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Research Article

Peer groups, parental factors, and students academic achievement in secondary school economics

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The present study investigated the correlation among peer groups, parental factors, and the achievement of secondary school students in economics. Various factors, including pedagogical strategies, learning behaviours, and study habits, have been considered influential factors in students' achievement in economics. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the influence of students' peer groups and parental factors on students' achievement in economics. The study sampled 299 Nigerian secondary school students. The data collection methods employed included the administration of the Economics Achievement Test (adopted from WAEC 2021) and a questionnaire. The results of the investigation show a significant correlation among peer groups, parental factors, and students' achievement in economics. The correlation coefficients for these relationships were determined to be ($r = -0.10$; $p = .07$), ($r = 0.30$; $p < .01$), and ($r = 0.13$; $p = .03$), respectively. This correlation between peer groups and students' achievement in economics is comparatively weaker when compared to the correlation between parental factors and students' achievement in economics. The observed mean difference of 1.25 between male and female students is not deemed to be significant ($t(297) = 0.79$; $p = .43$). Conversely, the mean difference of 5.18 between rural and urban students is found to be statistically significant ($t(299) = 3.18$; $p < .01$). To improve the performance of students in economics, educational institutions and policymakers should promote the involvement of parents in student schooling and encourage social groups among students in rural and urban areas.

Keywords: Students' gender, school location, correlation, academic achievement in economics

1. Introduction

Academic activities are intentionally structured to support students in developing their competence towards educational goals. The extent to which these objectives have been attained within educational establishments is significantly shaped by the dynamics of peer groups, potentially exerting an influence on students' scholastic accomplishments. The 2010 United Nations Report emphasised the importance of education as both a fundamental right and a necessity. The aforementioned acknowledgement holds particular significance with regards to the attainment of the second aim outlined in the Millennium Development Goals. The rationale behind this assertion lies in the fact that a high-quality education plays a crucial role in fostering the growth and cultivation of capable and versatile people. The impact of familial background on the academic performance of children and their capacity to attain educational objectives has been widely acknowledged at an international level.

Secondary school education is an important stage in a student's academic career since it establishes the foundation for future accomplishments and continued intellectual development throughout their lives. The scholarly achievement of students, which is seen as a pivotal determinant of educational results, has attracted considerable interest from stakeholders in the field of education. The influence of parents and peer groups on the social, psychological, and educational development of students has long been recognised in academic literature. This is because academic achievement is often attributed to the motivation that children derive from their early interactions with those in their immediate environment. The academic well-being of a child is significantly influenced by both peer pressure and the kind of parental support they receive.

Similarly, the engagement of parents goes beyond the mere provision of educational resources, as it encompasses the provision of financial and psychological support for students, both at home and in the school environment.

A variety of factors influence students' academic achievement, with the importance of peer groups and parental factors emerging as prominent in educational research. Understanding how peer connections and parental participation affect academic success is critical in secondary school education, especially in topics such as economics. Peer groups provide a social backdrop for learning, whereas parental variables include diverse aspects of family support, advice, and involvement in a student's academic path. Peer groups influence academic behaviour and achievement in secondary school students. Adolescents frequently want praise and validation from their peers, which can influence study habits, motivation, and overall academic success (Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997). In the field of economics education, peer debates and collaborative learning can either improve or worsen understanding. It is critical to investigate how peer dynamics in the classroom influence students' knowledge and performance in economics.

Parental participation is frequently associated with excellent academic outcomes. A Parent is a significant other with whom a child has a long-term, unique and irreplaceable emotional bond (Rohner et al., 2012). Parents are the initial educators and key sources of support for students. Their involvement in a child's education, such as supervising homework, giving resources, and instilling a positive attitude towards studying, has a major impact on academic success (Fan & Chen, 2001). This parenting ethics shift towards positivity was followed by the United Nations Children's Rights Declaration (UNF, 2006 as cited by Kyriazos, & Stalikas, 2018). Investigating how parental influences affect academic progress in economics at the secondary school level might shed light on the diverse role that parents play in children's education. According to American Psychological Association (2015) parental Background is the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income and occupation. Family Background is defined as a measure of one's combined economic and social status and tends to be positively associated with better health. Understanding the interaction of peer group dynamics, parental variables, and academic accomplishment in secondary school economics is critical for educators, parents, and policymakers. Identifying the methods by which these factors influence students allows stakeholders to build targeted interventions to improve learning outcomes in this key subject. According to Eshun and Parker (2016), understanding how peer groups and parental factors affect children's financial achievement can have an impact on educational interventions and legislation. It may lead to the development of activities that promote positive peer pressure and boost parental participation.

Parental participation can have both positive and negative effects, influencing developmental outcomes and consequences for the formation of an individual's personality. Throughout history, numerous theories and their associated constructions have been established and refined to provide insight and understanding into the intricate dynamics between two unique variables: parents and students. The behavioural learning theories, as posited by Thorndike, Watson, Skinner, and Hull; the cognitive learning theories, as advanced by Piaget, Kohlberg, and Vygotsky; and the social learning theories, as offered by Bandura, have been utilised to investigate matters concerning students and parents. In a study conducted by Davis and Copper (2017), empirical evidence was obtained to substantiate the commonly recognised belief held by parents and educators that parental influence has a major effect on secondary school student's success in school.

The peer group, much like the broader community, functions as a vehicle for the process of enculturation and the acquisition of knowledge. From an early stage, children commence the process of constructing their own self-concept by assimilating information from influential figures within their immediate social milieu, including family members, educators, and peers. Socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, and the work status of parents all have an impact on how families view themselves and how they socialize their children (Bornstein, 2002). Following the familial context, individuals undergo a process of transition wherein their self-perception and social interaction skills are influenced by the perspectives of their peers. Children start the process

of forming attachments and fostering friendships as they move from their familial setting to child care centers, schools, and the larger community, and their participation in play-based activities supports this process. These links have a significant impact on human behavior. Research has demonstrated that infants and toddlers display a range of social behaviours in reaction to their peers. These behaviours include engaging in physical contact, expressing distress when observing distress in others, and afterwards offering sustenance or comfort. Parker (1990) posits that the establishment of early friendships often initiates around approximately three years of age, signifying the commencement of peer influence that tends to exert a longer-lasting effect on children. The influence of peers on behaviour is increasingly gaining significance. Harris (2002) posits that the influence of peer groups surpasses that of parents. It is crucial to acknowledge that various academics have contested this position (Berk, 2005). The peer group serves as a mechanism for young individuals to evaluate their self-perception and emotional attachment to both themselves and their families.

Peer groups and family influences play essential moderating roles, but they do not work alone. A number of moderating factors influence student economic success, which can exaggerate or reduce the impact of parents and classmates. Educational resources, instructor quality, curriculum development, socioeconomic status, and distinctive student characteristics are only a few of these elements. An in-depth insight into children's academic success can be gained by investigating how these moderating factors interact with the effects of parents and peers.

The peer group influence on the formation of children's socialising skills is also significant. Early friendships have a big impact on how well a person negotiates and how well they develop relationships with people, including siblings and other family members. Individuals gain knowledge pertaining to cooperative and social interactions, as well as the adherence to established group norms and recognised patterns of conduct, through their interactions with peers (Rohrbeck, 2003). The influence of the peer group encompasses all aspects of a child's life, including their values, knowledge, clothing choices, nutritional preferences, and educational aspirations. However, the extent of this impact is dependent on other contextual factors, such as the age and personality qualities of children, as well as the characteristics of the group as a whole is germane. The papers cited above do not encompass the entirety of the research conducted on the subject of parental involvement in parenting and the impact of peer groups. Nevertheless, the inclusion of these examples serves the purpose of illustrating the extensive range of scholarly inquiries conducted within this domain. The present study investigates the influence of parental involvement and peer associations on the scholastic performance of secondary school students.

Empirical evidence supports the existence of a positive correlation between academic achievement and peer relationships. According to Kolawole (1998), the engagement of adolescent students in collective endeavours both during and outside of regular school hours can exert an influence on their scholastic achievements. When students are driven in a positive manner and actively participate in such activities, there is a tendency for their academic performance to exhibit improvement. Nonetheless, if the major objective of the group does not correspond with academic endeavours, the individual's performance may be negatively impacted. The speaker provided further details regarding the phenomenon wherein certain students choose to associate with peers who actively promote and pursue academic achievement, while others opt to engage with or endorse classmates involved in harmful gang affiliations or occult organizations. Therefore, both the domestic environment and educational establishment play crucial roles in either facilitating or attenuating the effects of peer group influence. Including positive activities in school and outside of school, which can help keep an eye on and lessen the effects of negative peer pressure, can help reach this goal.

This study explores the relationship among peer group influence, parental factors and academic achievement in secondary economics students in Ibadan, highlighting the potential influence of these factors on students' academic achievement in economics. The following were the research questions that were answered in this study:

RQ 1) What is the correlation among peer groups, parental factors, and the academic achievement of students in senior secondary schools Economics in Ibadan?

RQ 2) What is the statistically significant composite contribution of peer group and parental factors to student's academic achievement in Economics?

RQ 3) What is the statistically significant relative contribution of peer group and parental factors to student's academic achievement in Economics?

RQ 4) What is the significant difference in academic achievement between male and female students in Economics?

RQ 5) What is the significant difference in academic achievement in economics among students from rural and urban areas?

2. Methodology

The research methodology utilised in this study is a correlational design. The research adopted a multistage sampling technique in order to choose the samples. The city of Ibadan is characterised by the presence of two separate educational zones. These zones are referred to as Zone 1, which contains the Ibadan Metropolis, and Zone 2, which encompasses the less urbanised portions of Ibadan. In the preliminary stage, simple random sampling was utilised to select a certain educational zone 1. In the subsequent phase of the investigation, the researchers used simple random sampling to select two local governments. The selection of these municipal governments was based on the pre-established educational zone. In the second phase of the study, simple random was utilised to select three (3) schools from each local government area that had been previously identified. In the third step, a sample of 25 senior secondary students II was randomly selected from each school. The school authority was visited to seek ethical approval, and students informed consent was sought before the administration of the instruments. The survey was administered to 229 students from three schools selected. The participants consisted of 168 girls and 131 boys through senior secondary school II (11 years to 25 years). This study utilised two research instruments, namely: The 2021 West African Senior School Certificate Examinations [WAEC] and Peer Group and Parental Factors Questionnaire.

The 2021 West African Senior School Certificate Examination [WAEC] includes a set of 25 items that make up the Economics Achievement Test. The aforementioned items were chosen from the examination that was conducted during the same year. The application of the item was based on its standardisation and established track record for dependability. The questionnaire titled "Peer Group and Parental Factors Questionnaire" consists of a total of 19 items, which are categorised into three separate categories. Section A presents a comprehensive summary of the personal information of the participants, including both their own details and those of their parents. Section B consists of a collection of 10 items specifically designed to examine the impact of peer groups on individuals' replies. Section C consists of nine items designed to evaluate the level of parental engagement in the educational endeavours of the participant. The assessment of the questionnaire's reliability was conducted by employing Cronbach's alpha. The peer group scale demonstrated a reliability coefficient of 0.71, but the parental factor scale exhibited a reliability coefficient of 0.68. In addition, an evaluation was conducted on the Economic Achievement Test [EAT] using the Kuder Richardson reliability method (KR-20). The assessment yielded a reliability coefficient of r= 0.72.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 illustrates the correlation between peer groups, parental characteristics, and the academic success of students in the field of economics.

Table 1
Relationship among peer group, parental factor and academic achievement of students in economics

Variables	*Parameter*	*Peer Group*	*Parental Factor*	*Achievement Score*
Peer group		1		
Parental Factor	R	−0.13	1	
	p-value	0.03*		
Achievement Score	R	−0.10	0.30	1
	p-value	0.07	<.01*	
	N	299	299	299

Note. *Correlation is significant at $p < .05$.

The findings presented in Table 1 indicate a statistically significant negative correlation between peer groups and academic achievement in Economics ($r = -0.10$, $p = .07$). Additionally, a negative correlation is shown between peer group and parent factor ($r = -0.13$, $p = .03$). In contrast, it is seen that parental influences exert a favourable and significant influence on students' academic success in the field of economics ($r = 0.30$, $p = .01$). This suggests that there is a negative, if weak, association between peer group influence and the academic achievement of students in the field of economics, in contrast to the positive association observed between parental influences and academic success.

Based on the aforementioned findings, it was observed that the correlation between peer group affiliation and academic achievement in the field of economics is relatively weak. According to a study by Ezewe and Olalekan (2016), there is a specific factor responsible for this. The study highlights that students' peer group memberships undergo changes throughout their developmental stages, and they may concurrently belong to multiple peer groups. As a result, various peer groups may have an influence on students' academic performance in economics. However, it is worth noting that the association between peer group dynamics and academic achievement may be more pronounced in higher education institutions such as colleges and universities, where peers tend to spend more time together compared to their interactions with parents. The present study reveals a significant correlation between parental characteristics and academic success, which surpasses the correlation observed between peer groups and academic performance. The research by Ajala and Olutola (2000), which asserts that the home environment has a significant impact on an individual because parents play a crucial role as the primary socializing agents during the early stages of an individual's existence, lends support to this assertion.

Analysis of the composite contributions of peer group and parental factors to student's academic achievement in economics is presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Summary of regression analysis of the composite contributions of peer group and parental factors to student's academic achievement in economics

	Sum of Squares	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*p*
Regression	1197.27	2	598.63	3.27	.04*
Residual	54203.94	296	183.12		
Total	55401.20	298			
Model Summary: R=0.13; R Square = 0.02; Adjusted R Square = 0.02; Std Error of the Estimate=13.53					

Table 2 presents the regression coefficient values, suggesting that the coefficient of regression (R) is 0.13 and the adjusted R-squared (R^2) is −0.02. These values suggest a positive contribution of 1% towards explaining the variance in students' performance in the field of economics. Furthermore, the findings indicate that both peer group and parental influences have a combined statistically significant impact on students' academic achievement in the field of economics ($F(2, 241) = 3.27$, $p = .04$). This suggests that the inclusion of both predictor factors, namely peer group and parental factors, has a significant impact on students' academic success in the field of

economics. Based on the findings shown in Table 2, it can be observed that both peer group and parental factors exerted a 1% influence on the academic achievement of students in the field of economics. Haris (2002) posits that the effect of peer groups surpasses that of parents, but Berks (2005) critiques this viewpoint as being overly extreme and highlights the existence of opposing research findings. This observation highlights the significant impact of both parental supervision and peer group on academic performance, emphasising that even if their individual effects may be minimal, their combined influence is substantial.

Analysis of the relative contribution of peer group and parental factors to students' academic performance in economics is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Relative contribution of peer group and parental factors to student's academic performance in economics

Model		*Unstandardized B*	*Coefficients SE*	*Standardized Coefficients Beta*	*t*	*Sig.*	*Tolerance*	*VIF*
1	(Constant)	74.673	7.189		10.39	<.01		
	Peer group	−0.401	0.221	−0.11	−1.81	.07	0.91	1.10
	Parental factors	−0.331	0.278	−0.07	−1.19	.23	0.91	1.10

As shown in Table 3, there is no significant relative contribution of peer groups to students' academic achievement in economics ($\beta = -0.11$), while parental factors also do not significantly contribute to students' academic performance in economics ($\beta = -0.07$). This implies that parental factors have a relatively small contribution to students' academic performance compared to peer groups, which have a positive contribution. In addition, the two predictor variables do not have any multicolinearity, as the tolerance value (0.91) is not less than 0.1 and the variance inflation factor value (1.10) is not greater than 10.

The study found a substantial association between peer group influence and students' academic performance. This implies that the group of students associated with them had a positive impact on their academic achievement. The findings corroborated Kolawole's (1998) and Olalekan (2016) claims that a student's involvement with their peer group might influence learning and, consequently, academic achievement. This significant association exists because interacting with the correct peer group can increase students' enthusiasm for studying and, hence, improve their academic achievement. The results of this study conflict with those of Skues et al. (2005), who found that students who experienced peer bullying at school had lower levels of self-esteem, felt less connected to peers, teachers, and schools, and were less motivated to perform well in school. However, Chen et al. (2017) discovered in their study that students who are part of a peer group with a significant interest in economics are more likely to thrive on the topic. Additionally, Zhao et al. (2023) discovered that peer group impacts had a considerable impact on secondary school students' academic achievement and learning outcomes.

This study also found a substantial association between parental characteristics and students' academic achievement. The findings supported those of Ajala and Olutola (2000) and Danesy and Okediran (2002), who discovered that the family's socioeconomic status, rather than parenting styles and moral support and encouragement received from parents, is a strong predictor of academic achievement.

The mean difference between the male and female students' academic performance in Economics is presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Independent samples t-test results of male and female student's academic achievement in economics

Gender	*Mean*	*SD*	*N*	*Mean Difference*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Male	57.13	14.619	131	1.25	297	0.79	.43
Female	55.88	12.833	168				

According to the findings presented in Table 4 the average score for male students' academic performance in economics is estimated to be 57.13, while the average score for female students' academic performance in economics is 55.88. The statistical analysis reveals that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students, as indicated by the t-test results ($t(297) = 0.79$; $p = .43$; $p < .05$). This suggests that female students exhibit relatively higher academic performance in the field of economics when compared to their male peers. There exists no discernible disparity in academic achievement between male and female students. This finding provides empirical evidence in line with Abubakar and Bada (2012) research on academic performance, suggesting that there is no substantial disparity between genders in terms of academic achievement among students. This finding challenges the prevailing hypothesis that female students generally outperform their male counterparts across various academic domains, and contributes to the existing body of evidence highlighting the existence of a gender gap in educational attainment. (Holmlund & Sund, 2008) have been cited in the text.

The mean difference between in rural and urban area academic achievement in Economics is presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Independent samples t-test results of students in rural and urban area academic achievement in economics

Gender	*Mean*	*SD*	*N*	*Mean Difference*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Male	53.07	14.08	105	5.18	297	3.18	<.01
Female	58.25	13.07	194				

According to the findings presented in Table 5, the average score obtained by students residing in rural areas in Economics was 53.07, whereas students residing in urban areas achieved an average score of 58.25. The statistical analysis reveals that there is a significant mean difference of 5.18 between rural and urban students ($t(299) = 3.18$; $p < .01$), indicating that this difference is statistically significant at a significance level of $p < .05$. This suggests that there is a notable disparity in Economics performance between students residing in urban areas and those residing in rural areas.

However, according to the findings presented in Table 5, a notable disparity exists in the academic performance of children attending secondary schools located in rural and urban areas. It might be argued that the academic achievement of students is influenced by the geographical location of schools. The aforementioned result thus supports the earlier finding by Kemijika (1989) regarding the differences in academic performance between students in rural communities and those in urban areas. The findings of the study indicated that rural schools exhibited a lower quality compared to their urban counterparts, characterised by a lack of various amenities and limited opportunities for exposure and experiential learning. The study has demonstrated that students residing in urban areas exhibit superior academic performance compared to their peers in rural areas, with respect to geographical location. In essence, kids residing in urban areas get significant benefits from their educational engagement within an urban setting, which evidently enhances their academic proficiency, notwithstanding the perceived drawback of being instructed in sizable class sizes.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study provide important insights into the relationship between peer group and parental traits and secondary school students' academic ability in economics. The study emphasised the importance of parental characteristics in moulding academic achievement, while peer group influence was shown to be insignificant. The aforementioned findings highlight the need for greater research and intervention techniques that prioritise increasing parental participation in order to improve students' academic success in Economics. Furthermore, by taking into consideration the various socio-demographic characteristics of the children and their parents,

it is feasible to develop tailored treatments aimed at addressing the individualised challenges faced by students.

5. Recommendations

Based on the empirical evidence and constraints identified in the research conducted on the relationship between peer groups and parental influences and the academic achievement of secondary school students in economics in Ibadan, Oyo State, the following proposals may be made: Educational institutions and authorities must actively encourage and support increased parental involvement in students' academic lives. The adoption of workshops, seminars, and educational resources aimed at educating parents on the importance of their involvement in this process can help parents engage in their children's education. Educational institutions have the ability to establish efficient communication channels in order to constantly tell parents about their child's academic progress and provide guidance on how to support their child's educational growth at home. It is advised that educational institutions provide a system for continuing monitoring and evaluation of interventions aimed at improving students' academic achievement in Economics. Regular assessment and feedback are critical to identifying effective strategies and areas for improvement. This process enables the opportunity to make necessary adjustments and modify treatments as needed maintaining consistent development throughout time.

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