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PEER GROUP INFLUENCE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN AKINYELE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, IBADAN, OYO STATE

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Abstract

Peer groups play important roles in adolescents' outcomes as a result of their significant influence in the social, psychological and educational development of students. However, its role in student performance has largely been under-reported and factors underlining this behaviour among secondary students in Akinyele LGA have not been explored in recent literature. This study investigated the influence of peer group on the academic performance of secondary school students among secondary students in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo state. The study adopted the exploratory descriptive research design in eliciting information on the influence of peer groups on the academic performance of students in selected secondary schools. The main instrument used for the study was questionnaire. The data collected from the students were analysed using frequency counts and simple percentage based on the 4-points scale. The study concludes that peer groups influence positively affect academic performance of secondary school students. The underlining reinforcing factors include financial, emotional and social benefits of peer groups. Also, tacit and indirect parental support moderated the influence of these peer groups. The government and ministry of education should ensure that, trained counselors are made available in all schools so as to provide preventive counseling services and modify the behaviours of students who unfortunately influenced negatively by peers.

Keywords: Peer Group, Academic, Performance

Introduction

Peer groups have been perceived to be significant in the social, psychological and educational development of the students. A class consisting of groups of students can be described as peer group. It is pertinent to note that the student's peer groups matter most in the life of students. Several studies done within and outside Nigeria on the factors that influence the academic performance of students revealed that peer groups influence is stronger than some of the other factors that influence the student's academic performance (Harris, 2002). The peer groups serve as a barometer for children examining themselves and their feelings about self and family. The peer groups also influence development of children's socialising skills. Adesua (2014),

explained that although, the school is a socialising agent that is responsible for the experiences that make up the individual's life, during school periods. The peer groups a child mixes or grows up with and the parents of a child are two different sets or groups of socialising agents a child first comes into contact with. These groups are responsible for building the personality of the child and making the child what he becomes in life, their roles could make or mar the individual's (i.e. students) performance at school. These early peers' help children learn how to negotiate and relate to others, including their siblings and other family members. They learn from peers how to cooperate and socialise according to group norms and group-sanctioned modes of behavior. The peer groups are the first group outside the home in which the child attempts to gain acceptance and recognition. Peer groups are an important influence throughout one's life but they are more critical during development years. The peer groups can influence what the child values, knows, wears, eats, and learns. The extent of this influence, however, depends on other situational constraints, such as the age and personality of children and the nature of the group Harris, (1998). A peer group consists of people or individuals that are within ages that are close in years. For instance, between ranges of one to four years, the school serves as primary setting for the membership of peer groups, they may be in the same class, and same sex and close interaction is of equals. It is generally observed that peer groups have a lot of influence on students. This is seen from the role played by the peer groups in the life and learning of a child. It is believed that students feel more comfortable and relaxed among fellow students. A child who is brilliant and surrounded by dull friends would lose interest in learning. On the other hand, a peer group which inclined to study would have positive effect on a dull member towards learning and stimulate his/her interest on learning.

Taiwo (2004) observed that outside home peer group does not always conform with adult standard, and each child strive to abide with the ethics of the group they belong to because rejection by the group may have negative effect on the learning of the child. Acceptance of students by the group may have positive effect on the academic performance. A student who is not brilliant enough may do better if he is accepted by a group that is inclined to study. The attractiveness of the group, the nature of conformity demanded by the group and the morals of the group determine whether a group is likely to have positive or negative impact on members' motivation and achievement. If the atmosphere of the group is warm, understanding and supportive, the group influence or motivation, task performance and achievement will most likely be positive. A hostile atmosphere, constant frustration and frequent conflicts produce a negative impact not only on the member's growth and behaviour but also on his motivation to work and achievement. The kind of person a child is dictates the type of group he/she is in, as children tend to imitate each other.

According to Howard (2014), students have always been exposed to peer influence, but the kinds of peer influence that they encounter changes tremendously from time to time. Peers can influence everything from what a student chooses to wear whether or not a student engages in drug related or other delinquent behaviour. The student's behaviour changes in school, in which peers play an important role in accomplishing quite an adjustment. Peer pressure has an impact on pupils' academic achievement, either directly or indirectly.

Theoretically, it is believed that Adolescents pick a group in which they positively identify because they get respect from it, according to social identification theory. Individuals commit more resources to the in-group in order to expand the gap between their in-group and out-group in order to attain such identifications. Adolescent pick a group with which they positively identify because they get respect from it, according to social identification theory. They commit more resources to the in-group in order to expand the gap between their in-group and out-group in order to attain such identifications. According to Bankole and Ogunsakin (2016), peer groups create a sense of security and assist teenagers in asking questions about social identity theory, such as "who am I?" and "what do I want out of life?" Many peer groups can have a good impact on their peers. It is believed that brilliant students assist their peers by improving their academic achievement. Similarly, children who have excellent friends who are intellectual tend to do better in school, which may be ascribed to the fact that they are part of a shared team with comparable goals (Landau, 2002). Adolescence is a time when a person makes critical decisions about academic commitment. The decisions that adolescents make about their motivation, re-engagement, and accomplishment in school (and in life), as well as the satisfaction they derive from those decisions, are influenced by the circumstances in which they make them. The type of peers with whom a student identifies and relies determines the group's effect on his academic progress. Peer effect on academic accomplishment is determined by the students' sense of self-identity, self-esteem, and self-reliance. Peer influence has the ability to mobilise students' energies and inspire them to succeed. Positive role models can be provided by peers. When a student is negatively impacted, it has an impact on their academic achievement. Stronger students have an effect on their peers and help to increase overall academic achievement. Peers' attitudes and goals, as well as peer expectations and standards, impact individual effort and accomplishment in school (Uguma & Usani, 2016). However, kids are more likely to be exposed to undesirable behaviours such as drinking, smoking, and poor academic performance through their peer group. Those who are positively inspired by their peers produce more alternative answers to issues, suggest more mature ideas, and are less aggressive than students who are adversely influenced. It is believed that brilliant students assist their colleagues in improving their academic achievement.

Peer groups have an impact on social and emotional growth as well as educational goals (Deepika & Priya, 2017). According to Olalekan (2016), it is generally reported that peer groups have a significant influence on students. This is evident from the significance that a child's peer group plays in his or her life and learning. There is a lot of evidence showing pupils feel more at ease and calm when they are with their peers. A talented youngster who is dominated by mediocre peers will lose their passion for learning. On the other hand, a peer group that is predisposed to studying would have a good influence on an uninspired member's attitude toward learning and would encourage his or her enthusiasm for learning. Peer pressure appears to have a wide range of consequences for a student's academic success in school. It is how their peers influence them, whether positively or negatively. Adolescents seek reassurance from others in the company of their peers, and they are unaware of how their peers impact them academically (Moldes, Biton, Gonzaga & Moneva, 2019). According to Olalekan (2016), the characteristics of a peer group determine its influence on the morale and accomplishments of its members. Filade et al. (2019) used a mixed technique to explore the effect of peer groups on the

academic performance of undergraduate students in chosen departments at Babcock University in Ogun State. According to the conclusions of this study, peer group has a considerable impact on university students' scholastic achievement.

Furthermore, there is a considerable association between peer groups and student academic success. Cherobon et al. (2021) investigated whether relational ties and peer pressure are psychosocial variables impacting the success of orphaned and vulnerable children in Ainabkoi Sub-County using a descriptive survey approach. The target population included 99 early childhood schools in the Ainabkoi Sub-County as well as 580 instructors from chosen schools. According to the findings of the study, peer pressure has a good effect on the academic attainment of disadvantaged and orphaned children. Alafiatayo, Salau, and Ebebe (2021) studied the effects of peer pressure and time management on the academic performance of biology students in various secondary schools in Kaduna State's Sabon Gari Local Government Area. Three hundred fifty-seven (357) students completed the questionnaire "Peer Pressure and Time Management on the Academic Performance (PPT-MAP) of Biology Students" and took an achievement in school exam. The findings revealed that peer pressure has a significant impact on the academic performance of secondary school biology students, whereas time management has no substantial effect on students' academic performance, despite the fact that peer pressure, time management, and students' academic performance were all strongly, positively, and significantly related. Bankole and Ogunsakin (2015) explored the impact of peer groups on student academic achievement. The findings revealed that pupils' academic performance is influenced by their classmates' connections. From the aforementioned, it is imperative to investigate peer group and parental influence on academic performance of secondary school students in Akinyele LGA, Oyo State.

Research Methodology

The study adopted exploratory descriptive research design in eliciting information of peer groups and parental influence on the academic performance of secondary school students in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo State.

Population

The population of this study consists of only J.S.S III students in Akinyele Local Government Area of Oyo state. The study utilised the convenience sampling technique. Three schools in the local government due to accessibility and proximity. The researchers made use of 100 J.S.S III students because this is where the influence is expected to manifest fully considering their age range which is between 10 and 16 years, which falls under adolescent stage. Current study uses convenience sampling not just because it is simple to use, but also because it offers additional research benefits. Convenience sampling is a sort of sampling in which the first accessible primary data source is used for the study with no other constraints. Prior to subject selection in convenience sampling, no inclusion criteria were defined. All subjects are welcome to take part. During the exploration stage of the study field, the convenience sampling approach have been shown to be helpful. It allows the researcher to acquire basic data and patterns about his study without the complexities of utilising a randomised sample (Frey, 2018).

The main instrument used for the study was questionnaire, which was prepared in two parts. Part one contained questions on personal data about each respondent while part two contained other

set of items on different factors which can influence the respondents in reference to their peer groups. The questionnaire was scaled on the 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Disagree (D). The four-point Likert scale is essentially a forced Likert scale. It is so named because the user feels compelled to form an opinion. There is no such thing as a safe 'neutral' option. A suitable scale for educational researchers, who utilise the four-point scale to elicit particular reactions. Researchers often use forced choice questions to compel respondents to communicate their beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. Including unsure or neutral response items does not always shift the direction of a Likert-type scale response, according to previous studies (Allen, 2017).

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the students were analysed using frequency count and simple Percentage based on the 4-points scale.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. what is the influence of peer groups on the academic performance of secondary school students?
2. Does parents' economic status influence their learning and academics performance?
3. Do parents show interest in knowing the peer groups their children associated with?

Results

Table 1: Showing Peer groups influence on the academic performance of secondary school students

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ranks	Decision
1	My friends influence my belief about sexuality	100	2.43	1.12	2 nd	Agreed
2	My friends and I do not agree about alcohol drink	100	2.13	1.02	5 th	Agreed
3	Overall, I am influenced more by my friends than my parents	100	2.17	0.94	4 th	Agreed
4	Group discussion with my friends assist to improve my grades	100	2.21	0.94	3 rd	Agreed
5	The scores of my friends encourage me to work harder	100	2.69	0.99	1 st	Agreed

Table 1 presents the scores of my friends encourage me to work harder which ranked 1st and have the highest mean of 2.69 and that my friends and I do not agree about alcohol drink ranked 6th with the mean scores of 2.13. All the items under the influence of peer groups on performance, all the mean scores were greater than 2.00 hence the decision was agreed.

Table 2: Showing the economic status of peer's influence on their learning and academic performance?

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Decision
6	My friend's parents are richer than mine	100	2.64	1.087	1 st	Agreed
7	My parents' socio-economic status is average	100	2.25	0.821	3 rd	Agreed

8	My household income is enough to cater for my educational needs	100	2.03	0.758	5 th	Agreed
9	The earning of my father is above average	100	2.10	.745	4 th	Agreed
10	My mother earns more salary than my father	100	2.64	1.000	1 st	Agreed
11	We live in duplex of our own	100	2.34	.844		Agreed

Table 3: Showing Parents' interest in knowing the peer groups association of their children?

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ranks	Decision
12	My parents know many of my friends	100	2.28	1.215	3 rd	Agreed
13	My parents do not like my movement with friends	100	2.13	1.002	4 th	Agreed
14	My parents love me to have many friends	100	2.44	.988	1 st	Agreed
15	My parents encourage me to move around with students who are intelligent	100	2.03	.858	6 th	Agreed
16	My parents encourage me to study with friends	100	2.11	.942	5 th	Agreed
17	My parents teach me how to relate with friends	100	2.30	1.083	2 nd	Agreed

Table3 presents the scores of my parents love me to have many friends ranked 1st and have the highest mean of 2.44 and that my parents encourage me to move around with students who are intelligent needs ranked 6th with the mean score of 2.03. All the items under showing parents' interest in knowing the peer group association of their children, the mean scores were greater than 2.00 hence the decision was agreed.

Discussion of Results

In research question one; findings revealed that peer groups influence the academic performance of secondary school students positively. The scores of peers encouraged the students to work harder. Bandura (2011) noted that, through observing and imitating behaviour of others, learners can bypass much wasteful random behaviour and come close to reproducing the behaviours of which members are recognised. A child may not be dull but playful. If he is well monitored could fall into a group of brilliant students who are not playful and through imitating them changes his /her attitude towards learning for better. This is why it is important for teachers to be able to distinguish a playful student from the dull one.

In research question two, findings revealed that, economic status of peers' influence learning and academic performance of students. For instance, where mother of a student earns more salary than his/her father, and may likely to influence his/her academic performance tying to his/her father, there is every tendency that the student would go closer to his/her mother than the father. Cressey (2009) found that peers were involved in the socialisation of novices, considerable social interactions and the maintenance of loose, unwritten code of conduct to be followed by those who wished to remain in the group. The findings support that of Kolawole (2004) and Furlong et al (2004), that student's interaction with their peer groups could influence learning

and invariably their academic performance. The probable reason for this significant relationship is that, if students interact with the right peer groups that could positively influence their interest to learn, this could invariably motivate them towards their studies and enhance their academic performance. The result of this study contradicts that of Skues, Cunningham and Pokharel (2005), who discovered that students who were bullied by their peers at school tended to report lower levels of self-esteem, feel less connected to peers, teachers and schools were less motivated to perform well at school. The study showed that in their relationship with their peers they found out that their friend's parents are richer than theirs in turn influence the students on how their friends controlled them to read or not and to be serious with their academics. Peers influence therefore, can be both negative and positive. While we tend to think that peers influence leads teens to engage in unhealthy and unsafe behaviours, it can actually motivate them to study harder in school, volunteer for community and social services, and participate in sports and other productive endeavors (De Guzman, 2007). Negative peers influence does exist and should be an educational related professional issue. Negative peers influence leads adolescent's students to be involved in antisocial behavior, hence, lead to the formation of negative peer groups (Howard and Medway, 2004). However, a student who associates with fellow peers who are not motivated in learning affects academic negatively (Ryan, 2000). This study was in line with works that indicates that peers who are interested in academic issues are more likely to associate with students who have the same interest. They often study together, sharing course materials, and information (Mapesa, 2013).

In research question three, findings revealed that parents love their children to have friends of positive mind, and allow their children to association with such groups. This has great impact on their peer groups' influence. The finding aligns with findings from Taiwo (2011) that being the first people with whom the child comes in contact with are his parents. Parental support significantly impact on the students own values of right and wrong at a time when he is not in contact with any other influences. Thus, it is the values instill by parents that further reinforced by the external environment. Unless the foundation laid by home is sound and solid, the school has nothing to build upon and the child later becomes a problem not only to his parents but also to the community. Thus, in effective parenting, development of conflicting and poor home environment often leads an adolescent to adopt deviant peers or positive peers. Thus, parent influence on peers association plays a significant role in peer group influence and academic performance outcomes.

Conclusion

Learning does not occur in isolation rather through interaction with certain factors one of which is the peer groups. It can therefore be said that, the peer groups a child interact with will definitely affect the child's learning and academic performance either positively or negatively. The extent to which the peer groups determine the academic ability of students had been investigated in this study which 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 by their parents, may fall into bad groups. The study has also shown that a high percentage of the students are more interested in relating with their friends than their parents or teachers, due to the attitude of the parents and teachers as indicated in the finding. This findings contributes to existing knowledge that the moderating influences that tacit

and indirect support or value orientation that parental support for peer group association may go along long in affecting the strength of the association between peer pressure and students academic performance.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore made based on the findings of the study:

Students should endeavour to form or join groups that are study inclined which encourage learning so that their learning would be effective or affected properly.

- i) Parents should ensure their children are well monitored and encourage them to have friends that would have positive influence on their learning both at home and school
- ii) Teachers should understand that, positive peer groups are an important factor in child's learning and therefore should use it to encourage learning.
- iii) Teachers should use peer groups as a study group to bring about effective classroom interaction. And should neither be too strict nor permissive so as to encourage good teacher-student relationship.
- iv) The government and ministry of education should ensure that, trained counselors are made available in all schools so as to provide preventive counseling services and modify the behaviours of students who unfortunately influenced negatively by peers.
- v) School counselors should play a prominent and leading role in the matter of peer groups influence by organising lectures, seminars, career talk and symposiums that could create positive awareness on influence of peer groups on academic performance of students.

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