

SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS AS DETERMINANTS OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

This study, examined sociological factors as determinant of academic performance among senior secondary school students with learning disabilities in Ojo Local Government Area, Lagos State. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design of correlational type. One hundred and ten participants were drawn from four senior secondary schools in Ojo LGA, Lagos. The purposive sampling technique was adopted to select students with learning disabilities in Senior Secondary School two in Ojo. The participants were screened using Mykebust Pupil Rating Scale. Instruments used were Mykebust Pupil Rating Scale ($r = 0.81$), Peer Influence Scale ($r = 0.79$) and Study Habits Scale ($r = 0.78$) Data were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. Findings showed that peer influence ($r = .816$, $p < 0.01$) and Study habits ($r = .751$, $p < 0.01$) influenced the academic performance of students with learning disabilities in Lagos State, Nigeria. Therefore, peer influence and study habits were potent predictors of academic performance among students with learning disability.

Keywords: Peer Influence, Study Habits, Students with Learning Disabilities, Academic Performance

Introduction

Education is essential for individuals to shape their lives, tackle the challenges of the times, and become responsible citizens (Ferit and Rezak, 2023) The Federal Republic of Nigeria, in its National Policy on Education (2013), acknowledges education as a vital instrument for national development. The government recognizes that education is essential for addressing the nation's social, economic, political, and technological challenges. The policy outlines objectives for each level of education in the country. For example, the goals of secondary education include preparing students for productive lives within society and for further education.

Academic performance reflects a student's grasp of various concepts and the skills developed across different subjects. In many countries, parents often expect their children to achieve high academic success, which places significant pressure on students, teachers, schools, and the entire education system. As a result, schools dedicate substantial time and resources to helping students attain good grades. Peng (2015) suggests that academic performance is influenced by factors such as intellectual ability, personality, motivation, skills, interests, study habits, self-esteem, and the teacher-student relationship. These factors can be fully realized when there is a positive connection between home life and

school. Ultimately, student academic performance is the central focus around which the entire education system operates.

Academic performance encompasses excellence across all academic disciplines, as well as students' abilities and achievements. Steinberg (2005) posits that academic performance encompasses students' ability and performance; it is multi-dimensional; it is intricately associated to human growth and cognitive, emotional and social physical development. Academic performance reflects how effectively a student is completing their academic tasks. There is a significant relationship between peer groups and academic performance, as it is often believed that a student's performance is influenced by the group they associate with. Peer influence can be either positive or negative; negative peer influence can hinder academic performance, while stronger students tend to have a positive impact on their peers, contributing to overall academic improvement. However, the effect of positive peer influence is shaped by factors such as self-identity, self-esteem, and self-reliance. Positive peer influence can also boost a student's academic enthusiasm and motivation to succeed (Lashbrook, 2000).

Secondary education serves as the foundation for acquiring advanced knowledge in tertiary institutions. It is both an investment and a tool for fostering rapid economic, social, political, technological, scientific, and cultural progress within a country. The National Policy on Education (2004) identifies secondary education as a key instrument for national development, aimed at enhancing individual potential for further education, contributing to societal progress, and ensuring equal educational opportunities for all Nigerian children, regardless of any disabilities.

Learner (2000) defines students with learning disabilities from a psychological perspective, emphasizing that while these students are not deaf and do not suffer from intellectual disabilities, they cannot learn through typical processes. It is well-known that students differ in their abilities, experiences, and needs, and learning disabilities vary from one individual to another. For example, one student may struggle with reading and writing, while another may face difficulties in these areas along with challenges in understanding spoken language. Learning disabilities are lifelong, but with the right support, students with these challenges can achieve academic success. According to Medicine Net Inc. (2001), students with learning disabilities can learn effectively and become high achievers when given proper guidance and strategies to overcome their difficulties.

Academic activities are focused on helping students achieve mastery of educational goals. In schools, the degree to which these goals are achieved is largely influenced by peer group interactions, which can significantly impact students' academic performance. Peer groups play a vital role in shaping the social, emotional, and academic growth of students. According to Allen, as cited in Steinberg (2005), peer influence starts at a young age and intensifies during adolescence. Therefore, understanding both the opportunities and challenges presented by peer groups is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of educational processes and improving school structures to boost students' academic performance.

Hamm et al., as cited in Lavy and Schlosser (2007), emphasize that friendships play a crucial role in fostering students' psychological growth and maturity, promoting social empathy, and shaping their self-evaluation. This statement highlights the significant influence peer groups have on nearly every aspect of young people's development. The impact is evident not only in their social and emotional lives but also in their attitudes

toward academic activities. Careful examination of these factors reveals their effect on the academic performance of students with learning disabilities.

Olalekan (2016) observed that peer groups significantly influence students' lives, particularly in their learning. Evidence shows that students often feel more at ease and comfortable around their peers. A bright student surrounded by less academically inclined friends may lose interest in learning, while being part of a peer group focused on studying can positively influence a less motivated member, encouraging them to develop an interest in learning. Katz, as cited by Olalekan (2016), noted that the nature of a peer group greatly affects the motivation and achievements of its members. He further suggested that while some groups may negatively impact their members, others may have a positive influence.

The peer group can affect a child's values, knowledge, clothing choices, eating habits, and learning experiences. However, the level of this influence is shaped by factors like the child's age, personality, and the characteristics of the peer group (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). Socialization holds particular significance for children with disabilities, which is why many programs integrate typically developing peers into special education settings or place children with disabilities in general education classrooms.

Highlighting the positive impact of groups, Bandura, as cited in Olalekan (2016), pointed out that by observing and imitating the actions of others, learners can avoid unnecessary trial-and-error behaviour and more easily replicate behaviours recognized by the group. A student may not be inherently dull, but simply playful. With proper guidance, if such a student joins a group of focused, high-achieving peers, they are likely to imitate their behaviour, resulting in improved attitudes toward learning. Similarly, a study by Bankole and Ogunsakin (2016) examined the effect of peer groups on students' academic performance and found that peer relationships significantly impact academic outcomes.

Lavy and Schlosser (2007) conducted a study that explored the influence of peers at the classroom level, finding that a higher percentage of female classmates improved academic performance for both boys and girls. The study considered predetermined peer characteristics such as race and gender. Peer influence can occur in various environments, including the workplace, school, and society, and it affects individuals of all ages. While its impact can vary, this discussion focuses on how peer groups influence the academic performance of undergraduate students. Peer groups can have a positive effect, motivating individuals to strive for their best, but they can also lead to behaviors that conflict with one's sense of right and wrong, resulting in negative peer influence. In this context, peer group influence is defined as the pressure exerted by others in terms of ideas, values, and behaviours, either positively or negatively, and is often associated with adolescents. Research indicates that students who struggle to balance their activities within peer groups tend to achieve lower grades compared to their less socially accepted peers (Hartney, as cited in Manski, 1993).

Another important variable in this study is study habits, which significantly impact students' academic performance. If neglected by students at any level, as well as by teachers, administrators, parents, guardians, school counsellors, and the government, the on-going trend of poor student performance in both internal and external exams will continue to worsen, becoming even more alarming. Mark and Howard (2009) assert that the primary obstacle to students' success in all areas is the absence of effective or positive study habits. They also argue that when students cultivate good study habits and maintain discipline, they are likely to achieve outstanding academic success.

Mark and Howard (2009) believe that a major obstacle to students' success in all aspects is the absence of effective or positive study habits. They further emphasize that with good study habits and discipline, students are likely to excel in their academic endeavours. Similarly, Husain (2000) highlights that poor study habits are a significant issue for students across all levels. Grace (2013) adds that while the process of learning remains somewhat unclear, research shows that the most effective study methods involve active engagement over time. This means that to study effectively, students need to read, create visuals, compare, memorize, and regularly test themselves.

Bolling (2000) argues that effective study habits, particularly through proper planning, help students prepare for future challenges and achieve their academic objectives. A lack of study habits places students at a clear disadvantage and is a key factor contributing to the need for remedial classes, falling behind in coursework, and dropping out of school. Developing strong study habits significantly reduces the risk of academic difficulties and the failure to complete a college degree. According to Bolling (2000), students who excel across most subjects typically demonstrate good study habits by actively engaging in their learning process, continuously planning, and carefully monitoring their academic tasks.

As previously mentioned, academic performance and related concerns have been extensively researched, yet there remains a need for further investigation. To support this point, Aremu, Salami, and Salam (2005) encourage researchers to explore additional variables that may influence improved teaching and learning outcomes. In response to this challenge, the current study examines peer influence and study habits as predictors of academic performance among senior secondary school students with learning disabilities in Lagos State.

Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to assess peer influence and study habits as predictors of academic performance among secondary school students with learning disabilities in Lagos. Specifically, the objective of the study are to:

- (i) Investigates the joint contribution of independent variables (peer influence and study habits) on the dependent variable (academic performance) among secondary school students with
- (ii) Investigate the influence of peer influence on academic performance of students with learning disabilities.

Research Question

- (i) What is the joint effect of independent variables (peer influence and study habits) and the dependent variable (academic performance) among secondary school students with learning disabilities.

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were formulated and answered.

- (i) There is no significant relationship between peer influence and academic performance of senior secondary school students with learning disabilities.
- (ii) There is no significant relationship between study habits and academic performance among senior secondary school students with learning disabilities.

Literature Review

In a study conducted by Busari (2016) on the impact of peer influence and social media usage on the reading habits of secondary school students in Oyo State, it was found that peer influence played a significant role among the students. The main reasons students used social media included reading, seeking news, making new friends, socializing, having fun or entertainment, and finding communities of interest. Peer influence had a strong effect on students, and the library environment also attracted students of similar age groups to use its facilities. Research by Mosha (2017) further revealed that peer groups had both positive and negative impacts on adolescent students' academic performance in selected schools, with peer influence being more pronounced in government-owned schools compared to privately-owned ones. Additionally, factors such as peer relationships, socialization, the environment, globalization, and drug use were found to significantly affect students' academic performance.

Bankole and Ogunsakin (2015) carried out a study on the influence of peer group on academic performance of secondary school students in Ekiti States the findings reveal that peer relationship influence academic performance of secondary school students and some of the factors responsible for these are seriousness from the part of the students, use of school library, group discussions among others. Peer group with positive academic value will succeed greatly. In addition, positive influence of members or friends of the same age group will possibly make friends study together, avoid delinquent act, do away from negligence which is negative influence and peer pressure that could be positive or negative.

Omotere (2011) conducted research on the influence of peer group on adolescents in selected schools in Ogun State to investigated the influence of peer group on adolescent performance the findings revealed that peer group could positively influence the academic performance of in-school adolescents. It was therefore suggested from Omotere study that parents and teachers should provide adequate guidance to adolescents to help them understand how the friends they keep can either positively or negatively influence their academic performance in school. Parents and guardian are expected to know their children friends during this sensitive period in their life so that they do not get misguided by their peers thereby loosing focus of their future goals. In order to draw more students in public secondary to using the library as expected there is need for attractive and serene library environment.

Bank and Marlin (2001) has conducted a study to examine parental and peer influence on adolescents. Subjects for the study consisted of 149 American adolescents enrolled in public high schools in a Midwestern state. The respondents constituted a quota-sample design that was approximately balanced for age, sex, social class, race, and community of residence. In comparison with the total population, the sample contained more blacks and disproportionately few whites who lived in rural areas. The researchers found that peer behaviours are more likely to affect the adolescent than parental behaviours, whereas parental norms are more likely to affect the adolescent than peer norms. Parents have had a longer time to influence adolescents and retain a responsibility to represent the standards of the adult world. Peers, in contrast, may be shunned if they attempt to impose standards on their adolescent friends but are likely to be omnipresent as behavioural models within schools (Biddle, Bank & Marlin, 2001). It is unfortunate that many adolescents do not have parents who are actively involved in their lives. Most parents do not provide appropriate supervision, and are unable to clearly communicate

their values. This puts these adolescents in an even greater danger of giving in to negative peer pressure.

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Study Habits and Academic performance among Students with Learning Disabilities

According to Crede atund Kuncel (2008), study habit is the degree to which student engages in regular acts of studying that are characterized by appropriate studying routine occurring in an environment that is conducive for studying. This includes the management of time and resources to meet the demands of academic tasks. In a study conducted by Sulman and Naz (2012) on relationship between study habits of deaf students and their academic performance, the result revealed positive correlation between academic performance and study habit of these categories of students. In relation to the finding above, Tamilarasi and Ushalayaraj (2017) noted that study habits are essential for students' academic achievement and in the acquisition of general knowledge. If good study habits are inculcated at the earlier stage of a child, he will be able to face a competitive society positively.

Anwar (2013) who conducted a study on the performance of college students, he found that some study habits had a positive direct relationship on students' performance but others had a negative direct relationship. In the same vein, Hassanbeigi et al. (2011), in their study of the relationship between various study skills and reading performance of university students, found that the study skills scores of students with GPA of 15 and above (out of 20) were statistically higher than those of the students with GPA of less than 15 in all of the seven skills (time management, concentration and memory, study aids and note-taking, test strategies and test anxiety, organizing and processing information, motivation and attitude and reading and selecting the main idea). Study habit can increase attitude towards reading, although in the Nigerian context, not all students who have a positive attitude towards reading can really study. Because studying might be a little bit more time demanding than reading, subjects that demand serious critical thinking and computation require studying rather than reading.

The study of Demir et al. (2012), who examined the effect of development of efficient studying skills curriculum on reading achievements and studying skills of learners; They found that students could acquire efficient studying skills by means of curriculum for developing efficient studying skills. The students were able to organize the study environment and use specific methods, such as efficient reading, listening to lectures, note-taking, efficient writing and doing homework effectively.

Similarly, Nuthana and Yenagi (2009) found significant correlation between study habits and reading achievement. They equally found that reading and note-taking habits, habits of concentration, and preparation for examination had significant correlation with reading performance. According to them, secondary school students who are better at reading and note-taking, who have high level of concentration in the classroom and are well prepared for examinations, may have better reading performance than their peers

who fail to imbibe good study habit. This shows that study habit can improve attitude towards reading.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design of correlational type. This research was employed in the study in order to examine the relationships that exist between the variables of interest in the study. The population of the study was One Hundred and ten (110) senior secondary school two (SS2) in Ojo Local Government Area of Lagos State. Purposive sampling technique was used for data collection. Pupil Rating Scale was used for the screening for learning disabilities by Myklebust (1971). This instrument was revised by Myklebust in 1981. The scale contains 24 items with test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.81. The Peer Influence Scale constructed by Adeyemo and Torubeli (2008) was used as a measured of peer influence in the study. The instrument has a test-retest reliability index of 0.79. While Study Habit Scale used as measured for study habit was developed by researchers. This scale contains twenty items. The reliability coefficient alpha 0.78 for this scale was got through pilot study.

Results

One research question and two hypotheses were answered using correlation and multiple regression analyses respectively. The summary of the findings are presented as follows:

Research Question 1: What is the joint effect of independent variables (peer influence and study habits) and the dependent variable (academic performance) among secondary school students with learning disabilities

Table 1:

Descriptive Statistics on Peer Influence and Study habits on Academic performance among Senior Secondary School Students with Learning Disabilities in Lagos State.

Variables	N	Mean	Std Deviation	R	Sig.
Peer Influence	110	2.30	.989	.816**	
Study Habits	110	2.50	.967	.751**	>0.01

The above table reveals the relationship that exists between the independent variables (peer influence, study habits) and the dependent variable (academic performance) The result shows that study habits strongly correlates with academic performance ($r = .751, p > 0.01$), peer influence correlates with academic performance ($r = .816, p > 0.01$). Based on the correlational analysis, it can be said that there is positive joint relationship between study habits and peer influence on academic performance among senior secondary school students with learning disabilities.

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Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between peer influence and academic performance of senior secondary school students with learning disabilities.

Table 2:

Pearson Correlation Analysis on Peer Influence and Academic Performance among senior secondary school students with learning disabilities.

Correlations			
		Peer Influence	Academic
Performance Peer Influence	Pearson Correlation	1	.778
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	110	110
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.778	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	110	110

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

It reveals from the table the relationship that exists among independent variable (peer influence) to the determinant of the dependent variable (academic performance). The Pearson Correlation yielded ($r = .778$; $N = 110$; $p < 0.05$) respectively. The hypothesis which states that peer influence has no significant impact on academic performance of senior secondary school students with learning disabilities was hereby rejected. Hence, peer influence has significant impact on academic performance of senior secondary school students with learning disabilities.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between study habits and academic performance among senior secondary school students with learning disabilities.

Table 3:

Pearson correlation Analysis on Study Habits and Academic Performance among senior secondary school students with learning disabilities.

Correlations			
		Study Habits	Academic Performance
Study Habits	Pearson Correlation	1	.067
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.781
	N	110	110
Academic Performance	Pearson Correlation	.067	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.781	
	N	110	110

**Correlation is significant at the 0.5 level (2-tailed)

It reveals from the table the relationship that exists among the independent variable (study habits) to the determinant of the dependent variable (academic performance). The Pearson Correlation yielded ($r = .067$; $N = 110$; $p < 0.05$) respectively. The hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between study habits and academic performance among senior secondary school students with learning disabilities was hereby rejected. Hence, there is a significant relationship between study habits and academic performance among senior secondary school students with learning disabilities.

Discussions

The first research question states ‘what is the joint effect of independent variables (peer influence and study habits) and the dependent variable (academic performance) among secondary school students with learning disabilities? The result of the findings revealed a significant joint contribution of peer influence and study habits on academic performance of students with learning disabilities. The results of this study align with the findings of Sulman and Naz (2012), who examined the link between study habits and academic performance among deaf students, discovering a positive correlation between academic success and effective study habits in students with disabilities. This study also supports Busari's (2006) conclusion that peer influence significantly affects students. Similarly, it is consistent with Bankole and Ogunsakin's (2015) research, which found that peer relationships impact secondary school students' academic performance, with contributing factors including student commitment, library use, and group discussions. Peer groups with strong academic values tend to achieve high success.

The first hypothesis states significant relationship between peer influence and academic performance among students with learning disabilities. The results of the study clearly indicate the significant correlation between the variables. From this result, academic performance among students with learning disabilities had significant correlation with peer influence. This corroborates the findings of Wentzel (1998) highlights the importance of peer support, noting that students who perceive their peer as supportive and encouraging tend to show higher level of academic achievement. This is especially true for students with disabilities, who may benefit significantly from positive peer interaction. This finding give credence to finding of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory which underscores the importance of social interactions including peer influence in cognitive development. According to this theory, learning is a social process and students often learn more effectively when they engage with their peers. This can be especially beneficial for students with learning disabilities, who may rely on peers for academic and emotional support.

The last hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between study habits on academic performance among students with learning disabilities. The result revealed that there is a significant relationship between study habits and academic performance among secondary school students with learning disabilities. The outcome of this study was in line with Kucukaychin and Crim (2012) that found that students with disabilities who develop good study habits tend to perform better academically. These study habits can help students compensate for difficulties they may face due to their disabilities, such as difficulties in concentration or processing information. The results of this study agrees with Zimmerman and Schunk (2001) emphasize the importance of self –regulated learning which includes the ability to manage one's own study habit effectively. This is particularly important for students with disabilities who may face additional challenges in managing their time and resources effectively.

Conclusions

In this study, the researchers examined the sociological factors as determinant of academic performance of senior secondary school students. The result showed that there was significant joint contribution of the independent variables (peer influence and study habits) to the prediction of dependent variable (academic performance) of students with learning disabilities.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of this study, the researchers recommended the following:

1. Teachers and School guidance counselors should collaboratively guide students with learning disabilities to develop good study habits through which their academic performance will be enhanced.
2. School Counsellors should not relent in attending seminars and conferences that would equip them with 21st century skills to meet the need of the students with learning disabilities which will give room for better academic performance.
3. Parents should make sure their children with learning disabilities are well monitored and encouraged to have friends that would have positive influence on their learning.

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