

The Impact Of Peer Groups On The Academic Achievements Of Secondary School Students

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Abstract: The study investigated the impact of peer groups on the academic achievement of secondary school students. All Government Secondary School of District Mardan constituted population of the study. Through a self-developed questionnaire, data were collected from three secondary school students and was analyzed on simple percentage, Co-relation and Linear Regression. The study demonstrated that educational decisions including school selection and subject selection were strongly affected by members of peer groups, it was therefore recommended that students' should care in making decision regarding peer groups and educational decisions. [Sajjad H, Riasat A, Amir Z, Abdul G., Aamir, S.A., Minhas M. **The Impact of Peer Groups on The Academic Achievements of Secondary School Students.** *J Am Sci* 2013;9(11s):13-16]. (ISSN: 1545-1003). <http://www.jofamericanscience.org>.

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Key words: Peer Groups, educational decisions, academic achievement

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Kang (2006) Peer Group means a small group of friends which have close relations with each other and they have regular interactions. They share views and exchange ideas with each other and do activities in groups. When children take steps into the stage of adolescence, they spend a large amount of time with their friends as compared to their parents. Peer group is a group of people who are equal in some way. Those in a peer group have the same status and are about the same age.

In words Wikipedia it is both a social and a primary group of individuals. Peer group may be defines as a group of individuals through homophile share similarities such as age, background, social and political affiliations. The members of this group are likely to influence the person's beliefs and behavior. These contain hierarchies and distinct pattern of behavior. Eighteen years old are not in a peer group with fourteen years old even though they may be even in the same school, just as teachers do not share students as a peer group.

Peer group shows strong academic attainment, such that strong CGPA, strong aspirations for college, giving much time to homework, strong temperament of competition and participation in co-curricular activities. Socialization and selection strongly contribute to homophile. Socialization is the process of influencing similar attributes of peer group on each other, while selection is the choosing process of friends (<http://www2.kentisd.org/>, 2012).

Kang (2006) in his study quoted B. Sacerdote (2001) that peer group influences are felt more in the elementary and secondary stages of education because of puberty, independence and their experiences in relation. Mukama (2010) have

also examined the effects of non-academic peer groups such as smoking, use of alcohol and crimes.

It is investigated by researchers that peer group do not show differences in qualities, characteristics and in other attributes. Really speaking, they have common and similar features exceedingly. The affiliation among them on the basis of these same features is a force of social dynamism which is called homophile. The beliefs, behavior and attitudes of these peer group show a large scale of outcomes-homogeneity, good chatting, sometimes smoking and drug abuse as compared to student body as a whole.

Peer groups interaction influences individual's socialization directly as well as indirectly. Social reinforcement is the best example. if beliefs and behavior of peer group are once discouraged or negatively received, their redisplaying become difficult or even impossible, but positive acceptance or encouragement to beliefs and behavior can arouse these beliefs and behaviors once again with other friends. But sometimes the ways of influencing are less direct. For instance, modeling process like commitment to do assignment, voicing to a belief, engaging in school new activities etc. these modeling process can bring positive or negative changes in the behavior of peer group. Gossiping, teasing, humor, communication, sharing experiences, exchanging information, interaction with each other's and even motivation in activity based engagement at school for the peer influences (www.education.com, 2012).

Alvarado and Turly (2007) the adolescent behavior is being affected significantly by Peer groups, which are considered the most influential social forces for bringing changes in the behavior –

from ordinary decisions regarding clothing, hairstyle, music, and entertainment, to more significant decisions relating to short and long-term education plans. During the adolescent period, it is argued that peers are more important than parents, teachers, and counselors, and the influencing decisions of peers can have long-lasting consequences on youth. The importance of peer groups is recognized through their choice of neighborhoods, schools, and activities by Parents, that is an attempt for guidance, directions, shaping the destinies and future of their children' friendship selections, which are more helpful in facing the lurking challenges in the adolescence stage of life. Despite, socioeconomic status, it is the desire of parents to get the best possible social networks, mainly during adolescence, when youth are increasingly independent from parents. In the adolescent period a series of decisions are taken in the light of already established goals, that are very helpful in shaping their educational paths in future and peer groups have strong influence on these decision of the youth.

Peer groups are significant in students' academic achievement at different stages of education. It is highly influential for, pre-reading, linguistic skills and high level of commitment for education and training which affects the individual's educational and professional attainments. The results of different research studies have strongly linked higher-achiever to high achievements (Alvarado and Turly, 2007).

It is believed that peer groups characteristics and environment where it operates, affect the behavior and educational attainments of students. Variation in students' educational achievements is due to their peer group effect. Researchers are not of the same opinion on the exact estimation of peer group influences on students' academic achievements. According to (Sacerdote, 2001) peer groups' influence is strong at secondary school level due to the age of peer (Maturity level), while it is weak at college and university level.

Researchers are not of the same opinion regarding the effects of peer group interactions. There are controversies in the very existence and nature of peers' academic interactions. Some of the studies found no significant peers' effects, while some others reported significant effects of peers' interaction on their academic achievements (Sacerdote, 2001)

Various studies have assessed the effects of peer groups in different contexts. The present study studied peer groups effects in family context, which is the student of nuclear and joint family peers and friends, educated and uneducated parents students

peers and friends and their effects on their academic achievement.

1.1.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of peer group on the academic achievement of secondary school students.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Objectives of the study were to;

1. Investigate the impact of peer groups on the academic achievement of students.
2. Investigate the impact of peer groups in academic decisions of students.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The above objectives were tested on following hypotheses;

1. There is a significant impact of peer groups on the academic achievement of students.
2. There is a significant impact of peer groups in academic decisions of students.

RESEACH METHODS

The study was survey type and descriptive in nature. Research problem was investigated with the help of a self-developed questionnaire, containing closed-ended questions. The questionnaire was personally administered by the researcher.

POPULATION

All Government Secondary Schools of District Mardan constituted population for the study. All 10th class students were also the part of the study.

SAMPLING

Raosoft sample size calculator was used for sampling of the study. Thirty Government High Schools (15 Boys, 15 Girls) were selected randomly. Three hundred students (200 Male, 100 Female) were selected for sample group (<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>).

RESULTS

Peer Groups and Students Achievement

Group	No. of students	Pass	Fail	Pass %age
Science	95	76	19	80
Humanities	205	146	59	71
Total	300	222	78	74

The above table shows that the 80% peers of science group were successful in their board examination while 71.21% peers of humanities group

were successful. The results also showed more failure of students belong to humanities group.

Gender wise Students Results

Gender	No. of students	Pass	Fail	Pass %age
Male	200	143	57	71.5
Female	100	79	21	79
Total	300	222	78	74

The above table shows the academic achievement of students. This table illustrate that 71.5% male students have passed their examination while 28.5% were unsuccessful in their attempt. On the other hand female students showed 79% results in the examination which shows that female students performed better than male students. The overall results of the students were quite conducive.

Students School Selection and Peers Effects

Choice Influence	No. of students	Pass	Fail	Pass %age
Parents' Choice	93	75	18	80
Friends Choice	139	99	40	78
Self-Choice	68	48	20	71
Total	300	222	78	74

The above table explains the students' choice for selection of school where 80.64% students passed whose school selection was the choice of their parents, 78.41% students were passed for whom the school was selected by his/her friends while those students who make this choice by their selves become 70.58% successful.

Students Subject Selection and Peers Effects

Parents Choice	146	96	50	66
Friends Choice	94	68	26	72
Self Choice	60	58	02	97
Total	300	222	78	74
Parents Choice	146	96	50	66

The above table shows that 65.75% results of the students whose subjects were the choice of their parents, 72.34% results were shown by those students who selected their subjects by the choice of friends while the students who selected their subjects by their selves showed 96.66% results.

Peer Groups and students' academic achievement

Peer Group	No. of students	Pearson R	R Square	Pass %age
Supportive	75	.703	.494	49.4
Medium	139	.599		.359
Less supportive	86	.520		.270
Total	300	.607	.361	36.1

The above table illustrate that peer groups have significant effect on the academic achievement, regression values shows the different peer groups having different features and formation background affects differently.

Students belong to supportive peer groups have strong and positive co-relation ($R=.703$) to students' academic achievement and explains 49.4% achievement of students. The members of these groups had educational trends and often participate in educational activities. While students belong to Medium groups also shows significant and positive co-relation between the variables, the effects of these peer groups explains 35.9% academic achievement. On the contrary students belong to less supportive or none-supportive groups also have significant co-relation ($R=.520$) and explain up to 27% academic achievement of students.

FINDINGS

Findings of the study illustrated that

1. Pass percentage of science students group were more than the students of humanities group.
2. Gender wise female students performed well as compared to their counterpart. Pass percentage of female students was 79 as compared to 71 of male students.
3. School selection made by parents and friends were found more effective and successful as compared to the selection made by students themselves.
4. On the other hand the decision regarding the subject selection and its results were quite different. The decision made by students was found more effective and successful.
5. Supportive peer group explains up to 49% results of students. This is more than the medium and less supportive peer groups.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Most of the secondary school students in our country are divided into two groups that is the group of science and humanities. The classification of these groups is often made on the basis of student's aptitude and interest. That is why most frequently, the students of science group are better performers in their studies as compared to their counterpart. Therefore it is to conclude that the background studies of science students enable to perform well as compared to the students of humanities.

2. Most of the recent studies had shown the superiority of female students' performance in secondary school examinations. The pass percentage of male students was 71.5 while female students pass result was 79% which showed that female students performed well as compared to male students.

3. School selection made by students' parents was found more effective as compared to the decision made by students themselves and their friends. It is therefore concluded that the decision made by parents in selecting suitable school for their children is better.

4. Students' choice with regards to subjects was found more successful than made by parents and peer group members, which illustrate that the decision of subject selection by the students themselves is more valid and reliable.

5. Members of supportive peer groups explain more achievements as compared to the other two groups. The help and assistance made in right direction increase the value and worth of peer group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Peer groups are very influential in an individual life especially at the adolescence stage. The gap between parents and children allow peers to form a group of their desired members. They make discussions regarding their future and assist each other in this regard. The nature and background of group members affect all the decisions including school selection, subject selection, playground activities and refreshment time. It is therefore recommended that peer groups should be dealt with carefully and counseled in all the respected areas of their studies by the school counselor. Similarly, parents are also advised to give considerable time to their children to understand their needs.

2. The selection of school is an important decision in a student's academic life. It affects the overall educational life of the student. This decision is often taken by parents themselves at primary level

as the child is not in the position to make choices by his own while at secondary level students often follow others particularly their friends which sometime leads in wrong direction. It is therefore strongly suggested to parents to include their children in consultation for selection proper academic institutions especially at the secondary level and so on and also to encourage them in choosing best institute that is properly fit for the field of study they have selected.

3. Selection of subjects at secondary level is the most important decision taken by a student as it directs him towards specialization in that selected area. It is therefore advised that parents should not force their own will and choice upon children in selection of the subjects but their aptitude and interest and their own choice and mental tendency should be taken into consideration when the stage of subject selection is beforehand.

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10/25/2013