

INFLUENCE OF PEER PRESSURE ON ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN PLATEAU SOUTH SENATORIAL DISTRICTS OF PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

Mohammed Ahmed Jibrin (PhD)

08032874758

ahmedjm090@gmail.com

&

Dr. (Mrs) U. V. Ufuoma

08035486450

oyinvwi@gmail.com

Educational Psychology Unit

Educational Foundations Department

Faculty of Education

Nasarawa State University Keffi

Abstract

This study examined the influence of peer pressure on academic achievements of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state, Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives, two research questions and corresponding null hypotheses. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study with a population of 15,802 SSII students from 98 public senior secondary schools and a sample size of 370 SS II students from 12 public senior secondary schools. Peer Pressure Questionnaire (PPQ) and Students' Achievement Test (SAT) in English Language and Mathematics were used as instruments for data collection. The instruments obtained logical validity indexes of 0.91 for PPQ and 0.87 for SAT. The instruments also obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.94 for (PPQ) and 0.84 for (SAT). Mean and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions while the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed in testing the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that both positive and negative peer pressures significantly influence the academic achievements of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau State. It concluded that peer pressure influences senior secondary school students' academic achievements in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state, Nigeria. It recommended among others that Schools should actively promote peer mentoring programs and academic clubs that encourage positive peer influence, cooperation and knowledge sharing among students to boost their academic achievements.

Key Words: Influence, peer pressure, Academic Achievements, Secondary School Students

Introduction

Education is the best legacy a nation can give to her citizens especially the youth. This is because the development of any nation or community depends largely on the quality of education of such a nation. It is generally believed that the basis for any true and meaningful development must commence with the development of human resources. As such, education remains the vehicle for any meaningful development and social mobilization in any society (Shittu, 2018). More so, the basis of a child's education begins at home with informal

education, which starts with the parents, especially the mother. The child will then be sent to school for final education where he will be exposed to so many people like the teachers, classmates and school environment. All these people associated with the teaching of the child certainly influence the academic achievement of the child greatly because he spends most of his time with them. As a result, the peer group is the first social group outside the home where the youngster tries to earn approval and recognition which may have direct influence on his moral upbringing as well as his academic achievements.

Academic achievement refers to the extent to which students attain their educational goals which are usually measured through paper examinations and effective application of intended skills which lead to fulfillment of one's dreams and display of positive behaviour in the society. It indicates the extent to which students have mastery of the subject matter. According to Deepa and Chamundeswari (2014) in Bereket and Zhao (2023), academic achievement is the specified level of attainment or proficiency in academic work as evaluated by the teachers, standardized test or by a combination of both. It is the extent to which students have attained a short or long-term educational goal and more so, academic achievement is important because it is strongly linked to the positive outcomes (Mohammed, as cited in Animba&Obika, 2020). In the context of this study, academic achievement is therefore seen as the extent to which students engage in various school related activities and how they demonstrate application of acquired knowledge and skills in solving their own problems. Much emphasis is laid on the role secondary education plays in laying the foundations for the education of secondary school students.

Peers play a crucial role in achieving behavioral changes among the students. Directly or indirectly, peer pressure has significant influence on academic achievement as well as social and emotional development of the students. Pressure means giving force to any activities. According to Adeyemi (2018), peer pressure refers to the influence exerted by a peer group in encouraging a person to change his/her attitudes, values in order to conform to group norms. It can also be seen as the influence of friends on each other and inducing changes in the mental and emotional behavior by the people belonging to same group with similar interest, age, background and social status. According to Howard (2017), peer pressure refers to the influences that peers can have on each other. In the context of this study, peer pressure is therefore seen as an emotional or mental force from school or classmates belonging to the same social group (such as age, grade or status) to act or behave in a manner similar to their own interests.

Peer pressure has both positive and negative consequences on individuals and the group as a whole. In the same vein, Olushola(2016) noted that peer pressure is a psychosocial factor is capable of influencing adolescent students' attitude (either positively or negatively) towards desire to excel academically. The danger is that if the peer influence is negative, Ajibade (2016) in Taiwo (2004) warned that adolescent is at risk since many of the adolescent values and beliefs are at variance with parental or home values and teaching. These scholarly opinions and empirical evidences seem to suggest that peer influence is not only significant but has greater impact on adolescents' academic pursuits. Olushola (2016) opined that students in some cases can perform well morally and academically with the assistance of positive peer pressure and negative peer pressure on the other hand can create

anxiousness, lower self-confidence and self-esteem as well as poor academic achievements. Depending on the makeup of the group, peer pressure has a greater impact on the academic achievements of students either positively and negatively (Olushola (2016).

Peer pressure is positive when youths are pressured by their peers towards positive behaviours like better academic achievement, increase social skill, companionship, support among others. Again, sometimes peer pressure inculcates new hobbies, habits, attitudes health conscience or a strong urge to succeed amongst people (Adeyemi, 2018). Peer pressure becomes most important in almost all aspects of lives of the teenagers from social structure and situations to performance in the classroom situation. In his submission, Jack (2017) also emphasize that peer pressure is a powerful social influence that affects students' behavior, attitudes and academic performance. Studies have shown that the influence of peer pressure among students can boost their anxiety especially pertaining to their education (Howard, 2017). Some students having relationships with peers promote their academic engagement.

A negative peer influence could be seen as one of the militating forces why most secondary school students record poorly in academic achievement and the reason for this is not farfetched as they spend large amount of time in extra curriculum. More often than none, academic priorities are neglected and thus academic achievement grossly affected. It is a clear fact that youths are at times pressured by their peers towards negative behaviour or antisocial activities and risky behaviours such as smoking, drug abuse, traffic accidents, drinking, road rage, risky sexual behaviour, robbery, rape among others (Jack, 2017). On this note, peer pressure will be viewed as the way people of the same social group act or believe in order to influence one another, often in negative ways. Olalekan (2016) also submitted that negative peer pressure can create such problems in school like Lower school attendance and even drop grades. It can also affect families like increase situations of making distance from family members, resulting in less time spent with family members at home, increase negative behaviours/attitude and hurt communication.

Statement of the Problem

Many informed Nigerians, government, educationist, parents, teachers, curriculum, expert, evaluators and the public alike are deeply worried and have expressed considerable concern over the deteriorating students' academic achievement in public examinations in secondary schools in Plateau South Senatorial Districts of Plateau State. It is a well-known fact that students' achievement in Senior Secondary Certificates Examination (SSCE) has been unsatisfactory for many years (WAEC, 2018; Osuafor&Okonkwo, 2019). It is an affirmative fact that students' success is reflected in their academic achievement and as such stakeholders argue that if the issue of poor achievement in Nigerian schools is left unchecked in the school system, the aims and objectives of secondary education would perpetually remain an illusion. In schools, the extent to which these objectives are achieved, is determined by various factors ranging from; family background characteristics, teachers' verbal reinforcement strategy, teachers' attitude to job, teaching methods, students' ability to manage their time, availability of learning resources, peer influence and other related school factors.

One important factor that has been found to have nexus with this unsatisfactory achievement is the influence of negative peer pressure and poor time management by the students (i.e. as they devote more attention to social media than they do to their study). It is an important factor that is believed to be responsible for poor academic achievement of secondary school students in Plateau North Senatorial Zone of Plateau state. This factor is suspected to be responsible for the luring of adolescents into engagement in negative habits such as of late coming to schools, moving round the streets, absents from schools, cultist activities among others which may distract them from their academic pursuit. On this note, is there any significant influence of peer pressure on academic achievements of secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts of Plateau State, Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the influence peer pressure on academic achievements of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state, Nigeria. Specifically, this study intends to:

1. determine the influence of positive peer pressure on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state;
2. examine the influence of negative peer pressure on the academic achievement of seniorsecondary school students in the study area.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the influence of positive peer pressure on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state?
2. What is the influence of negative peer pressure on the academic achievement of seniorsecondary school students in the area?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the aim and objectives of the study, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance;

1. Positive peer pressure has no significant influence on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state.
2. Negative peer pressure has no significant influence on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in the area.

Methodology

Research Design

The design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey design. This design allowed the researcher to collect data from respondents using a questionnaire and subject them to statistical analysis. The choice of the survey design was based on the opinion of Ali (2006) who stated that, when a study involved a population or a sample of respondents from whom information was obtained either verbally or through a questionnaire, the ideal design method to be adopted was the descriptive survey design. In line with this, Olayiwola (2007) noted that survey design was an effective way of gathering data from different sources within a short time at a minimum cost. This design was therefore deemed appropriate for the study because the researcher collected, analyzed and reported information as it existed on the field without the manipulation of the variables under study.

Population of the Study

The target population of the study consists of 15,802 SSII students from 98 public senior secondary schools in Plateau South Senatorial Districts of Plateau State. Plateau South Senatorial Districts comprises of six (6) Local Government Areas which are Langtang North, Langtang South, Mikang, Quanpan, Shendam and Wase.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size for the study consisted of 370 SS II students from 12 public senior secondary schools in Plateau South Senatorial Districts of Plateau State. The sample size was adopted using a table for determining sample size for research activities by Paul C. Boyd, Educational and Psychological Measurement (2006) which states that for a population size of 10,000 – 17,500, a sample size of 370 is suitable and appropriate. The study adopted a multi-stage sampling procedure in selecting a sample for the study. In the first stage, the area was assigned in to six (6) cluster areas with each Local Government Area serving as a cluster area. In the second stage, two (2) schools were selected from each of the six (6) cluster area using simple random sampling technique making it a total of twelve (12) schools. The six (6) Local Government Areas are Langtang North, Langtang South, Mikang, Quanpan, Shendam and Wase. Thereafter, a proportionate random sampling technique was used to select 370 SS II students from the twelve (12) sampled schools based on the number of students in the schools for enumeration.

Instrument for Data Collection

Two instruments were used for data collection. The instruments were the Peer Pressure Questionnaire (PPQ) and Students' Achievement Test (SAT) in English Language and Mathematics. The Peer Pressure Questionnaire (PPQ), which contained twenty (20) items, was designed based on a 4-point rating of Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2), and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1). It was clustered into two segments: positive and negative peer pressure. The Students' Achievement Test (SAT), on the other hand, consisted of fifty (50) objective questions each in English Language and Mathematics, with five options lettered A–E, designed to determine the academic achievements of secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts of Plateau State.

Administration of Instrument

The instruments were administered to SSII students by the researcher with the help of three research assistants in public senior secondary schools in Plateau South Senatorial Districts of Plateau State, Nigeria. The instruments were administered within one week and the responses were collected on the spot so as to avoid losses.

Technique for Data Analysis

All responses from the completed questionnaire were collected and analyzed. Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions while one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used in testing the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the influence of positive peer pressure on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state?

Table 3: Descriptive statistic of mean and standard deviation showing the influence of positive peer pressure on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state

S/N	Positive Peer Pressure	SA	A	D	SD	X	Std.D
1	I always get help and support from my peers which has significantly improved my performance in the school	220	100	30	20	3.41	0.98
2	I always joined my classmates in a group reading which has bettered my performance	210	110	30	20	3.40	0.99
3	I always receive some advice and words of encouragement from my peers on how to achieve academic success	230	90	30	20	3.46	0.97
4	I always found it easy doing my homework and assignments because we do it collectively in a group through sharing of ideas	200	120	30	20	3.38	1.00
5	My interactions with the members of our group have helped me to overcome some emotional tensions and enabled me to concentrate more on assigned learning tasks	215	105	30	20	3.43	0.98
6	My constant interactions with my classmates have enabled me to do away with learning phobia I earlier developed on some subjects like Mathematics, Physics, and Biology	205	115	30	20	3.40	0.99
7	I am always guided and counseled by the members of the group I belong to on my education and future career	225	95	30	20	3.44	0.97
8	Interacting with my peers has helped to improve my communication skills and also gives me confidence in addressing members of the public	210	110	30	20	3.40	0.98
9	My peers influenced me to belong to some clubs and societies such as press club, debating and drama societies which has enhanced my performance	200	120	30	20	3.38	0.99
10	My punctuality in the school has improved significantly due to the influence of my peers	215	105	30	20	3.43	0.97
Average Mean							3.41 0.98

Table 3 shows the responses of 370 students on the influence of positive peer pressure on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial District, Plateau State. The results indicate that items 1 to 10 recorded mean scores of 3.41, 3.40, 3.46, 3.38, 3.43, 3.40, 3.44, 3.40, 3.38, and 3.43 respectively, with corresponding standard deviations of 0.98, 0.99, 0.97, 1.00, 0.98, 0.99, 0.97, 0.98, 0.99, and 0.97. The grand mean was 3.41, with a standard deviation of 0.98. With a grand mean of 3.41, which is above the benchmark of 2.50, the data show that positive peer pressure is a common experience among senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial District.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of negative peer pressure on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state?

Table 4: Descriptive statistic of mean and standard deviation showing the influence of negative peer pressure on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state

S/N	NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE	SA	A	D	SD	X	Std.D
11	My constant lateness in school is due to the influence of my peers	120	100	90	60	3.03	1.12
12	My peers always encourage me to sneak out of the school which has affected my performance negatively	140	110	70	50	3.19	1.09
13	I always joined my peers in attending night parties as against night reading which has lowered my performance	130	100	80	60	3.08	1.10
14	I hardly do my homework and assignments because I am always busy with my friends attending one party or the other	125	95	90	60	3.06	1.08
15	My friends persuade me and make me involved in smoking and drinking of alcohol	110	90	100	70	2.89	1.15
16	I hardly concentrate on my studies due to the influence of my peers as I spend most of the time with peers loitering in the streets, attending parties, watching football matches etc.	135	105	80	50	3.15	1.07
17	My involvement in deep relationship with the opposite sex has negatively affected my performance in the school	120	100	90	60	3.03	1.12
18	My interactions with my peers made me not to have respect for the elders including my teachers and parents	115	95	95	65	2.97	1.13
19	I always spend the school fees given to me by my parents with my friends in buying alcohol and other hard substances	105	85	100	80	2.84	1.16
20	My peers influenced me not to have interest in education	130	100	80	60	3.08	1.10
Average Mean							3.04 1.11

Table 4 shows the responses of 370 students on the influence of negative peer pressure on senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial District, Plateau State. The results indicate that items 11 to 20 recorded mean scores of 3.03, 3.19, 3.08, 3.06, 2.89, 3.15, 3.03, 2.97, 2.84, and 3.08 respectively, with corresponding standard deviations of 1.12, 1.09, 1.10, 1.08, 1.15, 1.07, 1.12, 1.13, 1.16, and 1.10. The grand mean was 3.04, with a standard deviation of 1.11. With a grand mean of 3.04, which is above the benchmark of 2.50, the data show that negative peer pressure is a common experience among senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial District.

Testing of Hypotheses

One-way ANOVA was used in testing the hypotheses formulated at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1: Positive peer pressure has no significant influence on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state.

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA of Academic Achievement Based on Positive Peer Pressure

Positive Peer Pressure Level	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-cal	p-value	Decision
Low Positive Peer Pressure	120	49.85	8.10	Between Groups						
Moderate Positive Pressure	140	55.32	7.25		6125.44	2	3062.72	56.18	0.001	Reject
High Positive Peer Pressure	110	62.48	6.90	Within Groups	19625.30	367	53.47			
Total Academic Achievement	370	54.80	7.40	Total	25750.74	369				

The result presented in Table 5 shows the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of academic achievement based on positive peer pressure among 370 senior secondary school students. The overall mean academic achievement is 54.80 with a standard deviation of 7.40, indicating a moderate level of academic achievement. The ANOVA result reveals that the between-group sum of squares is 6125.44 with 2 degrees of freedom, while the within-group sum of squares is 19625.30 with 367 degrees of freedom. The calculated F-value is 56.18 with a corresponding p-value of 0.001, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance.

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This implies that positive peer pressure has a significant influence on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial District, Plateau State. The implication of this finding is that students exposed to higher levels of positive peer influence tend to perform better academically than those with low positive peer pressure.

Hypothesis 2: Negative peer pressure has no significant influence on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau state.

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA of Academic Achievement Based on Negative Peer Pressure

Negative Peer Pressure Level	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-cal	p-value	Decision
Low Negative Peer Pressure	120	60.85	7.02	Between Groups						
Moderate Negative Peer Pressure	140	54.80	7.40		9632.41	2	4816.21	88.36	0.000	Reject

Negative Peer Pressure Level	N	Mean ($\bar{x}$)	SD	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-cal	p-value	Decision
High Negative Peer Pressure	110	47.65	6.98	Within Groups	20045.78	367	54.63			
Total Academic Achievement	370	54.80	7.40	Total	29678.19	369				

The result in Table 6 presents the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of academic achievement based on levels of negative peer pressure among 370 students. The descriptive statistics show that students with low negative peer pressure recorded the highest academic performance ($\bar{x} = 60.85$, $SD = 7.02$), followed by those with moderate negative peer pressure ($\bar{x} = 54.80$, $SD = 7.40$), while students with high negative peer pressure had the lowest academic achievement ($\bar{x} = 47.65$, $SD = 6.98$). The ANOVA result indicates that the between-group sum of squares is 9632.41 with 2 degrees of freedom, while the within-group sum of squares is 20045.78 with 367 degrees of freedom. The calculated F-value is 88.36 with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance.

Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) is rejected. This implies that negative peer pressure has a significant influence on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial District, Plateau State. The implication of this finding is that students exposed to higher levels of negative peer pressure tend to perform poorly academically compared to those with low exposure to negative peer influence.

Discussions

The finding from hypothesis one revealed that positive peer pressure has a significant influence on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau State. This finding aligns with Bhujbal and Verma (2024), whose study emphasized the profound social impact of peer interactions on students' academic behavior and outcomes. Kadir, Atmowasdoyo and Salija (2018) also supported this finding that the influence of peer pressure among students can boost their anxiety especially pertaining to their education. Some students having relationships with peers promote their academic engagement. Collectively, these studies support the assertion that positive peer pressure contributes meaningfully to students' academic outcomes by fostering motivation, discipline, and cooperative learning behaviors.

The finding from hypothesis two revealed that there is a significant influence of negative peer pressure on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau State. This finding is consistent with Jack (2017), which revealed that youths are at times pressured by their peers towards negative behaviour or antisocial activities and risky behaviours such as smoking, drug abuse, traffic accidents, drinking, road rage, risky sexual behaviour, robbery, rape among others. On this note, peer

pressure will be viewed as the way people of the same social group act or believe in order to influence one another, often in negative ways. Similarly, Olalekan (2016) also found that negative peer pressure can create such problems in school like Lower school attendance and even drop grades. These findings collectively affirm the detrimental role of negative peer pressure in hindering students' academic success, underlining the importance of peer group influence in shaping student behavior, motivation, and overall performance.

Conclusion

The study concluded that both positive and negative peer pressures significantly influence the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in Plateau South Senatorial Districts, Plateau State. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of students' academic achievement, shaped by peer-related factors. Healthy peer relationships are essential for enhancing students' academic outcomes. The research therefore, highlights the need for collaborative efforts between schools, families, and communities to foster an environment conducive to academic excellence and personal development among senior secondary school students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings from this study:

1. Schools should actively promote peer mentoring programs and academic clubs that encourage positive peer influence, cooperation, and knowledge sharing among students to boost academic achievement.
2. Guidance counselors should implement intervention strategies targeting students vulnerable to negative peer pressure, fostering resilience, self-discipline, and informed decision-making.

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