

INFLUENCE OF PEER PRESSURE ON SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF IN-SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ENUGU STATE

ANIMBA, IJEOMA EVELYN (Ph.D)

Department of Educational Foundations

Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani, Nigeria

Email: animba.evelyn@esut.edu.ng , Phone No: 08091713071

CHUKWU, PETER NDUBISI (Ph.D)

Department of Educational Management

Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani, Nigeria

Email: Peter.chukwu@esut.edu.ng

EZEMA, EDITH OBIANUJU

Department of Educational Foundations

Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani, Nigeria

Email: ezema.obianuju@esut.edu.ng

&

OSIM HAPPINESS UKAMAKA

Department of Educational Foundations

Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Agbani, Nigeria

Email: henriosim@gmail.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate influence of peer pressure on social behaviour of in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Enugu State. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. It was guided by three research questions and hypotheses respectively from some in-school social behaviours like drug use, sexual behaviour and self-esteem. Population for the study consisted of all the 73,792 senior secondary school three (SS3) students in 314 public secondary schools in Enugu State. The sample for the study was 800 senior secondary school three (SS3) students drawn using proportionate sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was researcher structured questionnaire validated by three research experts from Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation from Enugu State University of Science and Technology. An overall reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained using Cronbach alpha. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while test of hypotheses was analyzed using t-test at 0.05 level of significance. Major findings of the study indicated that male and female students agree on a great extent that peer pressure influence on social behaviours of in-school adolescents. Furthermore, there is no significant difference on the responses of male and female in-school adolescents on extent peer pressure influences the aforementioned social behaviour. It was recommended therefore amongst others that proper orientation and guidance be given by parents, guardians and teachers on crisis associated with adolescence in order to help students gain insight on the consequences of peer pressure on social behaviour in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Keywords: influence, peer pressure, adolescents, social behaviour, secondary school students, Enugu State.

Introduction

Adolescence means growth, differentiation and maturity. It refers to period of life span of an individual when the physiological and sociological processes are in transition between puberty and maturity as well as the bridge between life as a child and adult (Iwuama, 2017). Hence the transition to this stage of development exhibit variations in many level with bond with family gradually loosed while the adolescent tries to formulate his/her own personal identity. Adolescence is also a period characterized by liquidness and variability where the adolescent tries to gain his/her own identity, become independent from family, socializes and chooses future career. Thus, these change takes place biologically, psychologically, mentally and socially. Based on this perspective, adolescence is therefore a process not just a particular period of social changes when new adjustments must be made if the individual would live a normal, happy life in the society. It is the period when the individual learns to adjust to the complex series of social roles expected of him during adulthood hence no longer dependent on parents to take decision. At this stage the individual can think about his personal ideas and handle such ideas like choice of school subject, friends, vocation, social identity and social group. The individual is able to exhibit these mental functions through social interaction and behaviour.

Social behaviour centers on attitude, perception, reaction and disposition of an individual to others around him/her. It involves everyday action that affects behaviour of others as well as interaction that occur among individuals. It can be aggressive, mutualistic, cooperative, altruistic and parental however when individuals interact repeatedly social behaviour is formed (Rubenstein & Rubenstein, 2013). Behaviorally, adolescence is associated with volatile emotions and boundary-testing behavior as they explore and assert personal identity, learn to navigate peer relationship and transition to independence (APA, 2017). They work more to form their identities, pull away from parents and associate more with peer group with intimate exchanges of thought and feelings. It is noteworthy to understand that the social behaviour of adolescents is hugely tied to parental, family and societal structure. This is because adolescents are faced with identity crises with little or no insight on method of navigation. According to Adegboyega (2020), there are positive and negative social behaviours during adolescence. Positive social behaviour are acceptable due to positive and favorable attitude and disposition and negative social behaviour due to negative and unfavorable attitude and disposition. It is evident that most negative social behaviour are learnt from peer groups (Mahak & Diksha, 2020, Ryan, 2015, Javiera, 2018) therefore, it is pertinent to understand the massive influence peer groups have on social behaviours of adolescents.

Peers simply means adolescents who are equal in abilities, qualification, age, background or social status who help each other explore and develop their identities hence peers can serve both positive and negative functions during adolescence. Peers also can serve as important source of social support, friendship and companionship during adolescence as well as vehicle for driving deviant behaviours. It is widely acknowledged that experiences with peers constitute social developmental context for adolescents (Javiera, 2018). As members of peer group, adolescents face numerous subtle form of social influence such as peer expectations.

By contrast, peer pressure is the influence peer groups exert on its members by rewarding those who conform while punishing those who violate it. It's simply a negative emotional-social development in adolescent. It is also refers to situation whereby an adolescent deliberately changes his/her behaviour in order to avoid being laughed at, teased or ostracized by peers. According Mahak & Diksha (2020), peer pressure refers to expectation exerted by a peer group to behave in a particular way irrespective of their members' inclination and desires. It is a feeling that one must do the same things as other people of one's age and social group in order to be liked or respected they further opined. Peer pressure can be positive and negative. Therefore, peer pressure is the direct and indirect influence on people by peers and the effect on an individual who gets encouraged to follow their peers by changing their attitudes, values or behaviour in order to conform to the influencing group or individual. It can lead to riskier decision, low self- confidence and engagement in problematic behaviour like drug abuse, alcohol abuse and other deviant behaviour when it becomes negative. Evidence abound on the fact that most social behaviours are evidence of peer pressure like social value, intimacy, intellectualization, drug abuse, cultism, sexual exploration, truancy, time management, alcohol abuse, self-esteem amongst others (Mruk, 2016, Nweze, 2015, Okoye, 2015).

Drugs are chemical substances that could bring about a change in the biological function through its chemical actions like perceptual modification, cognition, mood and behavioural alteration (Okoye, 2015). It is defined also as a chemical modifier that could bring about physiological and behavioural changes. Mruk (2016) defined drug abuse as excessive and persistent self-administration of a drug without regard to the medically or culturally accepted patterns. It could also be viewed as the use of a drug to the extent that it interferes with the health and social (Ryan, 2015). In essence, drug abuse may be defined as the arbitrary overdependence or misuse of one particular drug with or without a prior medical diagnosis from qualified health practitioners as well as unlawful overdose of prescribed drug(s). Drug abuse is a major public health problem in Nigeria especially in secondary schools. This is because secondary school is filled up with early and middle adolescents who are yet to identify who they are thus easily influenced by peers. Peer pressure is a risk factor for drug use among in-school adolescents in Enugu State because of imitation as well as indirect pressure from celebrities they model after thus making them vulnerable to drugs in order to fit in and avoid rejection thereby affecting their self-esteem (Animba, 2021).

Self-esteem is the overall evaluation to self hence the ability of an individual to see him/herself as worthy or worthless. According to American Psychological Association (2021), self-esteem is not hereditary or innate but learned as a result of emotions and experiences an individual has within social environment. Thus self-esteem refers to individual perception or subjective appraisal of one's own self-worth, feelings of self-respect, confidence and the extent to which an individual holds positive or negative views about self. Relating self-esteem to adolescence, according to Mentalhelp.net (2022), self-esteem has to do with adolescent feelings from their sense of worthiness or unworthiness which influences their choice and decision. This is because self-esteem is a way of thinking evident in the way an adolescent accepts respects and believes in him/herself in comparison to standard across the globe. Furthermore, self-esteem is evident when an adolescent especially a student accepts him/herself both in good and bad attribute, respect oneself, treat oneself in a way reflective of others respect for him/her and believe in oneself with the mindset that he/she deserves the good things of life. Thus this

student makes choices and takes actions with confidence and optimism about life with so much dependence on his/her ability.

Moreover, self-esteem is an everyday language especially among adolescence with three connotative meanings. First it refers to personality variable which captures the way adolescents feel about themselves. Second, it is an evaluative measure which refers to the way adolescents analyze their attribute and abilities. Third, self-esteem is seen from the viewpoint of feeling of self-worth hence a momentarily emotional state especially from a positive or negative experience. It is worthy to note that self-esteem is the panacea of modern life because of its ability to motivate or demoralize an adolescent who is gradually moving to the ladder of adulthood. This is evident in academic success, health financial and personal fulfillment thus high self-esteem is seen as the antidote to underachievement, crime, depression, suicide, cultism and drug abuse among adolescents and youths (APA, 2021). The big question is “*can peer pressure influence self-esteem?*” Peer group according to Mustapha, (2013) evidently is a vehicle for conveying self-esteem in an adolescent. It also affects the level of peer pressure. Therefore, weather an adolescent will develop positive or negative self-esteem is dependent on the pressure from his her peer group positively and negatively. This is because an adolescent whose self-esteem is affected can succumb to pressures of sexual behaviour.

Sexual behaviour simply means the way and manner individuals react or conduct themselves towards sexual intercourse. It includes all sexual actions and responses related to pleasure feeling (Omeje, Ekwueme & Omeje, 2013). They further opined that sexuality behaviour is the ability of a person to express and experience sexual feelings. Sexual behaviour of adolescents is evidently influenced by peer pressure and norms (Blerta, 2017). Thus sexual behaviour may also include conducts and activities by adolescents which are intended to arouse the interest of another. From the foregoing, sexual behaviour in the context of this study is all sexual act displayed by adolescent for sexual gratification. Evidence further shows that when adolescents see their peers attitude towards sex, they are likely prone to engage in sex (Chigbu, Nwobi, Nwanna & Etale, 2018). When adolescents are connected to a group that expresses a clear value or norm against engaging in sex or unprotected sex, they are less likely to do so themselves vice versa. This is because adolescents are more concerned with what they perceive as normative thus, when identification with a peer group is strong, influence becomes stronger as well. According to Laura, Sophia, Sarah & Mitchell, (2016), when the unpleasantness of standing alone becomes too strong, fostering a tendency to adopt behaviour in the group becomes paramount in order to be accepted. Therefore peer pressure plays an important role in sexual socialization though the degree of conformity varies. Hence the outcome of sexual behaviours as a result of peer pressure may make adolescents vulnerable to sexual exploitation and high risk behaviours with the consequences resulting to unplanned pregnancies (females) and sexually transmitted infections (males). Peer pressure can also complicate adolescent’ sexual behaviour resulting to psychological and emotional damage, depression, AIDS/HIVs.

Cognizant of the contribution already made by existing studies in seeking to ascertain peer pressure influence on social behaviour of adolescents motivated by the need to fill a gap in knowledge, this study is set to ascertain peer pressure influence on adolescent social behaviour of secondary school students in Enugu State.

Theoretical Frame work

In order to establish scientific justifications on how peer pressure influences adolescent social behaviour with possibility of empirical verification, theoretical framework of this study was based on the following theories: Social learning theory by Albert Bandura (1977) and Social control theory by Hirschi (1960).

Social Learning theory as proposed by Bandura (1965) posits that peer pressure is the result of imitation and observation. According to this theory, the likelihood that a given adolescent behaviour will occur as a result of peer pressure depends on the learning and imitation ability of the individual in a social situation, the expectancies concerning the outcome of the behaviour and the value attached to the outcome. Hence an adolescent engages in sexual behaviour when he/she see other adolescent behave same way. In order not to be treated as an outcast, he/she joins in the sexual related behaviour. According to Nweze (2015), peer pressure induces adolescent into behaviour that ordinarily they would not positively and negatively. Social control theory postulated by Hirschi in 1960 posited that societal and political mechanism regulate individual and group behaviours leading to conformity and compliance to the rules of a given society, state or social group. According to the theory, exploring the processes of socialization and social learning helps develop self-control which reduces the inclination to indulge in any negative behaviour. The theory further stipulated that family bond help adolescent in conformity to other aspect of societal behavior which also serves to regulate adolescent propensity for peer pressure (Castello & Laub, 2020). The theorists opined that adolescent succumb to peer pressure when such bonds are weakened. The two theories was able to explain the reason adolescents are prone to peer pressure. This they do because they want to seriously belong to a social group as a result of their inability to solve identity crisis associated with adolescence. Secondly in order to gain self-esteem and control adolescents become prone to peer pressure.

Statement of the Problem

There is substantial evidence both in literature and observations to buttress the deteriorating situation of in-school adolescents with respect to peer pressure. Low self-esteem, drug abuse and sexual behaviour among students have persistently become a norm contrary to established societal rules. This is no doubt problematic. Despite parental, teachers and societal role of inculcating positive values in adolescents, the aforementioned problems continue to skyrocket on daily basis. The school is also overwhelmed by enormous cases of drug abuse, illicit sexual activities being reported daily as a result of peer pressure among adolescents. In Enugu State, this scenario presents the entire society with serious threats to the future of adolescents. This is against the backdrop of the fact that despite the prevailing drug abuse and illicit sexual behaviours compounded by low self-esteem, adolescents in secondary schools of the state are prone to various forms of peer pressure which has been illustrated through research studies. Worried by the challenges posed by peer pressure in adolescent social behaviour, the question then arises as to whether peer pressure influences adolescent social behaviour in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does peer pressure influence male and female in-school adolescents' behaviour on drug abuse in secondary schools in Enugu State?

2. To what extent does peer pressure influence male and female self-esteem of in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Enugu State?
3. To what extent does peer pressure influence male and female sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Enugu State?

Hypothesis

H0₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescent on extent peer pressure influences drug abuse in secondary schools in Enugu State.

H0₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescents on extent peer pressure influences self-esteem in secondary schools in Enugu State.

H0₃: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescents on extent peer pressure influences sexual behaviour in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Method of Research

The study design was descriptive survey. Nworgu (2015) noted that this type of design aimed at collecting data and describing them in a systematic manner. The area of the study was Enugu State made up of six educational zones of Awgu, Enugu, Obollo, Udi, Agbani and Nsukka respectively. The population for the study consists of 73,792 senior secondary III (SS 3) students in the 314 public secondary schools in Enugu State comprising of 41,100 males and 32,692 female students. A sample of 800 (493 male and 307 female) senior secondary school three (SS 3) students selected using proportionate sampling technique was used for the study. Data were collected with researcher structured questionnaire. Instrument was validated by three experts (Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation whose inputs were incorporated before the final copies were administered. Reliability test showed significant relationship between examination malpractice proneness and aggression at overall reliability of 0.85. Instrument was administered face-to-face while collection was done by the researcher and two research assistants (teachers) after every response was completed by the respondent. Research question was answered with mean and standard deviation while t-test was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent does peer pressure influence male and female in-school adolescents' behaviour on drug abuse in secondary schools in Enugu State?

Table 1: mean and standard deviation of in-school male and female adolescents on extent peer pressure influences drug abuse in secondary schools in Enugu State.

S/N	Items	Male Students			Female Students		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
1	I smoke when I am amongst my friends	2.59	0.99	GE	2.50	0.70	GE
2	I drink alcohol only when am with my friends	2.62	0.81	GE	2.56	0.99	GE
3	Drugs are easy to come by amongst my friends	3.01	0.70	GE	3.22	0.69	GE
4	I prefer taking drugs instead of being seen as a weakling	3.67	0.65	GE	3.18	0.70	GE
Cluster Mean		2.97	0.79	GE	2.86	0.77	GE

The result in table 1 shows mean value of 2.97 and (male) and 2.86 (female). This result therefore indicates that male and female in-school adolescents agree that peer pressure influences drug abuse on a great extent. Simply put, peer pressure influences drug abuse of in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Enugu State on a great extent.

Research Question 2: To what extent does peer pressure influence male and female self-esteem of in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Enugu State?

Table 2: mean and standard deviation of male and female adolescents on extent peer pressure influences self-esteem in secondary schools in Enugu State.

S/N	Items	Male Students			Female Students		
		$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
5	My friends always look down on me	2.93	0.76	GE	3.04	0.67	GE
6	As friends, we encourage each other.	3.01	0.69	GE	2.88	0.78	GE
7	My friends encourage me on the use of positive statement.	2.53	0.89	GE	2.70	0.84	GE
8	I prefer encouragement from friends in handling my emotions.	2.48	0.94	LE	2.44	1.09	LE
9	My friends encourage me to develop my potential	2.77	0.78	GE	3.00	0.67	GE
Cluster Mean		2.74	0.78	GE	2.81	0.81	GE

The result in table 2 shows mean value of 2.74 (male) and 2.81 (female). This result therefore indicates that male and female in-school adolescents agree that peer pressure influences self-esteem on a great extent. Simply put, peer pressure influences self-esteem of in-school adolescents in secondary school in Enugu State on a great extent.

Research Question 3: To what extent does peer pressure influence male and female sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Enugu State?

Table 3: mean and standard deviation of male and female adolescents on extent peer pressure influences sexual behaviour in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Items	Male Students			Female Students		
	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision	$\bar{X}$	SD	Decision
I am always attracted to my opposite sex during erotic discussion	2.79	0.99	GE	3.10	0.67	GE
I prefer to discuss sexual matters with friends	2.59	0.96	GE	2.50	0.89	GE
I enjoy having sexual intercourse with my friends	2.68	0.72	GE	2.57	0.76	GE
I touching a partners breast stimulates me	2.55	0.77	GE	2.54	0.78	GE
I like reading literature that deals with sexual content.	2.79	0.99	GE	3.10	0.67	GE
I enjoy having sexual intercourse with multiple partners	2.66	0.82	GE	2.71	0.79	GE
I prefer getting sexual information from my age mates to any other sources.	2.91	0.71	GE	2.69	0.88	GE
Age mates are always ready to help anybody who wants to learn sex education.	3.01	0.94	GE	2.63	0.78	GE
I like watching pornographic films	2.97	0.77	GE	2.68	0.84	GE
Having sex with people of my age is the in thing	3.06	0.89	GE	2.90	0.71	GE
Cluster Mean	2.80	0.86	GE	2.74	0.78	GE

The result in table 3 shows mean value of 2.80 (male) and 2.74 (female). This result therefore indicates that male and female adolescents agree that peer pressure influences sexual behaviour in a great extent. Simply put, peer pressure influences in a great extent sexual behaviour of adolescents in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescents on extent peer pressure influences drug abuse in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Table 4:t-test analysis of significant difference between the mean response of male and female in-school adolescents on the extent peer pressure influences drug abuse in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male Students	493	2.88	0.82	798	0.18	1.96	Do not reject
Female Students	307	2.82	0.83				

From table 4, t-calculated (0.18) is less than t-critical (1.96). Hence, at .05 significant level, the mean ratings of the two group (male and female) do not differ significantly. Therefore, hypothesis one was not rejected as stated, indicating that there is no significant difference in gender on extent peer pressure influences in-school adolescent drug abuse in secondary schools in Enugu State.

H0: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescents on extent peer pressure influences self-esteem in secondary school in Enugu State. Table 5:t-test of significant difference between the mean score of male and female in-school adolescents on extent peer pressure influences self-esteem in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male Students	493	2.84	0.78	798	0.33	1.96	Do not reject
Female Students	307	2.82	0.79				

From table 5, t-calculated (0.33) is less than t-critical (1.96). Hence, at .05 significant level, the mean ratings of the two group (male and female) do not differ significantly. Therefore, hypothesis one was not rejected as stated, indicating that there is no significant difference in gender on extent peer pressure influences self-esteem of in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Enugu State.

H0: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescents on extent peer pressure influences sexual behaviour in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Table 6: t-test of significant difference between the mean score of male and female in-school adolescents on extent peer pressure influences sexual behaviour in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male Students	493	2.52	0.93	798	0.27	1.96	Do not reject
Female Students	307	2.55	0.85				

From Table 6, t-calculated (0.27) is less than t-critical (1.96). Hence, at .05 significant level, the mean ratings of the two groups (male and female) do not differ significantly. Therefore, hypothesis one was not rejected as stated, indicating that gender does have significant difference on extent peer pressure influences sexual behaviour of in-school adolescents in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Discussions

The findings of this study revealed that male and female in-school adolescents agree on a great extent that peer pressure influences drug abuse, self-esteem and sexual behaviour. Simply put, peer pressure influences in-school adolescent social behaviour on a great extent in secondary schools in Enugu State. This finding agrees with Mahak & Diksha (2020), Mustapha, (2013), Iboma (2023) and Chigbu, Nwobi, Nwanna & Etale (2021) who reported in their respective studies that adolescents are easily influenced into drug abuse, sexual behaviour as well as their self-esteem. It was also found in this study that gender (male and female) did not have significant difference on the extent of difference between peer pressure and adolescents social behaviour. Furthermore, there is no significant difference between male and female adolescent responses on the extent peer pressure influences social behaviour in secondary schools in Enugu State.

Conclusion

Adolescents is a developmental stage filled with physical, social and psychological changes which determines to a large extent the kind of adult the individual will become. Therefore, adolescent state should be treated with care so that individuals will have adequate foundation for resisting peer pressure. Adolescent social behaviour is evidently fanned by peer pressure which results to behaviours like drug abuse and sexual behaviour. Thus, it is imperative that an emergency is declared in the public secondary schools especially in the face of technological innovations in order to reduce peer pressure.

Recommendations

1. Regular and adequate education should be given to in-school adolescents in secondary schools periodically on drug abuse, self-esteem and sexual behaviours.
2. Government and churches should organize programs aimed at sensitizing parents, caregivers and teachers on the importance of saying no to negative behaviours. For example, during mother's annual August meeting and mother's day, qualified, experienced and proven psychologist should be invited to educate parents and adolescents on the need for good and proper parenting and good value system.
3. Sexual education and effect of drug abuse should be comprehensively incorporated into secondary school curriculum.
4. School counsellors should identify at risk students from the parents and guardians susceptible of violence and negative influence and offer appropriate therapy.
5. Parents in collaboration with religious organizations should engage in conscious effort to offer quality discipleship training for children, teenagers and youth to help them grow into responsible adult and future parents.

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