

## **Relationship Between Peer Group Influence and Academic Performance of Students in English Language in Ilorin Grammar School**

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### **Abstract**

This paper looked into the influence of peer group on the academic performance of secondary students' performance in English language in Ilorin Grammar School, Ilorin. The objectives of the study are to: examine the effect of peer group on student's attitude towards the learning English language, determine the impact of peer group on students' behaviour and identify the impact of peer group on students' academic performance. Descriptive survey design was employed for this study and 150 students were used as sample, using random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection is a questionnaire. Based on the findings from this study, it was concluded that there is a huge relationship between peer group influence and students' attitude towards learning English language. Also, there is a significant relationship between peer group influence and students' academic performance in Ilorin Grammar School, Ilorin. It was recommended that among others that students' should engage with peers who are studious in order to aid them academically. Also, parents should guide and monitor their wards on the peers they associate with in order to prevent them from peer group that can influence them negatively.

**Keywords:** Relationship, Peer Group, Academic Performance, Influence, English Language

### **Introduction**

Educational activities are geared towards ensuring that students gain mastery of educational objectives. In schools, the extent to which these objectives have been met is determined greatly by the interaction of peer groups which could possibly reflect in student's academic performance (Steinberg, 2015).

Peer group plays a large role in the social, emotional and academic development of students. Peer group influence begins at an early age and increases through the teenage years. Thus, understanding the prospects and challenges of peer group is crucial for the productivity of educational processes and the organizational design of school systems in order to improve student's academic performance. Peer group can be seen as a small group of similar age, fairly close friends, sharing the same activities. Castrogiovanni (2012) is of the believe that in its most acceptable form, peer group is a healthy coming-of age intermediary, by which youth

grasp negotiating skills and learn to deal with challenges and to solve problems in a social context.

Adolescents always emulate their vague in whatever form of behaviors they exhibit, particularly that which interest them thus, since socialization only refer to changes in behavior, attitudes having their origin in interaction with other persons and those which occur through integration, a child learn more through interaction with peers. Bierman, (2014) opined that socialization being a life-long process that cannot be limited to the family members alone. As a child grow older and more matured, it becomes more necessary for the external bodies to be involved in his life. The family is not expected to provide all the education required by the growing child.

Lavy and Shlosser (2017) argued that, “for many students, friendships are critical interpersonal vehicle that move them towards psychological growth and maturity, allowing social compassion which influences the development of self-evaluation”. The above statement suggests strongly that there is an unprecedented effects of peer groups in almost all facet of adolescent’s growth. Such effect could be seen in social and emotional lives of young people, which does not end at the above mentioned, but could also manifest in their attitude towards educational activities and careful consideration of these elements has shown that they reflect in the academic performance of students.

Bierman (2014) postulated that the school is an established academic institution in which the behavior of an individual is sharpened to get him equipped for occupational socialization. In the school system, the child gets into the social group of “like minds” and interest. As a result of the various attitudes and skills, knowledge is acquired through role-play. He agreed that peer group as an agent of socialization is the most important socializing agent for the developing child.

This suggest that in its most acceptable form, peer group is a healthy coming-of age intermediary, by which youth grasp negotiating skills and learn to deal with challenges and to solve problems in a social context. Peer group can also act as positive role model, for example, if one is involved with a group of people that are ambitious and working hard to attain high academic goals, one might feel pressured to follow suit to avoid feeling excluded from the group. A negative peer influence could be seen as one of the militating forces why mostly student record poorly in academic performance. The reason for this is not farfetched: they

spends large amount of time on extra curriculum. More often than none, academic priorities are neglected and thus academic performances are grossly affected. (Castrogiovanni, 2012).

Academic performance refers to excellence in all academic discipline. Steinberg (2015) posits that academic performance encompasses students' ability and performance; it is multi-dimensional; it is intricately associated to human growth and cognitive, emotional and social physical development. Academic performance also refers to how well a student is accomplishing his tasks and studies. There should be an interrelated relationship between peer group and academic performance. It is believed that student's academic performance correlates with the group he or she belongs. Peer influence can be either positive or negative. If a student is influenced negatively by peer, it affects his or her academic performance. Nevertheless, stronger student do have an impact on their peers and actually help improve their overall academic performance. Lashbrook (2010) revealed that positive peer influence on academic performance depends on person's self-identity, self-esteem and self-reliance. Peer influence can as well inspire student's academic vigor and motivation for achievement.

According to Olalekan (2016), 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 evident 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. Olalekan (2016) wrote that the nature of a peer group determines the impact on the motivation of and achievements of its members. 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.

Advanced Learners Dictionary, (2001) defined peer group as a group of people of same age or social status. The peer group is the first social group outside the home in which the child attempts to gain acceptance and recognition. Peer group is an important influence throughout one's life but they are more critical during the developmental years of childhood and adolescence.

According to Santrock (2010), peers are the individuals who are about the same age or maturity level. Ryan (2010) also define peer pressure as when people of your own age encourage or urge you to do something or to keep from doing something else, no matter if you personally want to do it or not. Burns & Darling, (2012) propound that the more subtle form of peer pressure is known as peer influence, and it involves changing one's behavior to meet the perceived expectations of other.

Educators and parents should be aware that peer groups provide a variety of positive experiences for adolescents. Castrogiovanni (2012) cited the following: the opportunity to learn how to interact with others; support in defining identity, interests, abilities and personality; Autonomy without control of adults and parents; Opportunities for witnessing the strategies others use to cope with similar problems, and for observing how effective they are; involved emotional support and ‘ Building and maintaining friendships.

According to Black (2012), peer groups provide a forum where teens construct and reconstruct their identities. Castrogiovanni (2012) stated that at no other stage of development is one’s sense of identity so unstable. Downs & Rose, (2011) agreed that a peer-labeling process may be contributing to the construction of positive identities for some adolescents but negative identities for others. Unfortunately, members of groups may accept negative labels, incorporate them into their identity and through the process of secondary deviance, increase levels of deviant behavior. Teenagers learn about what is acceptable in their social group by “reading” their friends’ reactions to how they act, what they wear and actions, which either encourages or discourages certain behaviors and attitudes. Anxiety can arise when teens try to predict how peers will react, and this anxiety plays a large role in peer influence. Nonetheless, peer group could influence students positively or negatively.

### **Concept of Academic Performance**

Epunam (2019) defined academic performance of a child as the learning outcomes of the child. This includes the knowledge, skills and ideas acquired and obtained through their course of study within and outside the classroom situation. It could be describe as the outcome of determination and hard work of students in academic pursuit. Pandey (2008) defined academic achievement as the performance of the pupils in the subjects they study in the school. This determines the pupils’ status in the class. This gives children an opportunity to develop their talents, improve their grades and prepare for future academic challenges.

Academic performance refers to a person’s performance in a given academic area (e.g reading or language arts, mathematics, science and other areas of human learning). Kathryn (2010) is of the view that academic performance relates to academic subjects a child studies in school and the skills the child is expected to master in each academic curricular activities. It includes excellence in sporting behavior, confidence, communication skills, and others. Steinberger

(2015) posits that academic performance is multidimensional; it is intricately related to human growth and cognitive, emotional and social physical development; it reflects the whole child; it is not related to a single instance, but occurs across time and levels, through a student's life in public school and into post-secondary years and working life. Academic performance refers to how well a student is accomplishing his tasks and studies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on four different theories: Social Learning Theory, Social Bonding Theory, Behaviourism Theory and Social Identify Theory.

#### **Bandura's Social Learning Theory**

Bandura's social learning was developed in 1996. The theory speaks precisely the human interactions involved in learning. Observational or "vicarious" learning is based upon learning by watching then "modeling" or acting similarly to others. If the student views and works with people who appreciate learning by engaging in learning activities, then the student too will engage in learning and might work harder at learning. Peers with positive attitudes and behaviors toward education will allow and teach each other to set goals that include opportunities to learn and achieve. If peer models do not convey positive attitude toward learning, then the students observing these models will not prioritize learning in their own lives. They will learn to prioritize other goals.

#### **Social Bonding Theory**

Oetting and Donnermeyer (1998) quoting social bonding theories suggest that adolescent peer group effects will be stronger in the absence of strong social bonds with family and school. Terry, Hogg, and White (2010) suggested that students try on various identities and adopt the norms that are central to the social identity of the peer group to remain in good standing. Similarly, social exchange theory (Kelley and Thibaut, 2015) argues that friendship and group membership requires fair exchanges (reciprocity), leading to conformity of behavior between friends and group member. Of course, the nature of the relationships of group members greatly influences the nature of this reciprocity (Plickert, Cote and Wellman, 2007). Social network theory suggests that social norms are shaped by information shared by information shared among members of a social system (Scott 2010; Valente 2015). Norms also figure prominently in the literature on persuasion and social marketing. Indeed, social influence is the basis for

two stage communication strategies in which persuasive communications are directed not at the ultimate target, but at opinion leaders whose attitudes and behavior influence others in their social groups (Hastings and Saren 2013).

### **Social Identity Theory**

Social Identity theory proposes that an individual's self – concept is influenced by the “groups” he or she belongs to. Individuals are motivated to attach positive evaluations to their “in-groups” when compared with “out-groups” with whom they do not have a relationship. Positive associations one attached to an ingroup may then extend to having a positive self-concept and high self-esteem. The important role of peer groups in the development of identity must be identified must be monitored within the peer program context to ensure that peer-based programs do not reinforce negative identity and negative role stereotypes associated with the target group. Without monitoring and guidance, participants may begin to dwell on issues and adopt the identity of “being a teenage ‘mum’ or ‘being a gay or lesbian youth’ rather than constructing more positive identity descriptions and roles e.g being a positive role model for others, advocating for equal right (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

### **Behaviorism Theory**

Behaviorism provides one way to explain the association between motivation to learn and peers interactions. In basic behaviorist theories, relationships between people affect learning only as much as people reinforce each other (or not) in the academic arena. For example, if the peer group encourages education and learning, then the individual student within that group will value learning, because the individual is reinforced, or rewarded, for behavior that indicates that learning is valued. Students in peer groups that do not value education lack the stimulation and reinforcement needed to encourage personal learning. These peer groups presumably stimulate and reinforce other values.

Vygotsky (1978) also presented ideas on the facilitation of learning through experiences mediated by other people. In his explanations, the learner cannot reach full potential without the aid of others. The processes of guiding the learner to higher stages of cognitive functioning rely on interactive human relationships. Mentors-for example, teachers or more capable peers- can raise the student's competence through the zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD is defined as the gap between what a student can do alone and what the student can achieve with

assistance. In this view assistance is transitional, a “scaffold” that is removed when it is no longer needed and the student has internalized another’s support.

In summary, varied theories agree that the value and attitudes of the peer group are essential elements in motivation and learning. Students who surround themselves with academically focused, goal-oriented peers will be more likely to appreciate, internalize and exhibit these features themselves.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Children socialize with the people they associate with. Through interaction over many years, acceptable social customs are taught and fostered. Other children as well as adults can have a great impact on broad range of issues in the child’s life including achievement in schools. The research was geared towards having a proper understanding of the way social interaction affect academic achievement. This research therefore aims at investigating the relationship between peer group influence and academic performance of students in English language in Ilorin Grammar School, Ilorin.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general aim of this study is to investigate the correlation between peer group and academic performance of Junior Secondary School students in English. Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the effect of peer group on students’ attitude towards learning.
2. To identify the impact of peer group on students’ academic performance.

### **Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses were formulated for this study

1. There is no significant relationship between peer group and students’ attitude towards learning.
2. There is no significant relationship between peer group and students’ academic performance.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. Descriptive research design is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people or item that are representative of the entire group. This design is useful to collect data on a given population in order to describe or present the facts of the population as it is.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of this study is made up of all Junior Secondary Students in Ilorin Grammar School.

### **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

Simple random sampling technique was used for this study. The sample for this study consists of one hundred (150) students randomly selected from Junior Secondary Students in Ilorin Grammar School.

### **Research Instrument**

The instrument used for data collection is questionnaire. The questionnaire contains items which seek to know the influence of peer group on the academic performance of Junior Secondary School Students in Ilorin Grammar School.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

The validity of an instrument is the extent to which an instrument measure what it purport to measure. The research instrument was validated by the supervisor of the research thoroughly. It was assessed in order to validate the suitability of the language and relevance of the items in addressing the research questions, while bearing in mind the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was made available for scrutiny and comments made on the content validity. The input of the supervisor shaped the present state of the questionnaire. Reliability of an instrument is the extent to which an instrument yields consistent scores when administered over a number of times. Test-retest method was used in testing the reliability of the instrument.

### **Procedure for data collection**

The direct delivery and retrieval method was employed in the administration of the instrument. The administration of the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher by going to the school



under investigation to administer the questionnaire to the students. After seeking permission from the school authority, the copies of the questionnaire were given to the students during school hours and they were guided on how to respond to the items on the questionnaire. The respondents were assured of confidentiality on whatever information supplied. After each of the respondents finished responding to the questionnaire given to them, the researcher retrieved the questionnaire from them immediately.

### Method of Data Analysis

The researcher assembled the copies of the administered questionnaire for analysis. The hypotheses were tested using Chi square ( $X^2$ ) calculation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### Testing of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis I:** There will be no significant relationship between peer group and students' attitude towards learning.

#### Chi-Square table for Hypothesis I

S/N	ITEMS	X	Y	TOTAL
1.	Peer group affects student's interest in learning	113	37	150
2.	Student's readiness to learn in the classroom is impacted by the peer group he/she belongs.	116	34	150
3.	Student who keeps studious peers often shows seriousness towards learning	96	54	150
4.	Friends who often absent in class do influence their peers to do so, thus affect their attitude towards learning	113	37	150
5.	A disciplined peer group encourages student to be stern towards learning in the classroom	109	41	150

#### Chi-Square ( $X^2$ ) Table and Calculation for hypothesis 1

$X^2$ Calculated Value	Critical value	Degree of Freedom	Level of significant	Comment
22.73	9.488	4	0.05	Rejected

From the table, having calculated the  $x^2$  for a value of 22.73 and critical value been 9.488 a 4 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significant, it was observed that the  $x^2$  calculated value is greater than the critical  $x^2$  value. Since the  $x^2$  calculated value is greater than the critical value ( $22.73 > 9.488$ ), therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant

relationship between peer group and students' attitude towards learning is rejected. This implies that there is a significant relationship between peer group and students' attitude towards learning.

**Hypothesis II: There will be no significant relationship between peer group and students' academic performance.**

**Chi-Square table for Hypothesis II**

S/N	Items	X	Y	TOTAL
1.	The peer group a student relates with affects his/her interest towards academics, hence affects performance	120	30	150
2.	A peer group who engages in group discussion during classwork bring about improved academic performance in students	105	45	150
3.	Study habit of student is influenced by the peer he/she associates with, hence affects student's performance	113	37	150
4.	Student who belongs to peer group with delinquency often exhibit non-challant attitude towards their academics which in turns affects their performance	110	40	150
5.	Disruptive peer group negatively affects student's academic performance in school	120	30	150

**Chi-square ( $x^2$ ) Table and Calculation for hypothesis II**

$X^2$ Calculated Value	Critical value	Degree of Freedom	Level of significant	Comment
14.35	9.488	4	0.05	Rejected

From Table 4.2.9, having calculated the  $x^2$  for a value of 14.35 and critical value been 9.488 at 4 degree of freedom and 0.05 level of significant, it was observed that the  $x^2$  calculated value is greater than the critical  $x^2$  value. Since the  $x^2$  calculated value is greater than the critical value ( $14.35 > 9.488$ ), therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between peer group and students' academic performance is rejected. This denotes that there is a significant relationship between peer group and students' academic performance.

**Discussion of Findings**

Result from the study reveals that there is a significant relationship between peer group and students' attitude towards learning. This agrees with Ryan (2010) who noted that associating with friends who have a positive attitude towards school enhanced students' satisfaction with

school and their motivation to learn, whereas associating with friends who have a negative attitude towards school decreased it.

Furthermore, the result from this study reveals that there is a significant relationship between peer group and students' academic performance. This corroborates Wentzel and Caldwell (2017) who found the reciprocated friendships, peer acceptance and group membership are significantly related to academic performance.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings from this study, it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between peer group and students' attitude towards learning in Ilorin Grammar School, Ilorin. Also, there is a significant relationship between peer group and students' academic performance in Ilorin Grammar School, Ilorin.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the finding from this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Students should ensure they engage with peers who are studious in order to aid them academically.
2. Parents should also guide and monitor their wards on the peers they associate with in order to prevent them from peer group that can influence them negatively.
3. Students should desist from peer groups that promote antisocial behaviors and delinquency in schools so as for them not to be negatively influenced.
4. School authorities should check disruptive behaviors among students and students who are found culpable of such should be penalized accordingly so as to serve as deterrent to other students from mingling with such groups.
5. The government and Ministries of education should ensure that trained counselors are posted in all schools so as to provide preventive counseling services and modify the behaviors of student who may have been negatively influenced by peers.
6. School counselors should play a prominent role in the matter of peer group influence by organizing lectures, seminars, career talk and symposiums that can create awareness on influence of peer group on academic performance of students. This will help in

enlightening the students more on how peer group can influence them and will guide them in choosing peers they relate with.

7. Government, Ministries of education as well as school administrators should ensure a conducive learning environment for students in schools so as to reinforce students' interest in learning which will reduce the tendency of students joining bad groups. This will help in enhancing students' academic performance.

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