direct observation either in an environment or theoretically by researchers, is called qualitative research. Therefore, qualitative research emphasizes more on quality naturally because it concerns research, concepts, and values about the subject being studied. Experience in phenomenological research is described as an event that is consciously experienced by an individual, a group of individuals, or a group of animals (conscious experience). In phenomenological research, human experience is studied by providing a detailed picture of these subjects (Yusanto, 2020).

### 2.2. Analysis

Descriptive analysis is used in this study, according to Sugiyono (2015:29), descriptive analysis is a technique used to describe or analyze research results, but it is not used to reach broader conclusions. The purpose of descriptive research is to provide a systematic, factual and accurate description of the facts, characteristics, and relationships between the phenomena under investigation. In this case, the researcher conducted a study by describing or describing the Role of Social Support in Forming Self-Acceptance of Isolated Junior High School Students. In this study, the techniques used are observation, interviews, and documentation and are carried out during Teaching Assistance activities.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Results

The following are the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers at the UM Laboratory Junior High School during March-May 2025:

#### *Subject J*

The participant in this study is a 7th grade junior high school student named J, 14 years old and sitting in class 7D. J is an only child who likes to read novels and draw. He is known to be

a student with good artistic and academic abilities, but has a tendency to overthink, dissatisfaction with himself, and experiences of social alienation, both in the past and in current social interactions.

J describes the level of self-acceptance on a scale of 1–100 at 40. He realized that he had advantages, such as the ability to work under pressure, good memory, and drawing and writing skills. However, J also dislikes his overthinking, less productive, and negative body image of himself. The subject shows an effort to accept himself, but the biggest obstacles come from a constant self-critical mindset and an inability to break the habit of overthinking. Based on the statement of the BK teacher at school, J does look unconfident because of his physical shape so he finds it difficult to make friends with friends.

In the experience of social isolation, J has several experiences both directly and indirectly. At school, he often feels excluded, especially in group work situations, where he feels that he is only being taken advantage of without being appreciated. The subject said, *"They don't work but they like to make fun of each other. I work on my own and then they make fun of me."* J also once felt shunned by his friends without a clear explanation. He realized that he did tend not to take the initiative in socializing, but in some cases he felt that the treatment of his friends was unfair. However, J stated that he was quite comfortable in solitude, *"If I'm alone then okay. If I'm alone then okay. If you have a friend, that's fine. If not, that's good too. I'm fine with my own."*

The most significant social support J gets comes from online friends, especially from a friend with the initials F. A relationship with F has been established for about 5 years, and J considers him to be a figure who understands him very well. The support of online friends means a lot to J especially when he is in a difficult mental state, even since elementary school. They provide her with advice and emotional validation, especially regarding overthinking issues and academic stress. Support from friends at school is more limited. J mentioned that he has some close friends such as D, N, and T, who interact with him quite regularly. However, when he is having trouble or sad, he prefers to keep his feelings to himself or tell his friends online.

In addition, J has also received positive comments from friends about his intelligence, but he feels that the praise does not have enough impact on increasing his self-acceptance. Not all forms of support that J received had a positive impact on self-acceptance. He revealed that there were times when his friends gave suggestions or comments in an insensitive, even sarcastic way. This shows that the way support is provided affects its impact on self-acceptance. Empathetic and aligned validation is much more meaningful for J. Despite receiving social

support, J still struggles with self-acceptance. She realizes that support can help, but negative feelings about herself, a perfectionist mindset, and family pressure remain significant obstacles. J understands that a positive lifestyle can help reduce overthinking and build self-acceptance, but admits that he hasn't been able to do it consistently.

### ***Subject V***

The next research subject was V, a 14-year-old 7th grade junior high school student. He has an interest in the world of animation and is studying editing software such as Alight Motion. V is known as a calm child, with a character that is reflective of him, and has past experiences that affect his current social dynamics. V shows a fairly positive attitude towards himself. He was able to mention the advantages and its shortcomings by honest. The advantage is in creativity, especially in the field of animation, while the disadvantage is the difficulty in mathematics lessons, namely memorizing formulas. He is also aware of his habit of using mobile phones, especially watching YouTube excessively and wants to manage his time better. This shows the existence of self-awareness which is an important foundation for selfacceptance. V also expressed gratitude for the things he has, such as the opportunity to go to school and internet access at home. This attitude of gratitude reflects a good form of selfacceptance despite the shortcomings.

Despite having friends, V stated that he had no close friends in his own class. She felt that her first impression at the beginning of school was not good because she often tantrummed and pretended to fall out of her chair, which may have caused distance from her classmates. She says, *"It's natural that my classmates aren't close to me because my first impression used to be bad."* V did not seem to feel deeply hurt by this condition, and preferred to understand the attitude of his friends. He feels sometimes alone, sometimes not, depending on the situation. This shows that he is in the middle: not feeling very rejected, but also not completely accepted.

In the form of social support, V has some form of support from the people closest to him. When facing problems or feelings of sadness, V tends to share with his parents and brother. This shows that the family is the main source of emotional support for V. The family acts as a secure base that provides comfort when facing difficulties. From the peer circle, V mentions two names that are considered quite close and trustworthy: N and F from different classes. This statement was reinforced by his classmates, who stated that he was easy and liked to make friends with everyone but was only familiar with some. However, he also admits that he almost never receives support from friends in the form of encouragement or praise. In fact, he himself is the one who often encourages his friends. When he was in trouble, he did not explicitly mention that there was a friend who helped him, but he himself had helped a friend

in completing a task. This shows that the social relationships that V has are one-way: he gives more than he receives. Despite having experience being shunned by friends, V stated that he never felt uncomfortable when meeting friends. This shows that there is a fairly good social adaptability, even though the friendship relationship is not intense.

V is aware of the weaknesses he has and works to improve them, especially when it comes to time management. He does not show signs of extreme self-denial, but rather reflection and planning for improvement. This shows that there is a fairly good self-efficacy. In addition, positive past experiences, such as being a "class star" in elementary school and turning stories into animation, are important sources of pride and self-empowerment. This strengthens the aspect of self-worth in forming self-acceptance.

### **3.2 Discussion**

#### ***Social Support for Isolated Students***

Social support is an important component of human life, the presence of humans in other people's lives can have a big influence even if it only provides emotional support. Backing social is a fundamental aspect in an individual's life, especially in the process of adolescent psychosocial development. Social support is defined as help given to a person by people around it with purpose of making they feel comfortable, loved, and valued (Sarafino & Smith, 2011). In this study, social support emerged as one of the factors that influenced the level of self-acceptance in two subjects that experiencing limitations deep relationship social in the school environment.

Subject J gets more support from online friends, especially one individual with whom he has been in an emotional relationship for five years. In this case, J received social support from peers. Social support from peers refers to the help provided by peers in the form of affection, attention, empathy, and advice that helps individuals, especially adolescents. Close friends also play a role in responding to adolescents' behavior in the social environment, as well as opening up space for them to try different roles in solving problems (Awwaliyah et al., 2025). This support acts as a place to vent and validate the academic pressure and overthinking tendencies that he experiences. However, the limited quality of direct social interaction and insensitive ways of conveying support from some schoolmates, such as sarcastic comments, actually weaken the impact on increasing self-acceptance. This shows that it is not only the existence of the support that matters, but also the manner and context in which it is provided.

Meanwhile, subject V received more stable emotional support from the family environment. Social support from the family, according to Taylor (in Putri, 2022), is a form of information as well as a feeling that a person is loved, cared for, respected, and appreciated by his or her family members. An open relationship with his parents and siblings forms an important foundation for security in the face of various challenges. Although he has no close ties to his classmates, V does not show an emotional dependence on social acceptance. Instead, he plays a more encouraging role to others, even though he hardly receives support from friends in the form of praise or attention. This shows that the perception of social support, although minimal

in quantity, can still strengthen self-acceptance if it comes from healthy and meaningful relationships.

These findings emphasize that social support is not uniform between individuals. Each subject builds his or her own support system based on their own experiences and emotional needs. Whether from friends or family, the quality of relationships—characterized by empathy, acceptance, and trust—is more influential than the number of interactions. Therefore, it is important for the school and family environment to create a safe and open communication space, in order to support the formation of self-acceptance of students who are experiencing social limitations.

### ***Self-acceptance of Isolated Students***

Self-acceptance is an important aspect of an individual's psychological development, especially for students who experience social isolation. According to Hurlock (1986), self-acceptance is a positive attitude that reflects a person's ability to accept themselves as a human being. Individuals who have good self-acceptance are able to accept themselves as they are and have realistic expectations according to their abilities (Fitrianti et al., 2022). This attitude also includes the ability to manage emotions such as fear, anger, and anxiety without disturbing others. In adolescence, the ability to accept one's own strengths and weaknesses has a profound effect on well-being emotional and adaptability in complex social environments. However, students who feel isolated tend to face greater challenges in building self-acceptance due to various internal and external factors that affect their self-perception and evaluation.

In this study, it was seen that students who experienced social isolation showed significant challenges in terms of self-acceptance. Subject J, for example, despite having a number of advantages such as artistic ability and good memory, still struggles with feelings of dissatisfaction with himself. Discomfort with body image and the habit of overthinking that constantly criticizes oneself are the main obstacles in the process of accepting oneself as a whole. This condition illustrates how internal conflict can weaken confidence and emotional calm despite an awareness of one's potential.

Meanwhile, subject V showed a relatively more stable form of self-acceptance. He is able to recognize his strengths and limitations honestly and develop an attitude of gratitude for various things he has, such as access to education and family support. Despite experiencing limitations in social interaction with peers, V does not show excessive self-rejection. Instead, he focuses more on self-improvement efforts, especially in managing habits that are considered less productive. This reflective attitude is an important capital in building trust and acceptance even in less than ideal social situations.

These two cases show that social isolation can have a different impact on individual self-acceptance, depending on how they interpret and respond to the social experience they experience. Internal factors such as mindset, as well as the quality of social support obtained, play an important role in determining a person's level of self-acceptance. Therefore, interventions directed at improving the ability to manage emotions and build a positive perception of themselves are indispensable for students who face social isolation.

### ***The Role of Social Support in Shaping Self-Acceptance***

Social support has a vital role in helping individuals, especially adolescents, develop healthy self-acceptance. The presence of close people, such as family and peers, provides a sense of comfort, understanding, and validation that supports the process of forming self-acceptance. This support is not only in the form of emotional help, but it also provides constructive feedback that allows individuals to reflect and accept themselves more positively in the face of social and personal pressure. Based on previous research entitled "The Relationship between Social Support and Self-Acceptance in Chronic Kidney Failure Patients Undergoing Hemodialysis", it can be concluded that there is a strong relationship between social support and self-acceptance (Suandika, et al., 2024). However, based on what we found in the field, according to the results of our research, it was found that self-acceptance is indeed influenced by social support but is not the main factor in the formation of self-acceptance from a person.

In the formation of self-acceptance in a person, it is not only supported by social support but also supported by other things. We can find this in one of our subjects, namely V, in the results of the interviews that we have conducted it was found that social support is not the main factor in the formation of self-acceptance in a person but social support is only one of the factors in the formation of self-acceptance in a person. One of the other factors in the formation of self-acceptance is the existence of gratitude for all the things that a person gets.

Based on the results of our interviews, it was found that social support did not have a significant impact on self-acceptance in him. at this time, subject J often receives social support in the form of praise for J's intelligence. However, J still doesn't have good self-acceptance, so J is still struggling and struggling to get the self-acceptance that he is looking for now.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, it can be seen that the experience of each individual in accepting themselves is very unique and influenced by various internal and external factors. The process of self-acceptance does not always go smoothly, but it can develop over time through reflection and life experiences. It can also be concluded that social support is not the main thing in the formation of self-acceptance, but there is another factor that is a factor in the formation of self-acceptance in a person, namely gratitude for something they already have regardless of what others say about themselves.

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