
Peer Group Influence As Correlate Of Academic Performance Among Secondary School Students In English Language In Rivers Sout-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

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Abstract

The study examines peer group influence as correlates of academic performance among secondary school students in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State. Two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted a correlational research design. Population of the study consisted of 2,650 senior secondary school students in South-East Senatorial District. A sample size of 400 students were drawn via simple random sampling technique was used to collect data. The instruments for data collection was a researcher's developed questionnaires, titled: "Peer Group Influence Scale (PGIS) and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). Test re-test reliability method was employed and it yielded a reliability coefficient of, $r=0.81$ for Peer Group Influence Scale and $r=0.83$ for ELAT. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there is a strong negative relationship between negative peer group influence and academic performance in and English Language. It was also found that there is a significant relationship between positive peer group influence and academic performance in English Language. Among others, it was recommended that Non-governmental organizations should carryout campaign against negative peer group influence. Similarly, government should be strict in enforcing laws against negative peer group influence as this will help to control its influence on students' academic performance.

Key Words: Academic Performance, Students, Peer Group Influence, Senatorial District.

Introduction

Education has a pivotal role in national as well as individual character building. It is a life line for any society and nation. This is because there is an amplified and inextricable link between quality education and national development and the performance of students is a direct reflection of the quality of education obtainable in a society (Asuru, 2017). Similarly, in our society academic performance is considered as a key principle to judge one's total capacities and potentialities. Academic performance of students in examinations remains the primary indicator of how good or bad an education system of any society is. It serves as the index with which the quality of education of any society is measured. Hence academic performance possesses a very imperative place in education as well as in the learning process. Agi (2016) explained that the term 'academic performance' is the scholastic standing of a student at a given moment. It refers to how an individual is able to demonstrate his or her intellectual abilities. It is the outcome of education, that is, the extent to which an institution achieved its educational goals. Okanezi and Braide (2018) maintained that in educational institutions, success is measured by academic performance or how well a student meets the standards set by the examination bodies. This makes academic performance a vital issue for psychological research.

The academic performance of students at all levels of education particularly at the secondary schools level in Nigeria especially in Rivers State, has been one of the major concerns for all the stakeholders in the education system. Needless to say that students' academic performance occupied a very important place in the educational well-being of a student. It is considered as a key criterion to judge one's total potentialities and capacities. Nneka, (2020) noted that academic performance is the expression of learners' learning ability in a specific subject area or in a given task, performance in school could be measured in school subjects or a single school subject. Obioma and Cyril (2013) explained that high academic performance validates the efficacy of instruction given at any given programme. Academic performance is the extent to which the students have attained their short or long term educational goals. It is expressed in form of high or low scores obtained by students in class tests, assignments and examination. It could also be described as the performance of students in their school subjects at a given time which could be assessed or measured through test, assignments and examination. It is the measure of students' academic standing at any given academic programme. Academic performance helps in effective the evaluation of learners and identification of their academic strength and weaknesses.

Regrettably, students' academic performance is one of the current educational problems of public interest based on poor level of student's academic performance especially in schools and public examinations Chikwature and Ganyani (2016). The academic performance of students in secondary schools has dropped drastically across the Country. More so, Muktar and Kabiru (2021) opined that students' results from various examination bodies usually show massive failure with only few students able to get the required grades. Consequently, the root cause of this menace needs to be explored and carefully addressed in order to shape the future of the educational system, students and the country at large.

Ezemba, et. al. (2021) noted that academic success depends on a variety of factors and these factors can have both positive and negative influence on a child's ability to stay motivated and succeed in school. The poor academic performance at the secondary

level may be a product of the peer group influence among others. Peer groups play a significant role in shaping the behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes of individuals, particularly during adolescence. In secondary school, where students are highly impressionable, peer group influence can have both positive and negative effects on academic performance.

Opurum (2017) posited that for many years, educators, administrators or managers, researchers have debated over which variables influences students' academic performance, and concludes that peer group plays a significant role in the social, emotional and academic development of students; therefore, understanding the prospects and challenges of peer group is crucial for the productivity of educational processes (Filade, et. al., 2019). Peer group influence could be seen as one of the militating forces why most student record poor academic performance, the reason for this is not farfetched: they spend large amount of time in extra curriculum. More often than none, academic priorities are neglected and thus academic performance grossly affected. Brechwald and Prinstein (2011), stressed that it is generally observed that peer group has a lot of influence on students. This is seen from the role played by the peer group in the life and learning of a child, evidence abound 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 is prone to study would have positive effect on a dull member towards learning and stimulate his/her interest on learning. Okanezi and Braide (2018) opined that the nature of a peer group determines the impact on the motivation and achievements of its member. He further suggests that one group may have a negative impact on its members while the other may have positive impact on its members as well.

Peer group influence refers to the impact that a person's social group, typically consisting of friends or peers of a similar age and background, has on their attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and values. This influence can be both positive and negative and plays a significant role in an individual's development, especially during adolescence and early adulthood. Peer groups play an important role in the academic performance of students. They form a critical part of the schools environment, they create and maintain a culture separate from the home and adult community in which adolescents are raised (Gandara, 2021). Many young people spend more time with peers than with parents or other family members. Peers can exert extraordinary influence over each other, including the formation and support of personal goals and academic aspirations. Acceptance by peers is one of the strong needs of adolescents (Nwa-chil, 2021).

Peer group is the first social group outside the home in which the child attempts to gain acceptance and recognition. It is generally observed that peer group has a lot of influence on students. This is seen from the role played by the peer group 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.

Wentzel (2017) noted that there are forms of peer group influence which include; normative influence and peer modeling. Normative influence arises when students feel pressured to conform to the norms and expectations of their peer group. In the academic setting, this form of influence can manifest in two ways: positively or negatively. On

the positive side, when a peer group values academic achievement, members are likely to emulate behaviors that align with those values. For instance, students in a group that prioritizes studying, attending classes regularly, and maintaining good grades often feel motivated to adopt these practices to gain acceptance. Haruna (2020) opined that this can lead to improved academic performance, as students are encouraged to set high goals and work diligently.

However, the opposite can occur in groups where academic indifference or rebellion is the norm. Students may feel compelled to skip classes, neglect assignments, or downplay their academic efforts to fit in. This negative conformity often results in poor academic outcomes and diminished self-esteem.

Nana et al (2019) posits that peer modeling is another powerful form of influence in secondary schools. This occurs when students observe and imitate the behaviors of their peers, often subconsciously. The academic habits of high-performing students can inspire others to improve their own efforts. For example, a student who notices a classmate consistently excelling in mathematics may adopt their study habits, such as practicing problem-solving or seeking extra help from teachers. This positive modeling fosters a culture of learning and excellence, benefiting both the individual and the group.

Conversely, negative peer modeling can have detrimental effects. Students who observe peers engaging in disruptive behaviors, such as procrastination or academic dishonesty, may adopt these actions, believing them to be acceptable. Over time, this can lead to declining grades and missed opportunities for academic growth.

Research by Gandara, (2021) showed that normative influence and peer modeling peer group influence can have several constructive outcomes such as, academic performance, pro-social behavior, healthier choices, and emotional support and so on. Normative influence and peer modeling are two significant forms of peer group influence that shape academic performance among secondary school students. While these influences can drive students toward success, they can also lead to underachievement if misdirected. By creating supportive environments and promoting awareness, educators, parents, and students can harness the power of peer influence for academic growth and success.

The study is anchored on social learning theory developed by Albert Bandura (1977) and Peer Socialization Theory. Social learning theory suggests that individuals learn by observing and imitating the behaviours of others, including peers. Peers serve as role models, and individuals are more likely to adopt behaviors they see being rewarded or positively reinforced within their peer group. While peer socialization theory emphasizes the role of peer groups in teaching and reinforcing social and cultural values. It posits that individuals learn about societal norms, roles, and behaviors through interactions with their peers (Ruble & Martin, 1998). Peer Socialization Theory is a framework that explores how peer groups play a pivotal role in shaping an individual's social identity, behaviors, values, and beliefs. This theory posits that individuals acquire social and cultural knowledge through interactions with their peers during childhood and adolescence. It emphasizes the idea that peer groups act as dynamic socializing agents, influencing an individual's understanding of societal norms, roles, and behaviors. Some of the key concepts of peer socialization comprise.

Statement of Problem

Academic performance of students in examinations remains the primary indicator of how good or bad an education system of any society is. However, it appears that there is a persistent decline in the academic performance of secondary school students in spite of government huge expenditure on education. This, holds nothing but doom for the education which in turn puts the future of the country in danger. There is a general outcry that standard of education is falling and morals are flagging. Some blame students for this apparent decline in the quality of education and moral values. Some blame teachers for the woes in our schools that they are not as devoted and dedicated to the cause of education as their predecessor in the 20th century, while teachers as a group blame parents and children. It is observed that peer group influence among other factors contribute significantly towards the poor academic performance of students. A student who is negatively influence by peers may prefer to spend more time with friends and find it difficult to create enough time to study. This may lead to some undesirable behaviours such as, risk-taking behavior, academic underachievement, peer pressure, conflict and bullying, substance abuse, criminal involvement. He or she might not be stable in school to attend classes. It is against this background that the present study seeks to examine peer group influence as correlate of academic performance among secondary school students in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between family instability and academic performance among secondary school students in English language in Rivers East Senatorial District, Rivers State. The study specifically examined:

1. The relationship between normative influence and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.
2. The relationship between peer modelling and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does normative influence relate to academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State?
2. To what extent does peer modelling relate to academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:

1. There is no significant relationship between normative influence and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between peer modelling and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

Methodology

The study adopted correlational research design. Population of the study consisted of 2,650 senior secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District. Taro Yamane formula was used to determine a sample size of 400, while purposive sampling technique will be used to select the sample size. The instruments for data collection was a researcher’s developed questionnaires, titled: Peer Group Influence Scale (PGIS) and English Language Achievement Test (ELAT). The instruments was validated by two experts in Measurement and Evaluation in the department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The reliability coefficients of the instruments will be determined using test re-test measure of stability. The obtained correlation coefficient indices were, $r=0.81$ for Peer Group Influence Scale and $r=0.83$ for English Language Achievement Test. which were deemed high enough to guarantee the reliability of the instrument for the study. Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results:

Research Question One: To what extent does normative influence relate to academic performance of secondary school students English language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State?

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between normative influence and academic performance of secondary school students in English language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation of Normative Influence Relationship and Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State

		Normative Influence	Academic performance in English Language
Normative Influence	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.79**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.03
	N	400	400
Academic performance in English Language	Pearson Correlation	-0.79**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.03	
	N	400	400

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 1: revealed that the relationship between normative influence and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in River South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State is -0.79. This result showed that there is a strong negative relationship between normative influence and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

In testing the null hypothesis, the result indicate that normative influence and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State is significant at 0.05 level of significance.

This revealed a significant negative relationship between normative influence and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school in South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

Research Question Two: To what extent does peer modeling relate to academic performance of Secondary School Students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between peer modeling and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation of Peer Modeling Relate to Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State

		peer modeling	Academic performance in English Language
peer modeling	Pearson Correlation	1	.073**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005
	N	400	400
Academic performance in English Language	Pearson Correlation	.073**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	
	N	400	400

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 2 revealed that the relationship between peer modeling and academic performance in of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State is .073. This result showed that there is strong positive relationship between peer modeling and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

In testing the null hypothesis, the result also revealed a significant negative relationship between peer modeling and academic performance in English Language among senior secondary school students in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State

Discussion of results

The result of the study based on research question one and hypothesis one found that there was a negative relationship between normative influence and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State. This result is similar to that of Bankole and Ogunsakin (2015), Filade et al. (2019) and Bassey (2020) who carried out separate studies and found that, peer group has a negative influence on students' academic performance. A groups where students' academic indifference or rebellion is the norm. Students may feel compelled to skip classes, neglect assignments, or downplay their academic efforts to fit in. This negative conformity often results in poor academic outcomes and diminished self-esteem.

The result of the study based on research question two and hypothesis two study further found that there was positive relationship between peer modeling and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State. This result is similar to that of Brechwald (2020) who conducted separate studies and found that peer group could influence greater academic

performance. The probable explanation for the present finding is that a when student observe and imitate the behaviors of their peers, often subconsciously. The fact is that the academic habits of high-performing students can inspire others to improve their own efforts.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that there is negative relationship between normative influence and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State, it further conclude that there is positive relationship between peer modeling and academic performance of secondary school students in English Language in Rivers South-East Senatorial District, Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommended among others:

1. That parent and school administrators should lay more emphasis on the influence of peer group on students' academic performance. Similarly, government should be strict in enforcing laws against negative normative influence as this will help to control its effect on students' academic performance.
2. That students should be encouraged to observe and imitate positive of their peers. As this will fosters a culture of learning and excellence, benefiting both the individual and the group and improve their academic performance.

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