

PEER PRESSURE, AGE, GENDER, HOME ENVIRONMENT AND DROPOUT SYNDROME AMONG ADULT LEARNERS IN AGEGE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

The study examined the roles of peer pressure, age, gender and home environment as correlates of dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege Local Government Area of Lagos State. A descriptive research design was utilized and a purposive sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 230 adult learners. A self-developed questionnaire tagged the Peer Pressure, Age, Gender, Home Environment and Dropout Syndrome Questionnaire (PAGHES) was used to collect data. Using Cronbach Alpha, PAGHES yielded reliability coefficient of 0.858. Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study. The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Findings revealed that there were positive significant relationships between peer pressure and dropout syndrome and home environment and dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege local government area of Lagos state ($r = .983$, $N = 230$, $p < .05$ and $r = -.992$, $N = 230$, $p < .05$) respectively. Also, there is significant combined contribution of peer pressure, age, gender and home environment to dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege Local Government Area, Lagos State, ($F(4, 225) = 4799.93$, $p < .05$, $R^2 = 0.988$). Home environment, age and gender were significant contributing variables to Dropout Syndrome among adult learners in Agege Local Government Area, Lagos State ($p < .05$), while peer pressure was not significant contributor ($p > .05$). The identified significant relationship between peer pressure and dropout syndrome underscores the need for targeted interventions to promote positive peer dynamics within the academic environment.

Key Words: Peer pressure, Age, Gender, Home Environment and Dropout syndrome.

Introduction

The school serves as a fundamental social unit established by society or governments. It provides a formal platform for young students to explore their own identities, understand others, and acquire knowledge of language, customs, attitudes, and ways of life. Education is widely recognized as a crucial pathway towards a promising future, and school attendance is mandated by laws to ensure academic excellence. However, despite these efforts, some students discontinue their education, leading to what is commonly referred to as dropout (Obiunu & Ozuri, 2018). Dropout, as defined by Ramirez and

Carpenter (2008) in Okafor, (2024), occurs when a student leaves school before graduation with no intention of returning. It is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors associated with the individual students themselves, their families, schools, socio-economic conditions, socio-cultural context, and the community in which they reside (Rumberger & Lim, 2018). The issue of dropout transcends borders and has become a global challenge (Salihu & Ramadneh, 2015).

In Nigeria, the establishment of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in year 2000 aimed to provide education for all citizens by the year 2015, recognizing the significance of educating and developing the nation's individuals (Obanya, 2010). These issues are especially prevalent in rural regions, characterized by extreme poverty, widespread illiteracy, and the involvement of children as part of the family labor force (Kamla-Ra, 2007).

Education plays a crucial role in individual development, and schools serve as formal institutions where individuals acquire knowledge, skills, and social understanding. However, dropout syndrome, characterized by students leaving school before graduation with no intention of returning, remains a significant concern (Obiunu & Ozuri, 2018). Dropout rates are influenced by various factors, including age, gender, peer pressure, and the home environment (Rumberger & Lim, 2018). This article examines the impact of age and gender on dropout syndrome among adult learners. Since this phenomenon has remained a challenge to educators and adult students alike, the emphasis in this study is to address these factors in order to promote educational success (Salihu, & Ramadneh, 2015).

One contributing factor to dropout syndrome among adult learners is age of the student. According to Settersten & Ray, (2010), as individuals progress through different life stages, their priorities, responsibilities, and circumstances change. The demands of balancing education with other responsibilities can become overwhelming, leading some adult learners to discontinue their studies. Recognizing and addressing these challenges can help create supportive environments that facilitate educational persistence among adult learners (Schuchart & Schimke, 2022).

Meanwhile, gender is another important factor that influences dropout rates among adult learners. As observed by Smith & Naylor, (2001), gender-based inequalities and societal expectations can create barriers to education, particularly for female learners. In many societies, girls face discrimination, limited access to resources, cultural norms, and early marriage, all of which contribute to higher dropout rates. Gender disparities persist in educational opportunities, resulting in unequal access to education and higher dropout rates for girls. Addressing gender-specific challenges and promoting gender equality in education are essential steps in reducing dropout rates and ensuring equal educational opportunities for all (Salinas & Jorquera-Samter, 2021).

In addition to age and gender, peer pressure appears to be a significant contributing factor to the dropout rates among adult learners. It is common for students to succumb to peer influence and exhibit inappropriate and disruptive behaviours that can harm

themselves and others. This behaviour includes engaging in activities such as alcohol and tobacco use, bullying, and fighting, which are not acceptable to both the school and society (Adeleke & Odeyemi, 2015). Moreso, students are shaped by the society in which they are born and raised. The home environment and family dynamics play a significant role in influencing their behaviour at school. Various factors within the home, such as poverty, child abuse, excessive use of mobile phones, broken homes, and responsibilities at home, can have a negative impact on students' behaviour in school and society.

Furthermore, the environment plays a crucial role in the lives of individuals, including students, teachers, employers, and employees. While some people may question the impact of the environment on performance, it is evident that certain unhealthy practices exist in schools, including unfavorable home locations and socioeconomic status of the parents. These conditions can adversely affect the health of both students, leading to decreased performance and possibly pushing students out of school (Kolubowei, 2019). Therefore, in order for students to effectively and efficiently pursue their learning, it is imperative that they have access to a conducive environment. Environmental factors have a significant influence on both the physical and psychological potential of individuals. It is believed that many adult learners fail to develop their full potentials due to inadequate environmental influence coupled with peer pressure, age and gender. This understanding underscores the importance of examining peer pressure, age, gender, home environment and dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege Local Government Area of Lagos State.

Several studies have been done to examine causes of dropout among students in secondary schools. For instance, researchers examined quality of education and poor performance in relation to school dropout among students while others examined factors such as teacher's hostile attitude towards students as responsible for student dropout, [Antwi-Danso&Edet (2011); Uche& Maliki, 2011); Idumange, (2012)]. Other studies examined age and social background, gender difference, and dropout rate among students in secondary school [(Schuchart&Schimke, (2022); Salinas, &Jorquera-Samter, (2021); Settersten, & Ray (2010)]. Peer pressures among students are of various natures. Ombuya et al. (2012) and Rumberge (2001) asserted that, there are three main categories of peer influence that can lead to dropout. These include: Outside influences-brought by friends and peer pressure from other high school dropouts, lack of interest in gaining education and teen pregnancies which has accounted for a higher percentage of students who dropout of secondary schools. These categories can only be managed by the head of the institutions with the support of the parents and other education stakeholders. Moreover, prefects and schools guidance and counseling masters are equally key in this regard (Mudis&Yambo 2015).

Meanwhile, rejected students by peers are normally discontented with themselves and their relationship with other students. Results from different researchers including Rumberge (2001), Odhiambo and Yambo(2012) and Mudis and Yambo (2015) indicated that, on average, about 31 percent of children who are not socially accepted dropout of

school compared to 9 percent of other children. Parents and the school administration may need to seek professional psychological help for children suffering from negative peer influence by establishing a strong guidance and counseling department with skilled personnel and a good religious foundation.

Peer pressure and environmental factors have been identified as influential contributors to the dropout phenomenon. However, there is a dearth in the existing literature, as no study has examined the combined influence of peer pressure, age, gender and home environment on the dropout rates of adult learners in the Ojo local government area of Lagos State. Therefore, this study assessed the correlation among peer pressure, age, gender, home environment and dropout syndrome among adult learners in Ojo local government area of Lagos State.

The study was guided by four null hypotheses tested at a .05 Alpha level of significance. These are:

1. There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege local government area of Lagos state.
2. There is no significant relationship between home environment and dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege local government area of Lagos state.
3. There is no significant combined contribution of peer pressure, age, gender and home environment to dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege Local Government Area, Lagos State.
4. There is no significant relative contribution of peer pressure, age, gender and home environment to dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege Local Government Area, Lagos State.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive research design. The study population of this study consisted of all secondary schools in Agege Local Government of Lagos State. The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select 230 adult learners in four adult education centres in Agege Local Government. Adult learners who were absent from the centre twice a week for a period of six weeks consecutively were selected for the study. A self-developed questionnaire tagged Peer Pressure, Age, Gender, Home Environment and Dropout Syndrome Questionnaire (PAGHES) was used to collect data. Employing Cronbach Alpha on PAGHES yielded 0.858 reliability coefficient. PAGHES comprised of two sections: Section A sought for personal data of the respondents such as gender, educational level, age, marital status, and working experience in their schools; while, Section B consists of items on the major constructs in the study - Peer pressure, Age, Gender, Home Environment and Dropout syndrome. The research instrument was measured on a four-Likert scale of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1).

The questionnaire was administered on the 230 respondents in the four selected centres. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Multiple Regression were used to test the null hypotheses, using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 Alpha level of significance one after the other.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege local government area of Lagos state.

In order to test the hypothesis, the data collected were collated, summarised and subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) is presented in Table 1.

Table 1:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) between Peer Pressure and Dropout Syndrome among Adult Learners

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	r	p-value
Drop Out Syndrome	230	18.47	5.479	.983	.000
Peer Pressure	230	9.878	5.005		

Table 1 shows that there was a positive significant relationship between peer pressure and dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege local government area of Lagos state ($r=.983$, $N=230$, $p<0.05$). This implies that as the influence of peer pressure increases, there is a corresponding increase in the rate of dropout among students. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between home environment and dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege local government area of Lagos state. In order to test the hypothesis, the data collected were collated, summarised and subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) is presented in Table 2.

Table 2:

Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) between Home Environment and Dropout Syndrome among Adult Learners

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	r	p-value
Drop Out Syndrome	230	18.47	5.479	.992	.000
Home Environment	230	10.19	4.813		

Table 2 shows that there was a positive significant relationship between home environment and dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege local government area of Lagos state ($r=.992$, $N=230$, $p<0.05$). This implies that as the influence of home

environment increases, there is a corresponding increase in the rate of dropout among students. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant combined contribution of peer pressure, age, gender and home environment to dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege Local Government Area, Lagos State. The data gathered were subjected to Multiple Regression Analysis. The result of the Multiple Regression Analysis is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Multiple Regressions on the Combined Contribution of Peer Pressure, Age, Gender and Home Environment to Dropout Syndrome among Adult Learners in Agege Local Government Area, Lagos State

Tests	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	6793.608	4	1698.402	4799.926	.000 ^b
Residual	79.614	225	.354		
Total	6873.222	229			

R = .994^a, R Square = .988, Adjusted R Square = .988

a. Dependent Variable: Drop Out Syndrome

b. Predictors: (Constant), Home Environment, Gender, Age, Peer Pressure

Table 4.16 shows that there was significant combined contribution of peer pressure, age, gender and home environment to dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege Local Government Area, Lagos State, $F(4, 225) = 4799.93$, $p < .05$ and $R^2 = 0.988$. Peer pressure, age, gender and home environment accounted for 98.8% of the total variance in the model (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.988$).

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relative contribution of peer pressure, age, gender and home environment to dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege Local Government Area, Lagos State. The data gathered were subjected to Multiple Regression Analysis. The result of the Multiple Regression Analysis is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Multiple Regressions on the Relative Contribution of Peer Pressure, Age, Gender and Home Environment to Dropout Syndrome among Adult Learners in Agege Local Government Area, Lagos State

Variables	B	SE	β	t	Sig.
Gender	-.374	.138	-.034	-2.704	.007
Age	1.206	.157	.179	7.694	.000
Peer Pressure	-.051	.057	-.047	-.891	.374
Home Environment	1.337	.074	1.175	17.952	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Drop Out Syndrome

Table 4.17 reveals that home environment, age and gender were significant relative contributing variables to Dropout Syndrome among Adult Learners in Agege Local Government Area, Lagos State ($p < .05$), while peer pressure was not significant contributor ($p > .05$). Home environment was the best contributing variable ($\beta = 1.175$; $t = 17.952$; $p = 0.000$); sequentially followed by age ($\beta = .179$; $t = 7.694$; $p = 0.000$) and gender ($\beta = -.034$; $t = -2.704$; $p = 0.007$).

Discussion

The study examined the correlation among peer pressure, age, gender, home environment and dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege local government area of Lagos state. Findings showed that peer pressure had a positive significant contribution to dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege local government area of Lagos state. This implied that the higher the peer pressures the higher, the rate of dropout among adult learners. The findings of this study align with Filade (2019), which highlighted peer influence as a significant factor demoralizing young adults in academic pursuits across different nations. Peer pressure, ranked first among various demoralizing factors, is acknowledged for its potential to introduce individuals to both desirable and undesirable habits. The study underscores that peer pressure occurs when individuals feel persuaded or coerced into adopting the values, beliefs, and goals of their peers (Fieldman, 2011).

The impact of peer groups on academic outcomes is a recurring theme, as noted by Carter and McGoldrick (2015), who emphasize the pivotal role peers play in influencing academic success or challenges. The study findings support the notion that adolescents' success in meeting school expectations often aligns with the dynamics of their peer groups. Additionally, insights from Drewry's (2014) research in the United States shed light on the negative consequences of peer pressure, including the indoctrination of friends into undesirable behaviors such as smoking, marijuana use, and eventually, more harmful substances. The documented influence of peers on academic pursuits and behaviors resonates with the study's conclusion that peer pressure significantly contributes to dropout syndrome among adult learners.

Furthermore, home environment had a positive significant influence on dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege local government area of Lagos state. This by implication shows that, environment influences the dropout syndrome. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Taddese and Tadele (2019), investigated the prevalence, causes, and prevention of primary school dropout in Gurage Zone, Ethiopia; identified various factors contributing to dropout, to include a detrimental school environment and shortcomings in school management. Mitigating against this syndrome calls for effective teaching and learning in secondary schools, as well as enhancing mechanisms of preventing students from leaving school due to unfavorable school conditions. This requires the provision of adequate, conducive physical environments and facilities that

would encourage students to remain in school. Finally, the influence of the home environment indicates that familial support, social position, and domestic situations have a substantial impact on the educational experiences of adult learners. Enhancing collaborations between educational institutions and community-based support systems can provide comprehensive support systems that would tackle difficulties connected to home environments and improve educational perseverance.

Moreover, Omollo's (2017) investigation into peer pressure among students in Kenya emphasises the pervasive impact of social influences on educational decisions. The study revealed that a lack of parental guidance and family hardships significantly contribute to dropout rates, underscoring the importance of familial support and socio-economic stability in educational persistence. This complements the understanding that the home environment is crucial in mitigating dropout risks among adult learners in adolescence.

The findings of the study on dropout syndrome among adult learners in Agege local government area of Lagos state provides valuable insights into the multifaceted factors influencing educational outcomes in this context. The findings highlight the significance of home environment as a substantial contributor to dropout syndrome, emphasizing its powerful impact on individuals' decisions to discontinue their education. The identified significant relationship between peer pressure and dropout syndrome underscores the need for targeted interventions to promote positive peer dynamics within the academic environment. Furthermore, the study reveals a negative relationship between age and dropout syndrome among adult learners. While older learners face challenges in balancing various commitments, acknowledging their potential positive attributes, such as life experience and intrinsic motivation, is crucial for designing effective support strategies.

The study's contributions to the existing literature and its implications for educational policies and interventions are substantial. Peer support programmes that foster a positive and conducive learning environment is advocated. Peer mentors who can provide guidance and encouragement to fellow learners, helping to counteract negative peer pressure and promote a supportive academic community should be encouraged. Involvement of parents, guardians, and local communities in educational initiatives that would foster a collaborative approach to address dropout risks would enhance overall learning experiences.

Conclusion

Based on these findings, the study highlights the necessity of addressing peer pressure and home environment factors through strategic interventions such as peer mentorship programs, parental involvement, and improved educational policies. Schools, communities, and policymakers must collaborate to create a supportive academic environment that encourages adult learners to complete their education. Implementing structured counseling services, flexible learning arrangements, and economic empowerment initiatives will further enhance the retention of adult learners in formal education. Ultimately, fostering a holistic and inclusive educational framework will

contribute to reducing dropout rates and improving lifelong learning outcomes among adult learners.

Recommendations

1. Schools and adult education centers should establish peer mentoring initiatives where positive peer influence is encouraged to counteract the negative effects of peer pressure.
2. Parents, guardians, and community leaders should be actively engaged in adult learners' education to provide moral and financial support, reducing the risk of dropout.
3. Awareness programs should be designed to educate parents and caregivers on the role of a supportive home environment in enhancing academic perseverance among adult learners.
4. Educational institutions should ensure that learning environments are conducive by providing adequate infrastructure, teaching materials, and psychological support services to improve student retention.
5. Policymakers should develop and enforce educational policies that address socioeconomic factors contributing to dropout syndrome among adult learners.
6. Schools should incorporate counseling services that help adult learners manage peer pressure, family challenges, and other external influences affecting their education.
7. Institutions should introduce flexible schedules and blended learning options to accommodate adult learners who juggle multiple responsibilities.
8. Providing scholarships, grants, and skill acquisition programs will reduce financial constraints that often contribute to dropout among adult learners.

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