

Relationship between Peer-Group Influence and Moral Activities among in School Adolescents in Kwara State

Uyanne Elizabeth Obiageli University of Ilorin, Nigeria

Olokooba Issa Nasiru University of Ilorin, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents in Ilorin South Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to investigate level of in-school adolescent, types of moral actions displayed and relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents in the state. The study adopted descriptive design. The sample for the study was one hundred and fifty (150) students in selected schools using simple random sampling technique. Two questionnaires were validated by experts. The reliability of the instruments was obtained through the test-retest method. The data collected were analyzed using PPMC and a reliability index of 0.73 was obtained. The data collected were analyzed using percentages to answer two research questions while null hypothesis was tested using Chi-square at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study revealed that the level of in-school adolescent on peer group influence is high. It was revealed from the finding of the study that the main types of moral actions displayed by in-school adolescent was social contract orientation. The study's finding showed that there was no significant relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents. Based on the findings, recommendations were made among others that teachers should pay more attention to students' moral development in order to achieve the goals of senior secondary school.

Keywords

Influence; Peer-group; Moral Activities; In-school Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Children go from their immediate family to child care centers, schools, and the community as a whole as they grow older. They begin to create bonds, friendships, and play groups as a result of this. Friendships between children begin to form at the age of three, and they have a longer-lasting impact. According to Newton and Mwisukha (2009) children are grouped with children their own age from the moment they attend school at a young age until they graduate at a later age (18 years or so). This means that, outside of relatives, they have limited contact with others who are older or

younger. The adolescent years are a time of fast physical, emotional, and social change. At this point of life, the individual develops a need to form peer relationships, which might stifle family relationships to some level. Adolescents are more involved and personal with their classmates, sharing and influencing each other's thoughts and feelings (Coleman, 2014). Furthermore, they are taught things at school that are frequently unrelated to their major social interests and demands (UNESCO, 2010). As a result, they are predisposed to peer group influence, which may have an impact on their future lives.

According to Ryan (2000), a peer group is a social group made up of people with similar social position who have similar interests. Adolescent peer groups are made up of people who are roughly the same age. For diverse social circumstances, adolescents begin looking for companions, classmates, and even teams (Eder & Nenga, 2003). Adolescents' social and emotional development is heavily influenced by their peers (Allen, McGarland & Elhaney, 2005). Their effect begins at a young age and grows throughout adolescence; having and relying on friends is natural, healthy, and vital for adolescents as they develop and mature. A peer might be somebody you look up to in terms of behaviour or someone you believe is your age or aptitude level (Hardcastle, 2002). On the other side, the phrase "pressure" refers to the process of persuading individuals to do something they would not otherwise do.

Peer pressure, according to Hartney (2011), refers to the influences that peers can have on one another. Peer pressure is when persons in the same social group (such as age, grade, or status) exert emotional or mental pressure on one other to act or behave in a similar way (Weinfield, 2010). Peer pressure is defined by Jones (2010) as the ability of persons of the same social rank or age to influence another person of the same age. Although it is most commonly associated with adolescents, its influence is not limited to them. Adults, adolescents, young adults, and children can all be seen doing activities to get acceptance from their peers. Peer pressure is frequently linked to episodes of adolescence risk taking (such as delinquency, drug misuse, and sexual behaviors) since these behaviors are frequently carried out in the presence of peers. When kids are pressured by their peers to engage in positive behaviour, it can have a positive influence (Kellie, 2013).

Peers, on the other hand, can have a negative impact. They may encourage one another to skip courses, steal, cheat, use drugs or alcohol, or engage in other harmful activities. Peer pressure led to the use of drugs or alcohol by the majority of adolescents with substance misuse disorders. Negative peer pressure can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including joining a group of people who drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or use Indian hemp, among other things. It could also influence the decision to have a boyfriend or girlfriend. Peer pressure encourages youth to loiter in the streets, watch movies, and attend parties during school hours, and to tape as an alternative to stealing, which can lead to armed robberies (Arief, 2011).

Peer pressure exists in the workplace, at school, and in society, and it affects people of all ages. Peer pressure can affect people in a variety of ways, but the focus here is on how it effects the moral conduct of in-school adolescents. Peer pressure can have a good effect by challenging or motivating one to make better decisions in a given setting. Peer pressure can also lead to people doing things that aren't in line with their own sense of right and wrong. In other words, negative peer pressure occurs when one is compelled to perform actions that are frowned upon by others.

Peer pressure, according to Black (2012), is the influence exerted by a peer group, observers, or individuals to persuade others to change their views, values, or behaviors in order to comply with group norms. The influence of a social group on an individual is known as peer pressure. Peer pressure, according to Babawale (2015), refers to how members of the same social group act or think in order to affect one another, frequently negatively. Everyone has to cope with peer pressure at some point in their lives. The individual's self-concept and

place in the world play a larger role in how successful they are in dealing with peer pressure (Ademorokun, 2013). Peer pressure is defined as when individuals one's age encourage or compel one to do or refrain from doing something, regardless of the person's willingness to do so or not (Uche, 2010). According to Seel (2009), peer pressure is a set of group dynamics in which a group with which one feels at ease can override personal habits, individual moral inhibitions, or idiosyncratic inclinations in order to impose a group standard, attitude, or behaviour.

Peer pressure is when persons in the same social group (such as the same age group or status) exert emotional or mental pressure on each other to act or behave in a similar way (Ryan, 2015). Peer pressure, also known as peer influence, is the act of altering one's behaviour in order to satisfy the expectations of others (Adeagbo, 2013). When it comes to critical topics such as moral principles, parents continue to have a greater influence than peers (Black, 2012). Peer pressure might exist in the workplace, at school, or in the community at large. It can affect persons of all ages and from all walks of life. Peer pressure has a considerably bigger impact on the behaviour of in-school adolescents than any other factor, according to research such as peer cluster theory (Adetunji, 2003).

Peer groups are thought to be a major source of influence during adolescence in today's society. Peer groups have become an increasingly essential context in which adolescents spend their time (Chauhan, 2007). Peer pressure, according to Adeagbo (2013), can lead to drug and alcohol experimentation, sex, skipping school, and other high-risk behaviors. If a child's appearance, clothes, or attitude changes abruptly, especially if it is accompanied by

covert behaviour, he or she may be submitting to peer pressure (Kirk, 2014).

Peer pressure affects everyone at some point in their lives. Peer pressure can be positive or negative, but it is mostly depicted as negative. Friends, family, and others can have a detrimental or beneficial impact on adolescents (Ryan, 2015). Doing well in school, eating properly, exercising, and participating in after-school programs are all positive consequences of social pressure. Peer pressure has negative consequences such as drug use, smoking, theft, skipping class, having sex, drinking alcohol, physical violence, and performing poorly in school (Ogunwale, 2013).

According to Oduwale (2014), a person's peer group has a big impact on their intellectual and psychological growth. The study backs up the idea that peer groups might influence moral behaviour in one way or another (Shaffer, 1999). According to academics such as Eisenberg (2008), Carlo and Murphy (2014), and VanCourt (2015), psychologists have argued that developing or growing cognitive capacities and knowledge of others will lead to higher levels of moral behaviour. As a result, moral thinking is a major subject of moral behaviour research.

Moral reasoning is described as the cognitive processes involved in comprehending other people's behaviour. Consider how one feels about his personal interactions with others. To comprehend adolescence behavioral choices, it is necessary to grasp that the choices people make for behaviour reflect in part how they individually reason about their behaviour. Moral identity is the fundamental source of moral commitment throughout life, according to everything psychologists have learned from studying children's moral development. It is promoted by many social pressures that lead a child in the same

general direction. For the message to stick, children must hear it often (Damon, 2013).

Moral action, according to Steinberg (2010), entails free choice, purity, liberty, honesty, and meaning. According to Steinberg (2010), moral action entails taking the required efforts to turn one's intention to do the right thing into reality. Moral ownership, moral efficacy, and moral courage are all examples of this. An immoral action, on the other hand, is one that involves corruption and deception and frequently results in negative repercussions. Moral behaviour is highly subjective, but it is often defined as a person's understanding of social and cultural norms, as well as their ability to conduct good deeds through unselfish activities. Honesty, charitable giving, and avoiding unfavorable situations are examples of moral behaviour. Moral growth takes place in stages and is highly influenced by a combination of parental, communal, and social exposures to moral standards (Sacerdote, 2011).

The impact of peer groups on students' moral behaviour in secondary schools has long been a source of worry among parents, educators, psychologists, sociologists, counselors, and even the government. According to Palmer (2000), there has been a backlash against some students' behaviour in several secondary schools, and stakeholders are wondering what is causing this indiscipline. According to Barbour (2010), the influence of peer groups on moral behaviour is substantial during adolescence. Many youngsters have been found to derail in constructive moral behaviors not because they lack a teacher or mentor, but because they are concerned that they will not be accepted by their peers or that they will be negatively influenced. Many students have been carried out on the adolescent's peer group impact, moral acts, and other closely associated concerns in Nigeria, for example.

According to reports, the moral level of in-school adolescents has deteriorated in Nigerian secondary schools in general, and in Ilorin South, Kwara State in particular. Parents, teachers, and curriculum specialists have all raised worry about the deterioration of moral standards and poor value judgment. Teachers and school counselors have also expressed their dissatisfaction with adolescent behaviour in the classroom. These individuals often point accusing fingers at negative peer pressure as the cause of poor academic performance. These characteristics are suspected of seducing adolescents into harmful habits such as binge drinking, smoking Indian hemp, engaging in unhealthy sexual behaviour, cultist activities, and other maladaptive behaviors that divert their attention away from scholastic pursuits. These unhealthy adolescent behaviors, which have a negative impact on moral standard, prompted the researcher to look at the relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents in Ilorin South Local Government Area, Kwara State.

Purpose of the Study

This study is mainly designed to investigate the relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents in Kwara State. Furthermore, the study intends to determine the:

- a) level of in-school adolescent on peer group influence in Kwara State;
- b) types of moral actions displayed by in-school adolescent in Kwara State;
- c) relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents in Kwara State.

Research Questions

The study would provide answers to the following questions:

- a) What is the level of in-school adolescent on peer group influence in Kwara State?
- b) What are the types of moral actions displayed by in-school adolescent in Kwara State?
- c) Is there any relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents in Kwara State?

Research Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis would be tested in the course of the study:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents in Kwara State.

RESEARCH METHOD

Descriptive research design was used for this study. The population for this study were secondary school students in Ilorin. There are 74 senior secondary schools in Ilorin South Local Government Area of Kwara State. However, 10 senior secondary schools were randomly selected. The target population of this study were all senior secondary school three (SSS III) in Kwara State. Simple random sample techniques were used to sample 150 students.

Two questionnaires were used to elicit response from the respondents. The first questionnaire was used to elicit information on the respondent's peer group influence. The peer group influence questionnaire was used to elicit information on level of peer group influence and contain 20 items. The questionnaire was based on a four-point Likert scale 1 – 4. A respondent is expected to make a tick in one of the four Likert-type options of Strongly Agree (awarded 4 points), Agree (awarded 3 points), Disagree (awarded 2 points) and Strongly Disagree (awarded 1 point) according to how the statement of each item best describes his or

her peer group influence. The result of the peer group influence was collated by the researcher and used as the level of peer group influence of the respondents. Since the instrument contains 20 items, the maximum score was calculated as $4 \times 20 = 80$ points while the least point was calculated as $1 \times 20 = 20$ points, while range score of the score that can be obtained from the questionnaire was 60. The range was divided by the two levels of peer group influence (high, and low) and the cut off will be 30. However, students' score between 20 – 50 points was regarded as low peer group influence, while score between 51 – 80 points was regarded as high peer group influence.

While the second questionnaire was used to elicit information on the moral action of senior secondary school students. The moral action questionnaire was a structure type in which the respondents were expected to respond "Agree" or "Disagree" and "Not Sure". The research question 1 and 2 were answered using percentage, while the research question with corresponding hypothesis was tested using the Chi-square at 0.05 level of significant. The questionnaires were validated by two experts in the Test and Measurement unit in the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin. The reliability of the instrument was obtained through the test-retest method. The data collected were analyzed using PPMC and a reliability index of 0.73 was obtained. It was considered moderate for the study.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What is the level of in-school adolescent on peer group influence in Kwara State?

Results in Table 1 present the responses of the respondents to items that sought information on level of in-school adolescent

Table 1. Percentage Analysis of Level of In-school Adolescent on Peer Group Influence

Peer Group Influence	Frequency	Percent
High	87	58.0
Low	63	42.0
Total	150	100.0

Source: obtained from primary data, 2020.

Table 2. Percentage Analysis of Types of Moral Actions Displayed by In-school Adolescent in Kwara State

Moral Reasoning	Frequency	Percent
Punishment Obedience orientation (b)	41	27.3
Personal reward orientation (c)	7	4.7
Good boy-nice girl orientation (a)	2	1.3
Law and order orientation (c)	23	15.3
Social contract orientation (d)	77	51.4
Universal ethical principal orientation (-)	-	-
Total	150	100.0

Source: obtained from primary data, 2020.

on peer group influence. The results on the table indicate that the level of in-school adolescent on peer group influence in Kwara State is high.

Research Question 2: What are the types of moral actions displayed by in-school adolescent in Kwara State?

Results in Table 2 present the responses of the respondents to items that sought information on types of moral actions displayed by in-school adolescent. The results on Table 2 indicate that the main types of moral actions displayed by in-school adolescent in Kwara State was social contract orientation.

Testing of Research Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents in Kwara State.

Table 3 shows that the calculated Cal. X²-value is 5.98 with calculated significance of .21 computed at critical alpha level of

significance 0.05. Since the calculated significant (.21) is greater than the critical alpha level of significance (0.05), this implies that the null hypothesis is therefore not rejected, that is there was no significant relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents in Kwara State.

DISCUSSION

Finding revealed that the level of in-school adolescent on peer group influence in Kwara State is high. This finding is in line with that of Zaijl, Tepoel, duBois-Reymond, Ravesloot and Meulman (2000) found that children and teens from families with high social status spend more time with peer group than those from families of lower social status. Also, Okorie (2014) reported that there exists low level of peer pressure among in-school adolescent.

Finding further indicated that the main types of moral actions displayed by in-school adolescent in Kwara State was social contract orientation. A possible reason for

Table 3. Chi-square Analysis of Relationship between Peer Group Influence and Moral Activities among In-school Adolescents in Kwara State

Moral Action		Peer Group		df	Cal. X ² value	Cal. Sig. (2-sided)	Decision
		High	Low				
Punishment (b)	Observed	23	18	4	5.98	.21	Not Rejected
	Expected	23.8	17.2				
Personal Reward (c)	Observed	3	4				
	Expected	4.1	2.9				
Good boy-nice girl (a)	Observed	0	2				
	Expected	1.2	8				
Law and order (c)	Observed	11	12				
	Expected	13.3	9.7				
Social contract (d)	Observed	50	27				
	Expected	44.7	32.3				
Total	Observed	87	63				
	Expected	87.0	63				

$p > 0.05$

this study could be because most adolescents are not ready to adhere to universal principles. This finding is in line with that of Kohlberg (1984) who found that very few adolescents were at post-conventional level of moral reasoning. Also, Zaman (2010) found that very few adolescents were at post-conventional level of moral reasoning.

Another finding revealed that there was no significant relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-school adolescents in Kwara State. This finding is in consonance with that of Zimba (1994) who reported that there was no significant peer group influence on moral actions among in-school adolescent in Zambia. Also, Padilla-Walker and Carlo (2006) who's finding revealed that there is no relationship between appropriate parental reactions and moral conventional social domains.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that there was no significant relationship between peer group influence and moral activities among in-

school adolescents in Kwara State. It recommended that government should organize workshops and conferences for students, teachers and school administrators on how to enhance discipline in secondary schools. Also, immoral acts among senior secondary school in Kwara State, if not checked, can lead to societal vices because of this government should provide effective guidance and counselling services in the schools.

Teachers in senior secondary school should be implored to pay more attention on the students' moral development in order to achieve the goals of senior secondary school. The teachers and parents should try to monitor the students on the type of videos and films that the students view while in the school and at home. There should be effective use of social media; teachers should make use of social media to give assignment, test, research topics and online examinations to the students. The effective usage of social media will reduce the use of social media for immoral acts or immoral behaviors in the society.

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