*Sapientia Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Development Studies (SGOJAHDS), Vol.7 No.4 December, 2024; p.g. 213 – 218; ISSN: 2695-2319 (Print); ISSN: 2695-2327 (Online)*

# INFLUENCE OF PEER GROUP ON ACADEMIC BEHAVIOUR OF PUBLIC SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ENUGU EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE

**PATRICK CHINENYE OKAFOR, Ph.D**
**Department of Educational Foundations**
**Faculty of Education**
**Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University**
**Igbariam Campus, Nigeria**
**pc.okafor@coou.edu.ng**
**+2349039449219**

**&**

**ANIEBO GRACE CHINEME**
**Department of Educational Foundations**
**Faculty of Education**
**Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University**
**Igbariam Campus, Nigeria**
**cg.aniebo@coou.edu.ng**
**+2348033490580**

## ABSTRACT

*This study was on the influence of peer group on academic behavior of public senior secondary school students in Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was adapted as a method of study. The area of study was Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu state. The population of study includes all the senior secondary year one students (SS1) of public secondary schools in Enugu East Local Government area. The sample size consists of 650 students drawn through purposive sampling technique. The reliability of the instrument was obtained using test re test method and the result obtained was analyzed using Pearson product moment of correlation and the result yielded reliability co-efficient of α (0.74). Three briefed research assistants helped in the administration of the instrument and all instruments were returned. The questionnaire was a researcher developed instrument consisting of two clusters to measure the influence of peer group on academic behaviors. The data collected were analyzed using mean scores, standard deviation scores and average mean scores. . Interestingly the findings of study revealed that peer group is a very strong factor in career choice decisions of the adolescents because most if not all depends on their peer for affirmation of the decisions. Furthermore, the study discovered that peer influences cuts across both positive and negative values since both values are known to play out in the life choices and decisions of the adolescents. The following recommendations were proffered and they include; School counsellors are indispensable stakeholder in child socialization because they serve as agents to check the negative influences of peer groups. Secondly, Parents are to monitor the activities of their loved ones especially the influences they receive from peers. Finally, Career workshops and seminars should be encouraged.*

**Keywords: Influence, Peer group, Academic behaviour, Public Schools, Secondary education.**

## INTRODUCTION

Man as a social animal has the tendency to relate to each other and to one another. (Okudo, Okwunalu and Nwankwo, 2023). The tendency to relate to each other have reasons and outcome. The reason for relating to one another include; communication, intimacy, problem solving, relaxation, economic empowerment and fraternity. On the other hand, the outcome could result to clustering which eventually will lead to formation of groups. Okudo, Okwunalu and Nwankwo (2023), stated that groups may be formed based on certain shared characteristics one among which is age and interest. When age is the determinant factor, the group is known as peer group. They are people within the same ideological frame of thinking either because of age factors or common concern. Obi and Okoye (2019) viewed peer group as comprising of people of the same age and ability knitted together by feelings derived by common concern as seekers of what is desirable for the group even when such common concerns conflicts with the norms of the society. It is a phase the members of the group influences to a great extent the decision and visions of the group predisposing them to both positive and negative values because of their common concern. Omotere (2011), Obi and Okoye (2018), Okudo et al noted the following as common concern shared by the peer group. They include, provision of wide range of experience, provides considerable degree of emotional security, provides opportunities for development of loyalties, provides platform for relationships, helps establish attitude, opinions and ideas prevalent among the group, provide standards for behavior. The ideological influence of members of the peer is visibly translated into some common behaviors related to socialization one among which is academic behavior.

Generally academic behavior can be referred to the manner students deal with their studies. It is visible, outward signs that a student is engaged and putting effort into learning. It includes things such as attending class, punctuality, attentiveness, participating in instructional activities, class discussion, doing assignment, accepting responsibility of actions. Organizes and manages academic materials such as school uniform, bag, books, pen and pencil etc. it involves activities done to participate actively in learning exercises. Obi and Okoye (2019), Okudo et al (2023) views academic behaviors basically as actions that helps students perform better or poorly in the school. They noted that it involves ways students reacts to drilling and learning activities taking place in the school. Obi and Okoye further noted that it has a way of determining whether a student will perform poorly or highly in school. It is determined through several means significant among which include the academic goal actions, literatures stated them as cognitive oriented acts that enable learning such as good study habit, ability to memorize, consistent study hour, time table, punctuality to class, attentiveness, doing assignments, copying notes, development of verbal expressions and abilities etc. on the social goals, they include good social interaction, development of self-confidence, good perception of self, cherishing social and moral values, concern and interest about the future, feeling of security, level of calm, interest in other people, behavior stability, sense of co-operation, ability to participate in communal affairs, ability to organize social activities and interaction with friends and peers.

It is important also to state that academic behavior is greatly influenced by a number of socialization variables such as peer group. Bet (2013), Mustapha and Selvaraju (2015) noted that peer interaction influences students in a number of ways including career choice and academic behavior. They maintained that peers influence one another into similar acts. Hashim and Embong (2015) on this note view peer group as a very powerful and potent source of influence on student's behavior. Chireshe (2013) and Okudo et al (2023) collaborated this view stating that most adolescents very often depend on their friends to provide validation of choices that they made. Consequently, they are greatly influenced by the peer. Such influence encroaches on their academic behavior. It is based on the above that the researcher sets out to investigate how peer pressure influences the academic behaviors (cognitive and social goals) of students from Enugu East local Government area of Enugu State.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The society of our time has been noted to be deplorable, depraved and amoral. The effects of these are seen in value depletion rampant in the society and even worst among our young growing children (Okudo, Okwunalu and Obumse, 2023). These have been traced to the ills of Socialization rampant in the society and it influences every aspect of the lives of the young adolescents. Okudo and Obumse (2023) were emphatic stating that through socialization the child is made adept to norms, skills and values in the society . Perri and Damour (2022) remarked that at every stage, age and skill level, children benefit when the agents of socialization help them focus on improving their ability. On the contrary when these go wrong, maladaptation sets in and consequently results to deviance clearly seen in the society. Peer group is a strong agent of the socialization process and they play indisputable roles in the lives of these growing children including their academic behavior. Therefore, the problem of this study put in question format states as follows: what are the influences the peer group have on the academic behavior of growing adolescents from Enugu east local Government area of Enugu State.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of peer group on the academic behaviors or public senior secondary school students from Enugu east local Government area. The study sought specifically to determine the influence peer pressure on the academic behavior (social and cognitive goals) of the students. It looks into the following, namely to determine the influence of:

(1) Peer group on the academic cognitive/goals of the students
(2) Peer group on the social goal of the students

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study and they include

(1) What is the influence of peer group on the academic (cognitive) goals of students?
(2) What is the influence of peer group on the social goals of students?

## METHOD

The descriptive survey design was adapted as a method of study. The area of study was Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State. The population of study includes all the senior secondary year one students (SS1) of public secondary schools in Enugu East Local

Government area. The sample size consists of 650 students drawn through purposive sampling technique. The reliability of the instrument was obtained using test re test method and the result obtained was analyzed using Pearsons product moment of correlation and the result yielded a reliability co-efficient of $\alpha$ (0.74). Three briefed research assistants helped in the administration of the instrument and all instruments were returned. The questionnaire was a researcher developed instrument consisting of two clusters to measure the influence of peer group on academic behaviors. The data collected were analyzed using mean score and average mean scores, values less that 2.50 were rejected as low influence while values above 2.50 were accepted as strong influencing factor of peer group on academic behavior.

**RESULTS**

The data collected from the study were analyzed and summaries presented as follows.

**Research question one:** what are the influences of peer group on the academic (cognitive) goals of students from Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State?

**Table one:** mean scores of peer influence on academic (cognitive) goal.

| S/N | Items on peer influence on academic goals | $\overline{x}$ | SD | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Helps me have good study habit | 3.02 | 0.71 | |
| 2 | Helps me develop ability to memorize | 3.01 | 0.68 | |
| 3 | Agrees on a consistent pattern and time of study hour | 2.98 | 0.74 | |
| 4 | Encourages copying into the hall | 2.59 | 0.70 | |
| 5 | Encourages punctuality | 2.87 | 0.67 | |
| 6 | Encourages attentiveness in class | 2.69 | 0.63 | |
| 7 | Encourages doing assignment together | 2.72 | 0.68 | |
| 8 | Insists on note copying | 2.84 | 0.75 | |
| 9 | Leads me to make noise in class | 2.62 | 0.66 | |
| 10 | Encourages group discussion | 2.75 | 0.65 | |
| | | 2.71 | | |

The table one above indicated that all the items were scored above the mean score of 2.50. including encouraging copying into the hall and make noise in the class. The table further revealed an average mean score of 2.71.

**Research question two:** what is the influence of peer group on the social goals of the secondary school students from Enugu East Local Government Area of Enugu State?

**Table two:** mean scores of peer influence on social goals

| S/N | Items of peer influence on social goals | $\overline{x}$ | SD | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Helps me develop interest in people in school | 2.78 | 0.74 | |
| 2 | Encourage interaction with fellow students | 2.86 | 0.69 | |
| 3 | Helps me develop self confidence | 2.90 | 0.72 | |
| 4 | Encourages good perception of self | 2.87 | 0.63 | |
| 5 | Makes me cherish social values | 2.94 | 0.75 | |
| 6 | Shows concern and interest about the future | 3.01 | 0.63 | |
| 7 | Insist of participation of social activities | 3.03 | 0.68 | |
| 8 | Encourages behavior stability | 2.79 | 0.72 | |
| 9 | Encourages partying together | 2.70 | 0.71 | |
| 10 | Encourages dialogue with parents and teachers | 2.81 | 0.74 | |
| | | 2.73 | | |

The results in table two indicated that all the items in table were scored above the acceptable mean score of 2.50. The table further revealed an average mean score of 2.73 and further indicated that negative values such as encouraging partying (2.70) were scored above the acceptable mean score of 2.50.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study were discussed in line with the purpose of study which seeks to determine the influence of peer group on the academic behavior (social goal and cognitive goals of the students). Concerning the cognitive goals, the research question one and table one revealed the students assessment of the influence of peer group on their cognitive goal inclinations. Items such as helps you develop good study habit (3.02), ability to memorize (3.01), consistent pattern and time of study (2.98), encourages punctuality (2.87), attentiveness in class (2.69), doing assignment together (2.72), group discussion (2.75), making noise in class (2.62), copying into the hall (2.59).

The table further revealed an average mean score of 2.71 and indicated that all items were scored above the acceptable mean score both items of negative and positive influence.

Concerning the influence of peer group on the social goals of the students, the research question two and table two presented the ratings of the students on the item variables used to assess the influence. The table revealed that the items had an average mean score of 2.73 and that all the items were scored above the acceptable mean score of 2.50 both positive and negative items.

Accordingly, items such as develop interest in people in the school (2.78), encourages interaction with fellow students (2.86), develop self confidence (2.90), good perception of self (2.87), cherishes social values (2.94), interest about the future (3.01), behavior stability (2.79), partying (2.70). These were in line with the findings of Obi and Okoye (2019) who noted that the adolescents seeks affirmation from the peer even when such values conflict with the norms of the society. These were reflected in the ratings of the students on all the items variable used to determine the influence of peer group on academic behavior of the adolescents. The above view was collaborated by Okudo, et al (2023), Bet (2013), Omotere (2011), Chireshe (2013), Hashim and Embong (2015), Mustapha and Selvaraju (2015). All of the above emphasized the strong influences of the peer group on adolescent adjustment, development, socialization and decisions. They stated that most adolescents depend on their friends for the validation of the choices they made.

## CONCLUSION

The study was on the influence of peer group on the academic behavior of adolescents from Enugu east local government area of Enugu state. Interestingly the study revealed that peer group is a very strong factor in career choice decisions of the adolescents because most if not all depends on their peer for affirmation of the decisions. Furthermore, the study discovered that peer influences cuts across both positive and negative values since both values are known to play out in the life choices and decisions of the adolescents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) The school counsellor is an indispensable stakeholder in child socialization because they serve as agents to Close the negative influences of peer groups
(2) Parents are to monitor the activities of their loved ones especially the influences they receive from peers.
(3) Career workshops should be encouraged.

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