

Effect of Adolescent Peer and Teacher Consultation on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Minna Town, Niger State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT: The study was conducted to investigate the effect of learner's preference for help from either teachers or peers when confronted with academic challenge. The study adopted descriptive survey research design with a sample size of 150 senior secondary school students. An instrument tagged "Adolescent preference for either teacher or peer consultation in solving academic challenges" was used. Face validity was employed with test-retest method of reliability which yielded a reliability coefficient index of 0.75 through Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. t-test statistic was used to test the three hypotheses. The study revealed significant difference in the academic performance of students who consulted teachers and peers when compared with students who solve academic problems alone. No significant difference was recorded in the academic performance of students who consulted teachers and those that consulted peers. Recommendations were put forward such as identifications of students who may be socially challenged, as well as promotion of instructional strategies that enhances cooperative learning. In addition, teachers should model help seeking and help giving in a world where team work is increasingly becoming the vogue.

KEYWORDS: Adolescence, Peers, Consultation, Academic Performance, and Secondary School.

I. INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is a measure of many factors in school settings. It is common knowledge that it indicates school effectiveness and life prospects of products of schools. School settings are characterized by interacting pattern, which constitute part of the critical success factors of academic achievement. Such patterns include teacher-learner and peer interaction patterns. Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs, proper, adequate and timely satisfaction of the need for belongingness promotes emotional, physical, behavioural and mental functioning of individuals. In schools, sense of belonging refers to students feeling of being valued, recognized and encouraged by others in learning contexts (Goodenow 1993). Ahmed, Minnaert, Vander Werf & Kuyper (2010), Gunindi (2015); Harwood, Bosack & Borsok (2010); Lanier (2007); Patrick, Ryan & Kaplan (2007) and Bursal (2013) posits that students in a classroom need to feel support from people they interact with. Teacher-advisee programme and peer-helper programme are common features of school counseling. For example, peer-helper programme involve the training of students as listeners to be first-line helpers in a school, as mediators to assist with conflict resolutions, as tutors to students who are experiencing learning problems and the like (Schmidt 1999).

The Nigeria secondary school setting is facing challenges of academic underachievement. This is particularly more discernible when criterion referenced tests are employed as against norm referenced tests. According to Education sector Analysis in Anikweze (2011), in virtually all subjects tested and at Junior Secondary School level and Senior Secondary stages, performance were particularly poor. The challenge of academic underachievement aggravates at post-secondary school level (tertiary education) due to learning deficits recorded at the secondary school stage. Ikeotunoye (2011) described the scenario more profoundly when he said that talking about the quality and functionality of education in contemporary Nigeria will be like talking of illiterate primary school leavers, semi-illiterate and disoriented secondary school leavers, unemployable University graduates, inefficient and disoriented teachers at all levels of education. It is on the basis of the above school condition that this paper seeks to investigate the value addition prospect of teacher consultation and peer consultation in school interaction pattern. Spector (1953) observed that in the classroom, poor pupil-pupil relationship is one indication of an unfavourable climate for learning and for positive group interaction. Adesemowo (1986) asserts that as a social animal, man's life and existence becomes meaningful when viewed against the background of his social relationship with his fellow being. In the general process of educating a child, his social adjustment becomes very important as this can affect his academic performance, since his

relationship with schoolmates and classmates dictates his level of acceptance among them. Jennings (1947) noted that the high sociometric status students tend to be people with qualities that brought people together in constructive ways. They could contribute to flow of ideas and make good suggestions. Siann and Ugwuegbu (1980) posit that developments in psychology has made it possible to compensate to some extent for a poor and deprived past environment. An adolescent who is low in self-esteem because of an unrewarding home background can form a friendship or friendships which enable him to see himself in a more positive light. Ajayi (1991) noted how crucial it is for teachers who want to promote academic efficiency, happiness and adjustment of students to create favourable social climate in the classroom. The social climate is largely on the quality of interactional relationship. Effective student-teacher interaction improves, encourages, enrich and motivate the student to learn. It should be appreciated by teachers that complex perception of students and related on-going interaction with students will be conditioned by a number of processes which has been revealed by careful experimentation in social psychology, for example, Akimboye (1987) posits that disparaging remarks from the teacher will lower the student's self-esteem and academic performance. Students with poor self-concept may give up hope and expect worse as inevitable.

Osterman (2010) documented that teacher's affective behaviours such as caring, respect, fairness and encouragement positively respond to student's needs for belongingness to classroom and school community. Teachers are major social links for students to connect with peers and others in schools. Gherasin, Butnaru & Mairean (2013), found teacher support to be a significant predictor of students mathematics achievements for both genders and positively related to peer support. (Lumby (2011) documented that weak teacher-students relations increase stress in learning environments which undermines students' academic enjoyment leading to school failure. Ahmed, Minnaert, Vander Werf & Kuyper (2010) said that peer acceptance and cooperation with peers are likely to fuel academic achievement and social skills. Gherasin, Butnaru & Mairean (2013) noted that lack of peer support speeds up the decrease in the motivation and invariably the decrease in academic achievement. Bankole and Ogunsakin (2016) found positive effect in their study of the influence of peer group on the academic performance of students. The literature review shows that peer academically inclined interaction and teacher consultation are variables of academic achievement. That the social skills rating of an adolescent in classroom climate is a critical factor and that the readiness of students to consult teachers is a function of students perception of the teachers personal disposition in terms of care, show of empathy, support, motivation, unconditioned positive regard and responsiveness.

Statement of the Problem :The study is about resort to needful academic consultation to either peers or teachers, that is, the frequency and quality of secondary school students patronage of teachers knowledge of solutions to academic problems compared to resort to friends or peers. Variables of interest include;

- a. Peer consultation as a means to solving academic problems
- b. Teacher consultation
- c. Academic performance

The focus of the study is on effect of resort to peers/friends or teachers in finding solutions to academic problems

Purpose of the study: This study was designed to ascertain the relative effect of adolescent peer and teacher consultation as it relates to search for solutions to academic problems.

Research Questions: The following research questions will guide the study;

- I. What is the impact of personal preference for peers in finding solutions to academic challenges?
- II. How does the frequency and quality of teacher consultation outside the conventional classroom teaching and learning affect academic performance of students.

Research Hypotheses: The following hypotheses will help to give focus to the study;

HO1. There is no significant difference in the academic performance of secondary school students who have preference for teachers when seeking for solutions to academic problems and students who solve their problems on their own.

HO2. There is no significant difference in the academic performance of secondary school students who solve academic problems through consultation with peers and students who solve academic problems on their own.

HO3. There is no significant difference in the academic performance of secondary school students who solve academic problems through consultation with peers and adolescent who solve academic problems through teacher consultation.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study is essentially a descriptive survey research design.

Population and Sample

The subjects of the study were students from three secondary schools in Minna town. The schools include;

- i. Government day Science Secondary School, Chanchaga
- ii. Government Day Secondary School, Maitumbi, Minna
- iii. Government Secondary School, Minna

A sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) senior secondary school students were selected through cluster sampling, Fifty (50) subjects from each school. The selection of subjects was restricted to students who started from Junior Secondary School (JSS) one in the school to ensure reasonable time of interaction bonding and acquaintance with peers and teachers. The age of the subjects ranged between thirteen (13) and nineteen (19) years with 17.9 as the mean age.

IV. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Research designed instrument called “Adolescent preference for either teacher or peer consultation in solving academic challenges” Response pattern of one (1) to three (3) was used in the order below. The numerical values are of nominal significance.

Peer preference	=	1
Teacher preference	=	2
Self-help often	=	3

The instruments were given serial number and distributed based on the sitting position of students to help in determining the academic performance scores of the students according to the categories on the consultation preference scale. The instrument is composed of two sections, that is, sections “A” covered demographic variables and section “B” deals with variables that relate to preference of students to either consult teachers or peers.

Measure of Academic Performance : Raw scores of two subjects (English and Mathematics) were obtained from first term examination result of 2020/2021 academic session. The average of the two subjects was calculated to represent academic performance of the subjects.

Validation of Research Instrument : Face validity of the instrument by two professors of counseling, psychology who inspected the items and recommended corrections, specifically on the tone of language in view of the poor use of English in public schools. The reliability of the instrument was through test-retest method within an interval of two weeks at Government Day Science Secondary School, Tunga, Minna. A reliability index of 0.75 was obtained through the use of the Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation.

Administration of the Instrument : Form Master of each class (picked in the schools) together with the researcher guided the students on how to fill the questionnaire. The questionnaire is self-explanatory but the respondents were told to seek help where they were in doubt of any item. Out of the 150 questionnaire distributed 140 were properly filled and returned, 6 respondents did not write anything on the instrument, and four were improperly filled.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

The variables of interest include:

- i. Students that consulted teacher for solutions to academic problems
- ii. Students that consulted peers for solutions to academic problems

- iii. Students that solve their academic challenges on their own.
- iv. Academic performance of students

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses 1

Ho1:- There is no significant difference in the academic performance of secondary school students who always prefer to consult teachers for solution to academic problems and students who solve the academic problems alone.

Table 1: t-test of the difference between means of academic performance of secondary school students who usually consult teachers and student who prefer to solve academic problems on their own.

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-crit	DF
Students who consulted teachers	51	44.06	11.34	4.62	1.98	88
Students who solve alone	39	31.69	13.48			

P. < 0.05

Table one shows better academic performance by students who consulted teachers for solution to academic challenges with a mean (x) of 44. 06 compared with a mean of 31.48 recorded by students who solved academic problems on their own. Also the mean of students who consulted teachers was found to be statistically significant at 0.05. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the academic performance at students who consulted teachers and those who solve academic challenges alone is not accepted. This is because t-calculated is greater than t-tabulated. This implies that there is a significant difference in the academic performance of students who often consult teachers when compared with that of students who solve the problems alone.

Hypothesis 2

HO₂: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of secondary school students who solve academic problems through consultation with peers and those who solve academic problems on their own.

Table 2: t-test of the difference between means of students who solve academic problems with peers and those who solve problems alone.

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal	t-crit	DF
Students who consulted peers	87	40.85	12.05	3.65	1.96	124
Students who solve problems alone	39	31.69	13.46			

P < 0.05

Table two shows that students who consulted peers for solution to academic challenges performed better with a mean of 40.85 than students who often solve problems alone with a mean of 31.69. The mean difference was found to be statistically significant at 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis that said that there is no significant difference in the academic performance of students who regularly consulted peers and those who solve problems alone was not accepted. This implies that students who consult peers have better academic performance prospects than those who solve academic problems alone.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the academic performance of secondary school students who solve academic problems through consultation with peers and those who solve similar problems through teacher consultation.

Table 3: t-test of the difference between means of academic performance of secondary school students who consult peers and students who consult teachers.

Group	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-cal.	t-crit.	DF
Students who consulted peers	51	44.06	11.35	1.57	1.96	136
Students who consulted teachers	87	40.85	12.05			

P < 0.05

Table 3 shows that students who consulted teachers for solutions to academic challenges recorded higher mean academic performance than students who consulted peers with means of 44.06 (teacher consultation) and 40.85 (peer consultation). However, the difference in the means was found to be statistically insignificant at 0.05. The hypothesis was accepted implying that there is no significant difference in the mean academic performance of secondary school students who consulted peers and those who consulted teachers.

VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first hypothesis has to do with the significance of peer consultation vis-a-vis resort to self-help in search for solution to academic problems. Peer consultation includes seeking assistance from classmates, students in senior class and academically focused group discussion. The inclination to peer consultation is an index of sociometric rating and it can be developed and nurtured. The result of the analysis showed that peer consultation is a factor of academic performance. This is particularly valid in view of the scenario whereby students often consult students who are known to be academically well-off. This agrees with the findings of Ahmed, Minnaert, Van der Werf & Kuyper (2010) that peer acceptance and cooperation with peers often fuel academic achievement and positive social skills. Also by way of inverse application Gherasin, Butnaru & Mairean (2013) found that lack of peer support speeds up decrease in academic achievement. The positive effect of peer consultation on academic performance was corroborated by Bankole & Ogunsakin (2016) who found positive effect in the influence of peer group on the academic performance of students.

On the effect of teacher consultation compared with resort to self-help, it was found that teacher consultation impact significantly on academic performance of secondary school students. This is probably attributable to the resourcefulness of teachers and their professional dispositions such as care, empathy and motivation. This finding relates to the study by Gherasin, Butnaru & Mairean (2013) who found teacher support to be a significant predictor of students' mathematics achievement for both genders and positively related to peer support. Also, Lumby (2011) posits that weak teacher-students relations increase stress in learning environments which lead to school failure. On the relative effect of peer consultation and teacher consultation, it was found to be statistically insignificant, meaning that consulting either peers or teachers is relatively of good effect. However, the critical role of teachers in engendering conducive classroom climate is not in doubt. Peer relationship is largely but not exclusively a product of teacher's classroom management practice. For example, Ajayi (1991) observed how important it is for teachers who want to promote academic efficiency, happiness and adjustment of students to create favourable social climate in the classroom.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Public concern about the falling standard of education requires constant review of school practices especially as it relates to critical avenues for enhancement of learning. This study focused on readily available helpers when confronted with academic performance challenges. Teacher consultation and peer consultation when compared to self-help shows good prospects and efficacy. But the critical concern is for school management agencies to recognize the need to promote social skills, group work, cooperative learning, sports and the like, so as to make it easy for students to relate meaningfully and productively. In furtherance of the need to promote social skills which is at the base of the inclination to seek for help from other teachers or peers, the following

recommendations are considered germane:

- ⇒ Teachers should deliberately encourage learners to seek help from reliable sources in the search for solutions to academic challenges. He should give example of self who seeks for help from fellow teachers.
- ⇒ Teachers should learn to identify learners who may be socially challenged especially when such challenges are impacting negatively on the academic performance of the learner(s). In sociogram studies, there are elements like the rejectees, neglectees and the isolates, these elements when left without treatment or proper management may result in unrealized margin of aptitude and invariably a basis for academic underachievement
- ⇒ We should always encourage co-operative learning rather than competition. Students who are introverted or those who are weak in task performance should be encouraged to participate in class activities. Teachers should avoid disparaging remarks when unimpressed with learners responses.
- ⇒ Teachers should role-model the practice of search for solutions through help from colleagues. One way of doing this is by use of colleagues as resource persons to teach or explain particular subject matter that relates to their area of specialization.
- ⇒ Teachers and school counsellors should deliberately encourage and nurture peer bonding and peer mentoring

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