

Peer Group Influence on Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students in Faculty of Education, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria

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Doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v7i3p1

Abstract: The study investigated the influence of peer groups on academic performance of undergraduate students of Faculty of Education, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria. A total of 125 students were selected through a systematic random sampling method for the study. Data were collected by administration of structured questionnaire to respondents complemented by interview and group discussion and analysed by the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency count, frequency distribution and percentage. Results showed that majority (64.0%) of the students were males who were mostly (80.0%) slightly above the age of 22 years and affiliated to campus social peer groups (48.0%). Almost all (97.0%) of the learners utilised information provided by peers and adopted peer group behaviours (55.0%). Disengaged peer members experienced abandonment (52.0%), mockery (80.0%) and negative academic performance (80.0%). Pooled from the findings, most of the learners (90.0%) performed academically above average. In conclusion, it could be stated that most of the peers studied were males that were slightly in their adolescence stage who affiliated to campus social peer groups, and utilised information which modified their behaviours. The peer groups' interactions influenced learners' academic performance positively. Based on the results, it is strongly recommended that parents, teachers and counsellors should properly advise students on their choices of peer groups to associate with in order to be successful career-wise.

Keywords: Academic, Group, Influence, Learners, Maiduguri, Nigeria, Peers, Performance

1. Introduction

Peer group in education can be referred to as a group of pupils or students that are within the same age range who possess similar interests and are individuals of the same social stratum. Filade et al. (2019) reported that peer group has significant role in transforming pupils or students in understanding the challenges and prospects in improving their educational pursuits through a well organised schooling system. This normally involves process of interactions which is generally achieved through what is commonly referred to as socialisation. The latter is made-up of two phases namely, primary and secondary. Although Tome and Gaspar de Matos (2012) asserted that association with parents which connotes the primary socialisation had not shown any expected mediation effects on peers, but negative involvement or relationship with peers which entails secondary socialisation seemed to be more connected with risk behaviours. Filade et al. (2019) confirmed that this is more pronounced in primary and secondary schools, and that a significant correlation was established between peer group and academic performance of students. However, this was more seen among undergraduate students than any other group. In addition, several studies like Vandell (2000), Sussman et al. (2007), Olalekan (2016), Uzezi and Deya (2017),

Mosha (2017) and Afolabi (2019) all agreed on the fact that peer group played pivot roles in influencing the academic performance of fellow peers.

There are a variety of institutions of learning for minors in Nigeria ranging from public and private primary and secondary schools that include both religious and conventional organised systems. Among few are Islamiyya schools meant for Muslims children, and Sunday schools attended by the Christian children. These organised religious classes are usually for grooming or inculcating good moral values into the children at an early age. Others are remedial schools, Interim Joint Matriculation Board (IJMB), Diploma and National Certificate of Education (NCE) classes and over 100 universities located in various parts of the country. What is so peculiar to these institutions of learning is that of serving as medium of transition from childhood stage for minors to adulthood in which supposedly parents ought to have played significant role in properly guiding them, but due to their absence from homes, this is usually lacking. However, Munoz-Hurtado (2018) emphasised the position of teachers' role in this importance phase. Specifically, teachers should play the function of cooperative mode of teaching, rendering proper guidance and counselling, and adopting parental roles in order for minors to achieve meaningful academic goals. The end product of these parental and teachers' interventions in the lives of these pupils or students could be geared towards moulding them to be morally sound and academically successful so that they can immensely contribute to the societal improvement generally.

As a result of low parental and teachers' interference in the lives of these minors, a huge moral decadence has been observed among students nowadays. This is seen in the uprising in the cases of juvenile moral bankruptcy, manifesting in the form of rampart rape cases, armed robbery, gambling, prostitution, drug abuse, cultism, among several others, leading to low performance among the minors due to peer influence. This led to a growing concern among educationists, parents and teachers over a decline in the standard of education in the country. And a significant paucity of information has been observed in this area. In this regard, this study attempted to investigate the classes of peer groups, and relationship between peer groups and academic achievement among undergraduate students of Faculty of Education, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri, Nigeria, with the intent of contributing to the body of literature for proper policymaking towards improving the anomaly.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Area of the Study and Sampling Method

The study was undertaken in the Faculty of Education, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri, located in Borno State, North-Eastern Part of Nigeria, and affected only part iv students considered as the final year. The entire Faculty had five Departments namely, Continuing Education and Extension Services; Education; Library and Information Services; and Physical and Health Education. However, a total of five courses were randomly selected for the survey. They include, Agricultural Education, Business Education, English Education, Economics Education and Mathematics Education. The Faculty had a total of 1424 students as at the period of study. The selected teaching courses had a total of 684 students. Of this number, 25 students were purposely allocated to each course and respondents were selected through systematic random sampling, making a cumulative of 125 students as sample for the study.

2.2 Research Instrument and Data Collection

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire which was segmented into three. The first section had four items and contained demographic information of the respondent. The second section sought respondent's opinion on different classes of peer groups among the undergraduate students. And the third section also had four items which sought to know the relationship between peer group influence and academic performance of undergraduate students. The instrument was validated by relevant senior professionals in the Faculty to check for the authenticity. After slight modifications, the instrument was approved for the study. Data were collected by serving the respondents with the structured questionnaire and in some instances engaging the students in group discussion for clarity. The Faculty staff provided some relevant information pertaining to total courses offered, total Faculty students' number, among others.

2.3 Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics was used for the data analysis. Specifically, frequency count, frequency distribution, mean and percentage were used to achieve the objectives. These were later presented in tables and proper inferences were made and documented.

3. Results and Discussion

This segment of the research tabulates and discusses the findings of this study based on the socio-economic characteristics of the students, types of peer groups among the respondents, and relationship between peer groups and academic performance of the students.

3.1 Age and Gender of the Students

Table 1 shows the result of few of demographic variables of the students studied in the Faculty of Education of the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria. The findings revealed that majority (64.0%) of the respondents were male students slightly above 22 years (80.0%). Female students accounted for only 36.0% of the population in the Faculty. This is an indication that the Faculty was male dominant and within their adolescence age, and therefore, at a prime time for peer group activities which is absolutely influential. In a similar survey by Filade et al. (2019) in Ogun State, Nigeria, a pooled result of 63.8% was reported for accounting for undergraduate students between 20 and 24 years, and slightly above, for peer groups studied.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Students

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	45	36.0
Male	80	64.0
Total	125	100.0
Age (years)		
18-20	03	2.0
21-22	23	18.0
Above 22	100	80.0
Total	125	100.0

Source: Field survey (2012/2013).

3.2 Status of Students' Affiliation to Peer Groups

The distribution of students based on the status of their affiliations to peer groups is shown in table 2. Five categories of peer groups were identified namely, social peer group, cultural peer group, political peer group, those that were affiliated to all these three groups, and lastly, those students who hadn't joined any peer group. Of these peer groups, a larger proportion (48.0%) of them fell within the social peer group, with a total of 39.0% of the students who were in the three active groups at the same time. Although the other three peer groups existed, but they were quite very insignificant, going by their representation values of 2.0%, 2.0% and 9.0%, respectively (see table 2). Mosha (2017) clearly stated that this is the appropriate time to implore the aspect of guidance and counselling to curb or curtail the negative side of bad peer pressure. As this stage of engaging in relationship with peer groups determine the extent of assistance a child receives, close monitoring should be made through adequate guidance.

Table 2: Distribution of Students According to Status of Affiliation to Peer Groups

Type of Peer Group	Frequency	Percentage
Campus social group	60	48.0
Campus political group	03	2.0
Cultural peer group	03	2.0
Affiliated to all groups	48	39.0
Not affiliated to any	11	9.0
Total	125	100.0

Source: Field survey (2012/2013).

3.3 Status of Utilisation of Information by Students in Peer Groups

The students were assessed on the status of utilisation of information from peer groups and adoption of these information in transforming their behavioural attitudes. The findings are presented in table 3. A staggering total of 97.0% of the respondents answered in the affirmative to the question of accessing information from peer group, with only a very negligible few (3.0%) who hadn't access. Similarly,

majority (55.0%) of the students imbibed peer group's behaviours. In other words, the students were transformed by the attitudes of the peer groups, which is why Savolainen et al. (2019) suggested that parents and teachers should properly guide the students by advising them on the types of peer groups to associate with at their adolescence stage, more especially those groups with negative behaviours. The finding of this research on peer group's transformation of members behaviour is consistent with the study of Huang et al. (2014) who discovered that friends and adolescence risky behaviours are strongly correlated. Their study was however, conducted on displays on online and offline associations between peers.

Table 3: Distribution of Students Based on Access to Information and Adoption of Behaviors from Peer Groups

Criterion	Freq.	Percentage
Source of Information		
Access to information	121	97.0
Inaccess to information	04	3.0
Total	125	100.0
Adoption of Behaviour		
Adopted group behaviour	69	55.0
No to group behaviour	56	45.0
Total	125	100.0

Source: Field study (2012/2013).

3.4 Effects of Disengagement of Members from Peer Groups

Generally, failure to cope with the discontinuation of association with peer groups usually are with some aftereffects. These normally manifest in several ways. In this study, these are shown in table 4. There were three major manifestations observed among the dumped students namely, abandonment by peer groups, mockery of the rejected students by peer groups, and failure along the line of academic performance. Of the three major consequences highlighted, those whom their academic performance improved because of the abandonment of the peer groups accounted for 52.0%, while the remaining 48.0% had shown no effect on their performance. Also, those students that were affected as a result of mockery from their peers were 80.0% as against the students that weren't affected. On the aspect of general influence on attitudes of students' association with peer groups, a total of 80.0% affirmed that their involvement with peer groups had enhanced their performance academically. Only 20.0% of the students reported that their association with the peer groups influenced their performance negatively. This is consistent with Olalekan (2016) who stated that peer groups could have both positive and negative effects or outcome on students' performance, depending on whether the peer group joined has tendencies of risky behaviours or not. This opinion was also shared by Uzezi and Deya (2017). In fact, in Mapesa's (2013) earlier study, the importance of peer group was strongly highlighted, that during the transitional stage from childhood to adolescence, peer groups are arguably more essential than counsellors, teachers and parents, as their influence in terms of decision making has a very long-lasting consequence.

Table 4: Distribution of Students According to Abandonment, Effect of Mockery and Influence on Academic Performance

Item	Freq.	Percentage
Abandonment by Peer Group		
Affected performance of students	65	52.0
Had no effects on performance	60	48.0
Total	125	100.0
Effect of Mockery on Students		
Affected students' performance	100	80.0
Had no effect on students	25	20.0
Total	125	100.0
General Effect of Peer Group on Students		
Positively affected my academic performance	100	80.0
Negatively affected my academic performance	25	20.0
Total	125	100.0

Source: Field survey (2012/2013).

3.5 Assessment of the Students' Academic Performance by CGPA

The Cumulative Grade Point Aggregates otherwise referred to as CGPA or Grade Point Aggregates (GPA) are globally the most common criteria for assessing students' performance in tertiary institutions all over the world (Yogendra and Andrew, 2017; Hasan et al., 2017)). Some institutions use 4.00-point count, while others applied the 5.00-point count. Whichever the case, the weight still remains the same depending on the computations applied. In the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria, a 5.00-point count has been in use for quite some time now. The findings are shown in table 5. It could be observed from the results that majority (53.0%) of the students fell within the category of 3.00-4.00 CGPA, indicating that most of the learners on graduation with the same status would obtain a BEd. (Second Class Honours-Lower Division) or (Second Class Honours-Upper Division) Degree, which is considered as students above average performance. About 37.0% of the learners were within CGPA of 2.00-3.00, showing a range of Third Class-Second Class Lower Division Degree. Only a meagre 6.0% of the students would pass out with ordinary Pass Degree, and a total of 4.0% would graduate with a Second-Class Upper Division-First Class Degree or Distinction. Pooling from the findings in table 5, it could be said that a total of 90.0% of the learners performed above average in their courses. By inference, the affiliation of learners to peer groups influenced their performance positively in the Faculty of Education, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria. However, this finding contradicted Foen et al. (2016) report that students' engagement of their non-academic time into other activities like socialising affected their academic performance negatively in Malaysia.

Table 5: Distribution of Students Based on Cumulative Grade Point Aggregates (CGPA) at the Time of Study

Range of CGPA	Freq.	Percentage
- 2.00	08	6.0
2.00 – 3.00	46	37.0
3.00 – 4.00	66	53.0
4.00 – 5.00	05	4.0
Total	125	100.0

Source: Field survey (2012/2013).

4. Conclusion

Concluding from the findings of this study, it could be stated that majority of the students in the Faculty of Education of the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria, were males, with most of them slightly above the age of 22years. Of the peer groups mentioned, a larger proportion of the learners joined Campus Social Group, and almost all the peer group members utilised information from the peers. It was observed that disengaged peers faced abandonment, mockery and negative effects on academic performance. Majority of the learners performed academically above average, signifying that the affiliation of students to social peer groups had influenced the academic performance of students positively. And as it seemed that peer groups play significant role in the transitional stage from adolescence to adulthood, it is strongly recommended that parents, teachers and counsellors should strictly continue to guide students on the choice of appropriate peers to associate within the campus and off-campus so as to be highly successful in their academic pursuits.

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