

Original Research Article

Peer Pressure and its Psychological Effect on the Academic Performance of Students in Akoko North East Local Government Area, Ondo State, Nigeria

Olowolabi Segun Ph.D*

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Adekunle Ajasin University, Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study investigated peer pressure and its psychological effect on the academic performance of students in Akoko North East local government area, Ondo State, Nigeria. The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. A simple random technique was used to draw a sample which consisted of 120 secondary school students from three public secondary school. The population consist of both male and female students. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. Based on the findings, the researcher discovered that peer pressure does not necessarily means negative influence, it can also be positive influence, also the kind of peers a student keeps or move with can influence his attitude, learning and academic performance. The recommendations made include that parents should encourage their children to have friends that would have positive influence on their learning, both at home and in school. Teachers should also pay attention towards encouraging peer group activities in schools especially in the area of group discussion.

Keywords: Peers, peer pressure, psychological effects, academic performance.

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INTRODUCTION

Peer groups are the most influential social forces affecting adolescent behavior, from mundane decisions concerning clothing, hairstyle, music, and entertainment, to more significant decisions concerning short and long-term education plans. They are arguably even more important than parents, teachers and counselors during the formative adolescent years. However, studies from various cultures have shown that a child right from infancy to adolescence is faced with urge to belong and to be accepted by the group. A basic human need is to acquire an affiliation to a group in the society. Peer relationships are common in the schools and homes and this plays important roles in the socialization of children in Nigeria.

Students in the midst of their group transformed into the true picture of their behaviour, they feel more comfortable among fellow students but feel moody at home or at the presence of their teachers. The most important influence on student behaviour to learning is not always the teacher but the fellow students.

A peer could be any one you look up to in behaviour or someone who you would think is equal to your age or ability (Hassan, 2013). On the other hand, the term “pressure” implies the process that influence people to do something that they might not otherwise choose to do.

According to Howard, (2011) peer pressure refers to the influences that peers can have on each other. Peer pressure is an emotional or mental force from people belonging to the same social group (such as age, grade or status) to act or behave in a manner similar to themselves (Williams, 2010).

Jones, (2010) also defined peer pressure as the ability of people from the same social rank or age to influence another of same age, bracket peer pressure is usually associated with teens although its influence is not confined to teenagers alone; mature adults, teens, young adults and children can be seen doing things in order to be accepted by their peers. Peer pressure is commonly associated with episodes of adolescent risk taking (such as delinquency, drug abuse, sexual behaviours), because these behaviour commonly occur in the company of peers. They can encourage each other

to skip classes, steal, cheat, use of drugs or alcohol, or become involve in other risky behaviours. Majority of adolescents with substance abuse problems began using drug or alcohol as a result of peer pressure. Negative peer pressure may influence in various ways like joining group who drink alcohol, smoke cigarette and Indian hemp among others. It may also lead to the decision to have a boyfriend/girlfriend. Peer pressure indulges youth into loitering about in the streets, watching films and attending parties during school hours, tapping as alternative to stealing which may eventually graduate into armed robbery (Adekunle, 2013).

However, it can also have positive effects when youth are pressured by the peer toward positive behaviour. Such as volunteering for charity or excelling in academics (Kikiolu, 2013). It also helps to motivate one to do his best and boost his academic performance e.g. forming reading group, going to the library, anxious to join others in answering questions in the classroom.

Peer pressure may also result in one doing thing that may not fit with one's sense of what is right or wrong. In other words, when peer pressure makes one do things that people frown at, it is a negative peer pressure. Operationally peer pressure is a force exert by people that is influenced by ideas, values and behavior either positively or negatively and always associated with adolescents. Study has shown that many popular students who do not manage their time well make lower grades than less socially accepted adolescent (Howard, 2011). This is possibly due to the fact that popular students may spend more time worrying about their social life rather than studying. The most common types of peer group to be investigated are the secondary school children who fall into the same group that could have negative influence on their learning.

Gabriel (2016) feel that acceptance by a peer group improved social relation. These have beneficial effects on individual learning insecurity that arises from satisfying emotional tension enables him to concentrate more on his assigned learning tasks. This indicates that acceptance by the group may have positive effect on the child. A child who is not brilliant enough may do better if he is accepted by a group that is inclined to study. It has been observed that a child learns more easily within his peer group. Where he is wrong, he prefers to be corrected by a member of his peer group than by the teacher. In support of this view, Ezewu (2012) advised that the school must therefore use peer group energies to promote rather than impede good learning. It is therefore necessary to let students realize why they have to be careful in choosing their friends so that their attitudes toward learning would be improved as the peer group they belong can have effect on their learning negatively and positively. Peer pressure is something that causes conflict in an individual's life. The feeling of

not fitting in, not being good enough, and not being a part of the "group" overwhelms and takes over the mindset of a regular student. High stress and hurtful experiences seem to always be the result to give in to peer pressure because of the endless amount of negative aspects that can come with it. Statistics say between 20% – 30% of adolescents report symptoms of depression because of peer pressure.

Psychology means the mental, emotional, and behavioral characteristics pertaining to a specified person, group, or activity. Psychological effect is pertaining to, dealing with, or affecting the mind, especially as a function of awareness, feeling, or motivation.

Brett Laursen, psychologist claims that when a new school year begins, students are dealing with classes, sports and other extra co-curricular activities. Most students will also face an entirely different set of challenges with peer pressure. There are some children who are susceptible to influence from anyone, that is to say that whatever comes down the pike they are likely to follow. But, it is also the case that some people are more influential and so, if you hang around with people who tend to be particularly influential, you will look susceptible even though you are not particularly susceptible. It just happens to be that you are hanging around with others who are highly influential. So, we know that susceptibility is greater for children who do not have a lot of friends. They want to protect the friendships that they have, and so they are more likely to do what their friends say because they are worried about losing their friends and have difficulty making others. Younger children who hang around with older children are susceptible to influence.

Paradoxically, being popular may make you susceptible to influence. But it may be that popular kids in some domains worry about protecting their status and so, they are more likely to be influenced to be seen doing things that they should be seen doing even if they do not want to do them because otherwise they fear their status will diminish in the eyes of their peers.

Academic performance refers to how well a student is accomplishing his or her tasks and studies (Sanusi, 2012). Grades are certainly the most well-known indicator of academic performance. Grades are the student's "score" for their classes and overall tenure. Grades are most often a tallying or average of assignment and test scores and may often be affected by factors such as attendance an instructor opinion of the student as well. Grading systems vary greatly by county and school; common scales include a percentage form 1-100, lettering systems from A-F, and grade point averages (GPA) from 0-4.0 or above.

According to Wonuola (2012) academic performance refers to the outcome of education; the extent to which the student, teacher or institution have achieved their educational goals. Academic performance is the ability to study and remember facts and being able to communicate one's knowledge verbally or written on paper (Adeyemi, 2010). In the context of this study, academic achievement refers to the extent to which students have achieved mastery of the objectives of the subjects they are exposed to in school. According to (Aremu and Sokan, 2003) academic achievement has been observed in school subjects' especially mathematic and English language among secondary school students. Several factors have generally been identified as causes of poor academic performance. Morakinyo (2003) believes that the falling level of academic performance is attributable to teachers' non-use of verbal reinforcement strategy. Waleola (2015) also found that the attitude of some teachers to their job, poor teaching methods and the like influence students' academic performance.

The blame for poor academic performance among secondary school students could be attributable to a variety of factors such as peer pressure, inability of students to manage their time, family factors and the likes. Parents, teachers, counselors, curriculum experts and evaluators have expressed considerable concern over the deteriorating student' performance in public examinations.

Adolescence is a developmental period in which an individual change (over a varying length of time) from childhood into adulthood. This creates confusion about the self because society considers them neither children nor adults. Adolescence is also a period of sexual maturity (of sex organs and the development of hormones) and the development of sexual urge. The pattern of thinking is that in which immediate needs tend to have priority over long term ones and because they lack knowledge and skills to make healthy choices, they tend to go into risky behavior and try out experiences which often leads to mistakes and regrets in most adolescents it marks the beginning of sexual activity.

Adolescents are categories of children that usually form groups in the schools. Truly speaking, adolescence is the most chaotic and stressful of all stages in human life (Wikipedia). Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure because they are at a stage of development, when they are separating more from their parent's influence but have not yet established their own values or understanding about human relationship or the consequences of their behaviour. They are also typically striving for social acceptance at this stage and may be willing to engage in behaviours that will allow them to be accepted but are against their better judgment.

Research questions

Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions will be raised to guide it:

1. Does peer pressure affect students' academic performance in secondary school?
2. Do parents show interest in knowing the peer group association of their children?
3. Does the economic status of peer affect their learning and academics?
4. Do parents show interest in knowing the academic performance of their children?
5. Do teachers show concern about the academic performance of their students?

Significance of the study

The findings of this study will be helpful in determining the psychological effect of peer pressure on their academic performance. Also, this study will be of immense benefits to the counselors, teacher, the society, school and researchers.

To the counselor- It will help to create discipline in the life of adolescents. When this is done there will be sanity, peace and order, which will enhance the moral tone of the school as well as the society. It will also help the counselor to know the right technique to adopt in modifying negative peer pressure.

To the teacher- The teacher will equally benefit from the finding of the study because the finding will help them know what is expected of them as they are role model.

To the school- The findings of the study will directly lead to the raising of our standard of education because experience has shown that disciplined students learn faster and perform better academically than undisciplined students. Therefore, the findings of this study will help the school produce students who can contribute meaningfully towards the development of the nation in future. The findings of the study will be made known to public by organizing conferences, workshops and seminars to inform them of the positive and negative effect of peer pressure. This will help sensitize the students by making them to be aware of the merits of good peer pressure.

Finally, the results of the work will be of great help to future researchers and a source of research materials or empirical data for them.

METHODOLOGY

Data analysis

The method of data collection is through descriptive statistics, namely: frequency counts, percentages and table. The obtained data are analyzed through frequency counts while the results are presented in percentages to answer the research questions.

RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1

Does peer pressure affect students' academic performance in secondary school?

RESULTS

Analysis of Research Questions

Table-1: Responses on the effect of peer pressure on the academic performance of students

S/N	STATEMENT	VT	(%)	T	(%)	NT	(%)	NV	(%)	TOTAL
1	I prefer to study with my friends	50	42%	30	25%	26	21%	14	12%	120(100)
2	My friends affect my academic work positively	55	46%	35	29%	18	15%	12	10%	120(100)
3	My performance in class has been great since I started moving with my friends	56	47%	39	33%	15	12%	10	8%	120(100)
4	My friends and I sneak out of school	17	14%	20	17%	43	36%	40	33%	120(100)

Table 1.1 above shows that the students responded that the statement was 42% very true, 25% true while 21% and 12% responded not true and never respectively.

Table 1.2 shows that 46% responded that the statement was very true and 29% true while 15% and 10% said not true and never respectively.

Also, table 1.3 shows that 47% responded that the statement was very true and 33% true while 12% and 8% responded not true and never respectively.

The data on table 1.4 shows that the statement was 14% very true, 17% true while 36% and 33% responded not true and never respectively.

Research Question 2

Do parents show interest in knowing the peer group association of their children?

Table-2: Responses on the interest of parents in knowing the peer group their children associate with

S/N	STATEMENT	VT	(%)	T	(%)	NT	(%)	NV	(%)	TOTAL
1	My parents know many of my friends	18	15%	25	21%	45	37%	32	27%	120(100)
2	My parents encourage me to study with friends	20	17%	16	13%	58	48%	26	22%	120(100)
3	My parents encourage me to move around with students who are intelligent	38	32%	12	10%	40	33%	30	25%	120(100)
4	My parents teach me how to relate with friends	30	25%	25	21%	45	38%	20	17%	120(100)

From table 2.1 above, the data shows that the statement was 15% very true and 21% true while 37% and 27% responded that the statement was not true and never respectively. Hence, the parents do not know many of children's friends.

Table 2.2 shows that the statement was 17% very true and 13% true while 48% and 22% responded that the statement was not true and never respectively. This reveals that most parents do not bother or encourage their children to study with friends.

Also, the data on table 2.3 shows that the statement was 32% very true and 10% true while 33%

and 25% shows not true and never respectively. This shows that a total of (33%, 25%) do not encourage their children to keep intelligent friends.

Table 2.4 above showed that the statement was 25% very true and 21% true while 38% and 17% showed not true and never respectively. This also shows that majority of the parents do not teach their children on how to relate with their peers; either good or bad.

Research Question 3

Does the economic status of peer affect their learning and academics?

Table-3: Responses on the economic status of peer

S/N	STATEMENT	VT	(%)	T	(%)	NT	(%)	NV	(%)	TOTAL (%)
1.	I hate to make friend with students from poor family	20	17%	22	18%	48	40%	30	25%	120 (100)
2.	I like to associate with friends from rich family	52	43%	30	25%	28	23%	10	9%	120 (100)
3.	I borrow textbooks from my rich friends	36	30%	25	21%	30	25%	29	24%	120 (100)
4.	I have every necessary textbook	20	17%	15	12%	50	42%	35	29%	120 (100)

Table 3.1 above shows that 17% responded that the statement was very true and 18% true while 40% and 25% responded that the statement was not true and never respectively. This shows that making friends does not have any thing to do with their economic status.

Table 3.2 shows that the statement was 43% very true and 25% true while it shows that the statement was 23% and 9% not true and never respectively. Hence, this reveals that majority of the students like to associate with friends from rich families.

Table 3.3 also shows that the statement was 30% very true and 21% true while 25% and 24% shows

that the statement was not true and never respectively. This shows that some students borrow textbooks from their rich friends.

Table 3.4 shows that 17% responded that the statement was very true and 12% true while 42% and 29% responded that the statement was not true and never respectively. This reveals that majority do not have the necessary textbooks.

Research Question 4

Do parents show interest in knowing the academic performance of their children?

Table-4

S/N	STATEMENT	VT	(%)	T	(%)	NT	(%)	NV	(%)	TOTAL (100)
1.	My parent checks and monitors my assignment	20	17%	17	14%	35	29%	48	40%	120 (100)
2.	My parents encourage me to study hard	40	33%	25	21%	30	25%	25	21%	120 (100)
3.	My parents check my result at the end of the term	45	38%	28	23%	25	21%	22	18%	120 (100)
4.	My parents scold me for failing	30	25%	12	10%	42	35%	36	30%	120 (100)

From table 4.1 above, 17% responded that the statement was very true and 14 % true while 29% and 40% responded not true and never respectively. Thus, the data shows that majority of the parents do not monitor their children’s assignment.

Table 4.2 shows that 33% responded that the statement was very true and 21% true while 25% and 21% responded not true and never respectively. This reveals that most parents encourage their children to study hard.

Also, table 4.3 shows that 38% responded that the statement was very true and 23% true while 21% and 18% responded not true and never respectively.

Table 4.4 shows that 25% responded that the statement was very true and 10% true while 35% and 30% responded not true and never respectively. This shows that majority do not scold their children for failing

Research Question 5

Do teachers show concern about the academic performance of their students?

Table-5

S/N	STATEMENT	VT	(%)	T	(%)	NT	(%)	NV	(%)	TOTAL (100)
1.	My teacher motivates me to read and study well	45	37%	32	27%	20	17%	23	19%	120 (100)
2.	My teacher does not care about my academic performance in class	20	17%	12	10%	58	48%	30	25%	120 (100)
3.	My teacher is loving, caring	40	33%	38	32%	20	17%	22	18%	120 (100)
4.	My teacher teaches well	35	29%	42	35%	30	25%	13	11%	120 (100)

From table 5.1, it shows that 37% responded that the statement was very true and 27% true while 17% and 19% responded not true and never respectively.

Table 5.2 shows that 17% responded that the statement was very true and 10% true while 48% and 25% responded not true and never respectively.

Also, table 5.3 shows that the statement was 33% very true and 32% true while 17% and 18% responded not true and never respectively.

Table 5.4 shows that the statement was 29% very true and 35% true while 25% and 11% responded not true and never respectively.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The analysis of data on research question 1 reveals that peers can affect students' academic performance and it can be negatively or positively based on the kind of friends they keep. Thus, the finding shows that peer pressure has an effect on students' academic performance. According to Ajibade (2016) the findings revealed that peer group could positively influence the academic performance of students and that peer group could also be used to motivate student's class achievement.

The results and data shown in table 2 also answers the research question 2. The findings show that most parents do not show interest in knowing the peer group their children associate with and even encourage them to study with the intelligent ones among them. Related study by Mustapha (2010) shows that family members can provide information and guidance, directly or indirectly to influence the peer group of a child.

The results in table 3 also answers the research question 3 does the economic status of peers affects their learning. The findings reveal that their economic status does not affect their learning and academics, they make friends with one another without minding their status; either from a rich or poor family. Most of them even borrow textbooks from their rich friends. The findings also agrees with the findings of Okunnuga (2014) who examined the relationship between the socio-economic status of parent and academic performance of students in Orlu Division of Imo state. A sample of twenty families was used. He came to the conclusion through his findings that two variables, socio-economic status of parents and students achievement were not related. He found out that there is no significant difference between the performance of students of high socio-economic status and other student from low socio-economic status.

The analysis of data on research question 4 on Table 4 reveals that most parents fails to monitor their children's assignment and scold them for poor performance. The findings further reveal that some parents encourage their children to study hard and checks their results at the end of the term. Hence, we can still conclude that some parents show interest in the academic performance of their children.

The findings are in agreement with that of Owoyele and Toyobo (2008) shows that many parents determine virtually all academic decisions for their children. They choose the school to attend, the books to read, the subjects to study in school and even friends to move with.

The findings on the research question 5 reveals that teacher show interest and concern about the academic performance of their students. This indicates that teachers influence the academic performance of students through motivation or reinforcement which in return enhances effective teaching and learning. According to Adeyemi (2017) Students look up to their teachers to provide role models and so might want to improve their academic performance.

CONCLUSION

The extent to which the peer group determines the academic ability of students had been investigated in this study revealed that a dull student may become study inclined when he finds himself in a group that encourages effective learning. The study also revealed that when students are not well monitored they fall in bad groups. However, the study has also shown that a high percentage of the students are more interested in relating to their friends than to their teachers and parents.

This may be as a result of the attitude of the parents and teachers. It is indicated in the finding that teachers may be able to use the peer group effectively for classroom interaction and participation. The peer group could also be used in a group to motivate student's class achievements.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings from the study, a number of recommendations could be made as follows:

- Students should endeavour to form or join groups that are study inclined and encourage learning so that their learning can be effective.
- Parents should make sure their children are well monitored and they should encourage them to have friends that would have a positive influence on their learning both at home and at school.
- Teachers should understand that the peer group is an important factor in child's learning and therefore should use it encourage learning.

- Students should make friends with positive role models and stay away of peers who would pressure them to do wrong things
- Parents should develop a close, open and honest relationship with their children and take keen interest in their academics.

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