



INFLUENCE OF PEER GROUP ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN UDI EDUCATION ZONE OF ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract:

The study sought to investigate the influence of peer group on the behaviour of secondary school students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State Nigeria. The study as guided by three research questions and to null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted survey research design. The population for the study comprised 3,011 SS1 to SS3 students from 53 Government owned Secondary Schools for the study. The researcher administered the research instrument generated the respondents. The data collected from the respondents were analysed using Mean statistics drawn from the responses of male and female senior secondary school students to the questionnaire item. Four point likert scale was used to measure the opinion of the respondents, such that after the statistical analysis those items of questionnaire that has the Mean rate of 2.5 and above were regarded as great extent that peer group has influence on students behaviours, while questionnaire item with the mean below 2.5 were regarded as little extent, that peer group has no influence on students behaviors. The findings of the study revealed that peer group has a great influence on students reading habits, dressing, and sexual behaviours. The implications of the findings is that if the activities of the peer groups are not properly monitored by all the concerned persons such as parents, school counselors, school administrators and teachers, it will affect their academic achievements. The researcher recommended that the activities of the peer group should be carefully checkmated to reduce the manifestation of risky behaviour among secondary schools students. In addition, sex education should be encouraged in all secondary schools in Udi Education Enugu State in Nigeria.

Keywords: peer group, secondary school students, social status

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1. Introduction

Peer groups are a social group which Enugu State and Nigeria at large consists of individual of the same social status, who share similar interest and are close in age. For example, the peer groups within the ages of eighteen – years old are not in the same group with those of fourteen years old, though all of them may be in the same school.

According to Kinderman, (1998) peer groups are type of social group that is made up of people who share similar interests, social status, and are in the same age group. Patwoods, (2015) defined peer group as a group comprising people of similar age, background and social status who might reasonably influence a person's life in terms of perceived behaviours and beliefs. This means that a 4-year-old would not be in a peer group with 12-year-old. Similarly, college Professors would not be in the same peer group as their students. Children are less likely to accept those who are different from them. Peer groups are individuals who are either equal in age or have about minus or plus one to three years differences. They see themselves as equal in status, societal standing and other respects in the society. Although the group may be made up of children from different social classes but the latter is not reflected in their relationship as a group.

As a child grows, he establishes steady friendship with some peers of similar age and often the same sex. These steady friends are his peer mates and they have enormous influence on their life styles especially during the time of secondary school. Major area of influence are; mode of dressing, hairstyle, language usage, learning societal values, establishing personal identity, learning of anti-social behaviour, such as, drug abuse, cultism, alcoholism and exchanging information especially those issues relating to sex or practicing sexual behaviour among others. Thus, peer group has an important influence throughout one's life, but they are more critical during the developmental years of childhood and adolescence. According to Steinberg and Laurence (2010) in secondary schools, peer groups tend to face dramatic changes. Secondary school students tend to spend more time with their peers and have less adult supervision. Peer group communication shifts during this time as well. They prefer to talk about school and careers with their parents but enjoy talking about sex and other interpersonal relationships with their peers. Children like to join peer groups who accept them, even if the group is involved in negative activities. Egbo, (2013) sees peer group as individuals of the same age, sex and interest who share the same views and belief. According to Ezewu and Edward (2008), peer group is the association or the social relationships between people who fall within the same age range. Members of the peer group often have common characteristics or interest. Sometimes, the influence of peer group on student's development is generally associated with negative connotation such as disobedience, arrogance, truancy and so on. At times, the reverse is the case. Peer groups do contribute positively to their members, in the areas of physical, social, emotional, academic and even sexual development among others. Children like to socialize as much as they can and have rapport with their peers; rather than spending time with their families (Farmer, 2010). It is noted that peer group influences individual

members attitudes and behaviour on many cultures and social issues such as; drug abuse, violence and even the development and expression of prejudice (Aboud, 2005), Negative peer influence can expose secondary school students to unethical behaviours such as sexual misconduct, poor reading habit, indecent dressing, lateness to school, smoking, stealing, kidnapping and killing, lack of respect to elders and constituted authority and sexual misconducts. It is good to understand that every human being whether a child, adolescent or even an adult longs to associate with others. Consequently, peer group are always obedient to their group; they adhere strictly to the rules and regulations' of the group for acceptance. In explaining the concept of peer group, Nnachi (2009), stated that students, children or older individuals move in groups in accordance with their age and status. Each group is a society of its own with its philosophy similar or different from that of other groups. Each of the group is known as peer group. He also said that peer group directs the life style of the individual and this is why peers have a significant aspect of the social environment which helps the child to develop feeling of adequacy or inadequacy of life.

According to Kontula and Mannila (2009), sexual behaviour is the manner in which human beings experience and express their sexuality; hence, people engage in a variety of sexual behaviour from time to time and for a variety of reasons. Sexualbehaviour normally results in sexual arousal and physiological changes in the aroused person, some of which are pronounced while others are more subtle. This definition indicates that sexual behaviour can involve one, two or more persons which may be either between opposite sex or otherwise and that such behaviour induces sexual arousal. Animasahun (2007) found that such students are always loaded with academic success barriers than their counterparts who read their books regularly. The barriers, apart from truancy behaviour include: poor study habits, examination malpractices, conduct disorder, sexual promiscuity, poor time management and indecent dressing. Peer group influenced secondary school students reading habit when a student belongs to peer group that does not like or engage themselves in group reading or reading activities that will make the student not to be able to increase likely to his or her reading habit. Students with reading behaviour problems were significantly more likely to display poor task engagement, poor self-control, externalizing behaviour problems in school.

2. Statement of the Problem

What worries the researcher most in this study is that, in Udi Education Zone, peer group influence pushes the secondary school students in rural schools to be open and permissive in their behaviour towards pre-marital sex. With this exposure to pre-marital sex, secondary school students may become less interested in the academic pursuit and become more interested in sexual behaviour that manifest in kissing, romancing, holding of hands, hugging, watching pornographic movies etc. These may lead to problems such as; indecent dressing, prostitution, unwanted pregnancy and

early marriages, school dropout, abortion and other anti- social acts such as smoking and truancy.

It therefore, becomes necessary to investigate the influence of peer group on sexual behaviour of secondary school students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State Nigeria.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of peer group on behaviour of secondary school students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State. Specifically, the study sought to investigate the following;

1. The influence of peer group on sexual behaviour of secondary school students.
2. The influence of peer group on the reading habit of secondary school students'.
3. The influence of peer group on dressing behaviour of secondary school students.

2.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study;

- A. The extent to which peer group influence the sexual behaviours of secondary school students in Udi Education Zone.
- B. The extent to which peer group influence the reading habit of secondary school students?
- C. The extent to which peer group influences the dressing behaviours of secondary school students?

2.3 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean response scores of male and female students on the influence of peer group on sexual behaviours of secondary school students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean responses score of urban and rural students on the influence of peer group on reading behaviours of secondary school students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State.

2.4 Research Design

This study adopted survey research design, according to Nworgu (2006) stated that survey research is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. This research design is the best for this study because it involves the description, analysis and interpretation of existing conditions.

2.5 Population of the study

The population of the study comprises of 3,011 SS 1 to SS 3 students from 29 government secondary schools in Udi Local Government Area and 24 government

secondary schools in Ezeagu Local Government Area all of which are under Udi Education Zone of Enugu State Nigeria. Data collected from the Department of Planning and Statistics, (Post Primary School Management Board Enugu in 2016), of 3,011 from the area of the study, 1,900 are girls while 1,111 are boys. Source (PPSMB Udi Education Zone 2016). These form the male and female strata.

2.6 Sample and sampling techniques

The sample size of the study was (602) senior secondary school students comprising of 380 female senior secondary school students and 222 male senior secondary school students from the area of the study. The sample of the study will be calculated using 20% of 1,900 which is the population for female students and 20% of 1,111 which is the population of male students. Thus bringing the total sample to 602. Random sampling was adopted to ensure female and male strata.

2.7 Instrument for data collection

The instrument for data collection was questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument titled: Influence of Peer Group on behaviour of Secondary School Students Questionnaire (IPGBSSSQ) was structured by the researcher. The instrument consists of two sections, section A and B, Section A sought information on the demographic data of the respondents, Section B consists of (28) items carefully arranged into (4) clusters, A, B, C and D which aimed at eliciting information on the influence of peer group on behaviour of secondary school students. Cluster "A" sought information on peer group influence? Cluster "B" sought information on reading behaviour? Cluster "C" sought information on dressing behaviour while cluster "D" sought information on punctuality behaviour. The (4) clusters, A, B, C and D each has a (4) point rating scale responses of Very Great Extent (VGE), Great Extent (GE), Little Extent (LE), Very Little Extent (VLE).

2.8 Validation of the instrument

To ensure the face validity of the instrument, the initial draft was sent to three research experts, two in Guidance and Counselling and one in Measurement and Evaluation all of the Faculty of Education, Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT).

2.9 Reliability of the instrument

In order to ensure the reliability of the instrument, the instrument was subjected to trial-testing on Thirty (30) SSII students from two secondary schools in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State Nigeria. The reliability was calculated using Cronbach Alpha method. The reliability indices for cluster A, B, C and D were: 0.89, 0.95, 0.91 and 0.70 respectively; while the overall reliability index was 0.86, indicating that the instrument is highly reliable and is suitable for the study.

2.10 Method of data collection

The researcher personally visited all the secondary schools and administered the copies of the questionnaire to students with the help of three research assistants.

2.11 Method of data analysis

The data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation in order to answer the three research questions. The null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. For the decision rule, all the items with mean ratings of 2.50 and above were accepted while those with mean ratings below 2.50 were rejected. For the hypotheses, if the t-calculated is less than table value or critical value of the t-test, the null hypotheses are accepted, but if otherwise, the null hypotheses are rejected.

3. Discussion of Findings

A. Research question 1

To what extent did peer group influence the sexual behaviour of secondary school students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean score and standard deviation of peer group
 on sexual behaviour of secondary school students in Udi educational zone

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Male Students				Female Students			
		Statistics	(\bar{x})	SD	Decision	Statistics	(\bar{x})	SD	Decision
1	Students join their friends to a courtesy visit to opposite sex especially during recreations	222	2.544	1.001	Accept	380	2.211	1.022	Reject
2	Students are driven by thought provoking and captivating text messages from my friends	222	2.881	0.872	Accept	380	2.652	0.992	Accept
3	Students accepting gift has made them susceptible to their friends advances	222	3.001	0.926	Accept	380	2.543	0.872	Accept
4	Students enjoy listening to sexual experiences of their friends when they discuss	222	2.742	0.623	Accept	380	2.784	0.621	Accept
5	Students feel uncomfortable when their body touches the sensitive part of their male friends	222	2.612	0.991	Accept	380	3.122	1.001	Accept
6	Students usually don't like moving with friends who keep company	222	2.761	1.532	Accept	380	2.983	0.998	Accept
7	Most male and female students lose their	222	2.531	1.212	Accept	380	2.563	1.122	Accept

	control when a good looking opposite sex is naked								
8	Most male and female students join their friends to watch romantic films and pornographic pictures	222	2.961	0.772	Accept	380	2.567	0.998	Accept
9	Students attracted looking at the sensitive parts of the opposite sex such as breast and buttocks of the female folk and groin for the male folk	222	2.961	0.872	Accept	380	2.734	1.212	Accept
10	Students choose not to engage in sexual intercourse but deal with sexual behaviour through masturbation and self-stimulation	222	2.552	0.432	Accept	380	2.882	0.632	Accept
	Grand mean & SD		2.245	0.923	Accept		2.704	0.947	Accept

Decision

Item 1-10 are contained in table 1, ten questionnaire items were used to answer research question one. All the items have the ratings for male and female respondents approximately close to 2.5. The highest mean scores for male and female students is 3.001 indicating that there is great extent in students accepting gift has made them susceptible to their friends advances, while the lowest mean score for male and female students is 2.211 which indicates that there is low extent in students joining their friends to a courtesy visit to opposite sex especially during recreation. The grand mean rating for male and female are 2.745 and 2.704 respectively which is above the criterion mean.

B. Research Question 2

To what extent did peer group influence the reading habit of secondary school students in Udi Educational Zone of Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean score and standard deviation of peer group on reading habits of secondary school students in Udi educational zone

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Male Student				Female Student			
		Statistics	(\bar{x})	SD	Decision	Statistics	(\bar{x})	SD	Decision
11	Promoting accepted values and norms of the society through peer groups, lead to reading habit	222	2.6532	0.9832	Accept	380	2.983	0.872	Accept
12	Parents, teacher and principals are to be role model to students and their peer	222	2.7612	0.7212	Accept	380	2.763	0.992	Accept
13	Provision of guidance and counseling services in school through reading to direct and guide student with regards to good behaviour	222	3.0012	1.2311	Accept	380	2.983	1.882	Accept
14	Emphasis should be laid through reading on cultivation of virtues for sound moral development	222	3.1231	1.0123	Accept	380	2.534	1.211	Accept
15	Teaching of sex education in our secondary schools to enable students and peer develop the habit of self-control as regard to sexual matters lead to reading habit	222	2.8163	1.2133	Accept	380	3.212	0.836	Accept
16	Motivation encouragement and rewards to well behaved students are regards to good reading habits	222	2.5432	0.9871	Accept	380	3.221	0.635	Accept
17	Student inability to read their books leads to good reading habt	222	2.6524	1.2233	Accept	380	2.877	0.822	Accept
	Grand mean & S.D		2.7929	1.0527	Accept	380	2.939	1.035	Accept

Decision

All the items had mean ratings for male and female respondents approximately close to 2.5. The highest means score for male and female students is 3.221 indicating that motivation, encouragement and rewards to well behaved students as regards to good reading habits while the lowest means score for male and female students is 2.534 which indicates that there is low extent in emphasis laid through reading and cultivation of virtues for second moral development. The grand mean rating for male and female are 2.793 and 2.057 respectively which is above the criterion mean.

C. Research Question 3

To what extent did peer group influences the dressing behaviour of secondary school students in Udi Educational Zone of Enugu State?

Table 3: Mean scores and standard deviation of peer group on dressing behaviour of secondary school students in Udi education zone of Enugu state PPSMB

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Male Student				Female Student			
		Statistics	(\bar{x})	SD	Decision	Statistics	(\bar{x})	SD	Decision
18	Peer group influence result to indecent dress code	222	2.6531	0.9322	Accept	380	2.863	0.916	Accept
19	Peer group influences result to dressing in mini skirt	222	2.9836	0.8731	Accept	380	3.122	1.232	Accept
20	Peer group influence result in dressing leggings	222	2.4573	1.2321	Accept	380	2.653	1.021	Accept
21	Peer groups influence result in dressing in spaghetti	222	2.3211	1.3212	Accept	380	2.988	0.998	Accept
22	Peer groups influence result in wearing sagging dress	222	2.5432	0.5321	Accept	380	3.122	0.643	Accept
23	Peer groups influence result in dressing in bump short	222	2.6352	0.6543	Accept	380	2.873	0.872	Accept
24	Peer groups influence result in dresses that exposes the breast region of the body	222	3.0112	1.2123	Accept	380	3.222	1.453	Accept
Grand mean & S.D			2.6578	0.965	Accept		2.963	1.019	Accept

Decision

Item 18-24 are contained in table 1, seven questionnaire items were used to answer research question three. All the items had mean ratings for male and female respondents approximately close to 2.5 the highest mean scores for male and female counselors is 3.222 indicating that there is great extent in peer group influence result in dresses that exposes the breast region of the body, while the lowest mean score for male and female Respondents is **2.321** which indicates that there is low extent in peer groups influence result in dressing in spaghetti. The grand mean for male and female are **2.6578** and **2.963** respectively which is above the criterion mean.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female secondary school respondents on the influence of peer group on behaviours of secondary schools in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State Nigeria.

Table 4.3.1: Contingency One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
There is no significant difference in the mean response score of male and female students on the influence of peer group on sexual behaviours of secondary school students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State.	64.595	601	0.000	1.39006	1.3478	1.4323

Source: Field survey 2015

Decision Rule

Since the calculated value (64.595) is greater than the critical value (1.960), we reject the null hypothesis (H₀) which states that there is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female school respondents on the influence of peer group on behaviour of secondary school students in Udi Educational Zone of Enugu State Nigeria.

H₀: There is no significant difference in the mean response score of urban and rural students on the influence of peer group on reading behaviour of secondary school students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State.

Table 4.3.2: Contingency

	Test Value = 0					
	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference	
					Lower	Upper
There is no significant difference in the mean response score of urban and rural students on the influence of peer group on reading behaviour of secondary school students in Udi Education Zone of Enugu State.	64.443	601	0.000	1.38050	1.3384	1.4226

Source: Field survey 2015

Decision Rule

Since the calculated value (64.443) is greater than the critical value (1.960), we reject the null hypothesis (H₀) which states that there is no significant difference in the mean opinion score of the urban and rural secondary school on the influence of peer group on reading behaviour of secondary school students, hence accept the alternative hypothesis (H₁) which states that there is significant difference in the mean opinion score of the urban and rural secondary schools on the influence of peer group on reading behaviour of students in Udi Educational Zone of Enugu State.

4. Recommendations

1. There should be a synergy between the parents and teachers in training and monitoring of children even within and outside the school premises so as to avoid them indulging in behaviours that might alter the wheel of their academic excellence.
2. Sex education should be encouraged in all the secondary school in Enugu State in particular and Nigeria in general.
3. Parents should exercise their parental roles as much as possible
4. The activities of the various peer groups should be carefully monitored by parents, school guidance counselors and administrators to reduce the manifestation of risky behaviours among the secondary school students.

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