

# Peer Influence and Negative Parental Attitude as Determinants of Academic Underachievement among Secondary School Adolescents in Polygamous Families in Lagos State

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**Abstract :-** This study investigated peer influence and negative parental attitude as determinants of academic underachievement among secondary school adolescents in polygamous families in Lagos State. The study adopted ex-post facto design, while multi-stage sampling techniques was used to select three hundred and sixty (360) students. To measure academic underachievement, the average score of respondents in 2018/2019 first and second term examinations in English and Mathematics was used. Other instruments used include Peer Influence ( $r=0.71$ ) and Parental Attitude Scales ( $r=0.76$ ). Three research questions were formulated and tested to guide the study. The data collected was analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Multiple Regression Analysis. The study revealed that peer influence ( $r= .981^{**}$ ) and negative parental attitude ( $r= .975^{**}$ ) had significant relationship with academic underachievement. The result also showed that peer influence ( $\beta = 0.395$ ,  $t = 11.29$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) was the most potent contributor to the prediction of academic underachievement. Recommendations were made on how to ameliorate academic underachievement among secondary school adolescents.

**Key words:** Academic underachievement, peer influence, negative parental attitude, polygamy

## I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Success is often a pleasurable event and this makes it a desire and goal of every human aspiration. For every endeavour, there are goals and objectives, viz-a-viz the yardstick with which the achievement of such targets are ascertained. For this purpose, examinations are conducted in academic institution, secondary school inclusive, in order to ensure whether the students have been able to achieve the expected objectives and are able to perform to the set standard expected of the grade or level. Besides, a progressive or upward movement of a student is premised on the ability to show that he or she had achieved the target academic objectives. Many adolescent students are not able to meet up with the set academic standard; and such situation is regarded as academic underachievement.

Underachievement is complex and challenging and is a never-ending issue facing parents and educators yesterday, today, and tomorrow (Voegeli, 2008). In general, academic underachievement is defined as failure to meet the academic

requirements of the school setting (Connor, 2002). Academic underachievement can be defined as the inability or failure of a student to meet the set academic objectives, expectations and yardstick after exposure to an academic content. Mostly, students are said to be underachieving when such students failed to achieve what is expected based on intellectual, psychological and economic resources that are made available to them .

Meanwhile, academic underachievement portends great dangers, especially to the affected adolescent students. For instance, Voegeli (2008) opined that children who do poorly in school and feel inadequate develop ways to defend themselves psychologically and self-protecting behaviours become their instinct for natural survival in the academic world. Underachievement has also been known to be responsible for lack of motivation, frustration, learning phobias, negative expectations, emotional scarring, resistance to learning, and diminished self-confidence (Greene, 2004; Voegeli, 2008). This shows that students that are experience academic underachievement are at much risk of continuing in the predicament, expect the causes are quickly identified and rectified.

Students' achievement in Senior Secondary Certificates Examination (SSCE) has been unsatisfactory over many years (Okoye and Okeke, 2007; WAEC, 2008; Osuafor and Okonkwo, 2013). One important factor that have been found to have nexus with this unsatisfactory achievement is the family structure and that is why Osuafor and Okonkwo (2013) noted that a systematic review and research indicates that family structure from which a student comes from actually has significant influence on the academic achievement. While the level of academic underachievement across various, adolescent students from polygamous families, a common global practice (Nigeria inclusive) that allows husband to have more than one wife, are very much at risk of having prevalence of academic underachievement.

Salami (2007), as cited by Bongiwe (2015), is of the idea that monogamous families are always eager to see their children progressing in their education compared with those in the

polygamous families. Akolomolafe (2011) supported this view that the type of family system the child comes from could influence his or her academic achievements in school. The reason for this has been suggested in many literatures to include, quarrelling (Whitaker, 2008), non-cooperation of parents, unhealthy rivalry, inadequate financial resources, poor academic provision, unhealthy home climate and so on. It is also most likely that adolescents from polygamous homes will be more at-risk of peer influence, well as not benefiting positive attitude and support expected from the parents. Furthermore, Elbe dour, Onwuegbuzie, Caridine & Abu-Saad (2002) are of the idea that children from polygamous families experience a high incidence of marital conflict, high violence, and family disruptions than do children of monogamous families. Besides, children raised in polygamous families' exhibit development dysfunction, as reflected in many outcomes including poor performance, poor mental health status, low self-esteem, poor social adjustment, rivalry between full and half siblings (Busari, 2013); more problems in their psychological well-being, bullying and victimization than adolescents from monogamous families (Mohammad, 2017).

World Health Organisation [ WHO] defines adolescent as any person between the ages ten and nineteen. To developmental psychologists, it is the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence can be a period of both disorientation and discovery. This transitional period is generally characterised with issue like independence , self identity, peer pressure ,and making tough choices about school, drugs , sexuality and social life.

The influence that adolescent peers do have on each other has become a very crucial concern when determining factors that determine outcome variables of secondary school students. In addition, Ajibade (2016) noted that the complexities of contemporaries' life have made adolescence a major developmental period compared to the ritualized transition; it has been in traditional culture and past generation. Komolafe (2004) opined that adolescence period is the stage when adolescent confide in their peers and spend most of their time with them. Likewise, Judy and Eileen (2002) stated that peer influence emerges as a potential factor in the adolescent transitional period from childhood to adulthood. Judy et al. went further to report that peers become more influential in the life of adolescents and dependent on their peers. The pressure to conform to the standards of the group has a strong impact on the behaviour of the adolescents, including the academic outcomes. This shows that peer influence is noted has a common phenomenon in the period of adolescence. The quest for social integration and acceptance could make adolescents to want to conform or comply with their mates. Generally, according to Ajibade (2016), it has been observed that a group which a child belongs to could influence his learning, studies from various cultures have shown that a child right from infancy to adolescence is faced with urge to belong and to be accepted by the group.

Furthermore, the empirical evidences suggest that peer influence might determine whether an adolescent student will achieve or under-achieved academically. For instance, Okorodudu (2013) found that pressure from peers significantly influenced student's attitude toward examination malpractice. Matthew (2010) and Oak (2009) emphasised that peer influence has much impact on adolescent's behaviour than any other factor. They also further observed that adolescent interaction with their peers is direct and much more powerful than the influence of parents, counsellors, teachers and other authority figures. Similarly, Olushola (2006) noted in a research that peer influence as a psycho-social factor is capable of influencing adolescent students' attitude (either positively or negatively) toward desire to excel academically. The danger is that if the peer influence is negative, Taiwo (2004) in Ajibade (2016) warned that adolescent is at risk since many of the adolescent values and beliefs are at variance with parental or home values and teaching. These scholarly opinions and empirical evidences seem to suggest that peer influence is not only significant but has greater impact on adolescents. Moreover, the scholarly view and result cited point to the likelihood that once the influence of peers is high (negative or positive), there is little parental influence can do to shape the academic achievement of adolescents. However, this claim is yet to be empirically ascertained and therefore there is need to conduct studies to either confirm or reject the claim. Therefore, in this study, using peer influence and parental attitude as independent variables, the study will help to either confirm or reject the claim that peer influence has more potency than any other factors in determining adolescent academic underachievement.

The attitude of parents towards the academic endeavour of the child is another factor that is of paramount interest in this study. Negative parental attitude is defined as an adverse, counterproductive and non-challant self-predisposition, involvement and commitment of parents towards the academic activities of the child. This ranges from poor interaction with children to negative attitude to teachers and school. Parents are important significant others that determine many aspects of children's activities because children grossly rely on the parents in providing basic necessities of life and especially academic necessities such as finance, guidance, positive attachment and so on. Thus the involvement of parents could be observe as germane to a child's academic achievement and this has been established in many studies. For instance, Suman (2011); Akinsanya, Ajayi and Salomi (2014) pointed that parents' education and parental occupation influenced academic achievement of students, while Femi (2012) concluded that education qualification of parents and health status are significant factors that affect the academic performance of students. In addition, being the first education agent and environment a child is exposed to (Nyarko 2010), the initial experience that would mould the child's values, aspirations, emotions, interest and attitudes are offered by the parents (Okeke, 2009). Similarly, what the

child learns at home and how his family motivates him towards education contributes to the child's success in school (Essien, 2002). Likewise, Obasi (1999) observed that mere making sure that the children are prepared for school in the morning is important for the children's successful achievement at school.

Again, home is noted as the bedrock of learning (Ajiboye and Omolade, 2005 cited by Bongiwe, 2015) and if the parental attitude is not favoring education the child is likely to face challenges in his performance (Bongiwe, 2015). Abubakar (2014) opine that the education a child receives from his/her parents, is likely to be a significant dominant factor on his / her behavior later in life. More importantly, Anertt (2007) established that the influence of parents and the parental relationships is a main source of children's downfall in academic performance. Aremu (2000) as cited by Bongiwe (2015) is of the idea that early childhood problem may have negative impact on later life development. Petit (2008) concurs with these sentiments when he asserts that a chronic pattern of parental violent attitude leads to elevated levels of anger, aggression and violence in children and academic performance of a child could be traced to the kind of home he comes from.

Moreover, Mohammad (2017) found that adolescents' perceptions of parental care and the fairness with which they feel that their father treats them have important effects on their relationship with their parents, their sense of well-being and their behaviour. Also, McNeal (2014) has found that some forms of parent involvement, specifically parent-child discussion largely affects on student attitudes, behaviors, and achievement as compared to others. Similarly, Topor *et al.* (2010) found that, based on teacher's rating, positive attitude parents have toward their child's education, teacher, and school, was significantly related to increased academic performance. This means that if parents do not have positive attitude as regards interacting with their adolescent children, teacher and school, such adolescent will likely have academic underachievement. It is based on this that this study intends to investigate peer influence and negative parental attitude as determinants of academic underachievement among adolescents in polygamous families in Lagos State.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of this study is to investigate peer influence and negative parental attitude as determinants of academic underachievement among secondary school adolescents in polygamous families in Lagos State.

#### *Research Questions*

For this study, the following research questions guided the study:

- i. Would there be significant relationship among peer influence, negative parental attitude and academic underachievement among secondary school adolescents in polygamous families in Lagos State?.

- ii. To what extent would the joint contributions of peer influence, negative parental attitude determine the academic underachievement among secondary school adolescents in polygamous families in Lagos State?
- iii. What is the relative contribution of peer influence and negative parental attitude to academic underachievement among secondary school adolescents in polygamous families in Lagos State?

## II. METHODOLOGY

### *Design*

The study adopted the descriptive research design using an ex-post facto type approach. This design is appropriate for the study because the variables of interest that were investigated in the study were not manipulated but described as they naturally exist among the respondents.

### *Sample and Sampling Techniques*

Multi-stage sampling techniques was used to select the participants of this study. The first stage involve the use of simple random technique in selecting one (1) Local Government Area from each of the Three (3) senatorial districts in Lagos State, Nigeria. From the selected Local Government Areas one (1) public junior secondary school was randomly chosen from the list of all junior secondary schools in the Local Government Areas.

In each junior secondary school, the researchers employed simple random sampling to select one one hundred and twenty students (120) on the whole three hundred and sixty (360) students were selected, but only three hundred and fifty-two (352) correctly filled the instruments and as such constituted the real sample for this study. The age of the participants ranges from eleven (11) years to thirteen (13) years. The population of the study consisted of all Junior Secondary School 2 students in public secondary schools in the state. This category of students was chosen because of the need for early detection and treatment of underachievement.

### *Instruments*

Two instruments were used in collection of data for this study. They are: peer influence and negative parental attitude. To measure academic underachievement, the researchers made use of average score of students in the first and second terms of 2018/2019 academic session.

### *Peer Influence Scale (PIS)*

This peer influence scale was developed by Bailur, (2006) to measure general influence of peers on students. It contains 21 items which covers various aspects of influence of peers on an individual student. The items are coded from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). Sample of the items on the scale includes: "My friends help me in sharing notes"; "My friends pressurize me for studies". This scale is found suitable for use in this study as it yielded Cronbach Alpha of .71, after the

pilot testing of the instrument using twenty respondents different from the participants of the study.

*Parental Attitude Scale (PAS)*

This scale was adapted from the one developed by Rojalin (2012) and was used to measure parental attitude towards the academic and schooling of the adolescent children. The scale has 23-items in a four-point Likert type scale, where (1) denotes Strongly Disagree and (4) denotes Strongly Agree. Examples of the items on the scale include: “It does not matter whether a child starts going to school early or late in life”; “I am interested to send my child to school every day and discourage absence even for a day”. The pilot testing of the scale showed that it has a Cronbach alpha of .76 after subjecting it to pilot study using secondary school adolescent who were not part of the study.

*Procedure for Data Collection*

The researchers took letter to the selected heads of the schools for permission to carry out the study. After adequate explanation of the purpose and scope of the study, the school

management granted the permission to carry out the study. The researchers used the simple random sampling technique to select the participants (360 students). Afterward, through the help of some class teachers, the instruments were distributed to the sampled participants to fill. The respondents were given specific instruction on how to fill the instrument. The researchers collected the instrument from the respondents, after they have finished filling it. The researchers appreciated the participants for their time and adequate cooperation.

*Analysis of Results*

Data collected were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and Multiple Regression Analysis.

III. RESULTS

**Research Question One:** Would there be significant relationship among peer influence, negative parental attitude and academic underachievement among secondary school adolescents in polygamous families in Lagos State?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlational Matrix of Relationship between Variables Examined in the Study

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
Academic Underachievement	43.00	7.815	1		
Peer Influence	49.02	9.009	.981**	1	
Negative Parental Attitude	40.10	6.736	.975**	.924**	1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1 showed that peer influence had significant relationship with academic underachievement (r= .981\*\*). Similarly, negative parental attitude had significant relationship with academic underachievement (r= .975\*\*).

**Research Question Two:** To what extent would the joint contributions of peer influence, negative parental attitude determine the academic underachievement among secondary school adolescents in polygamous families in Lagos State?

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Joint Contribution of Peer Influence and Negative Parental Attitude to Academic Underachievement

Multiple R= .852 Multiple R <sup>2</sup> = .847 Multiple R <sup>2</sup> (Adjusted) = .840 Standard Error of Estimate = 2.11982					
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	f. Sig.
Regression	3012.011	2	1506.006	2476.98	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	212.201	349	.608		
Total	8360.000	351			
a. Predictors: (Constant), peer influence, negative parental attitude					
b. Dependent Variable: Academic underachievement					

The result in table 2 shows that the independent variables had significant joint contribution to academic underachievement. The multiple R<sup>2</sup> of .847, implies that peer influence and negative parental attitude jointly contributed to 84.7% variance of academic underachievement of the secondary school students from polygamous families.

**Research Question Three:** What is the relative contribution of peer influence and negative parental attitude to academic underachievement among secondary school adolescents in polygamous families in Lagos State?

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Relative Contribution of each of the Independent Variables to Academic Underachievement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	Rank		
(Constant)	-.685	.421			-1.626	.106
Peer Influence	.298	.026	.395	1 <sup>st</sup>	11.29	.000
Negative parental attitude	.349	.038	.294	2 <sup>nd</sup>	9.23	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Academic underachievement						

Table 3 depicts the relative contribution of peer influence and negative parental attitude to academic underachievement. The result of the study reveals that the independent variables significantly determined academic underachievement. The result shows that peer influence ( $\beta = 0.395$ ,  $t = 11.29$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) was more potent in determining academic underachievement among secondary school adolescents in Lagos State.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The result of this study as shown in table 1 revealed that peer influence and negative parental attitude had significant relationship with academic underachievement. The result of this study corroborates the findings of Mohammad (2017) who found that adolescents' perceptions of parental care and the fairness with which they feel that their father treats them have important effects on their relationship with their parents, their sense of well-being and their behaviour. Also, McNeal (2014) has found that some forms of parent involvement, specifically parent-child discussion largely affect student attitudes, behaviors, and achievement as compared to others. Similarly, on parental attitude, related studies by Suman (2011); Akinsanya, Ajayi and Salomi (2014); Femi (2012) pointed that parents' education and occupation influenced academic achievement of students. These scholars maintained that parents that have low educational qualification might not be able to demonstrate required positive attitude that can help the adolescent children in achieving significant academic achievement.

Moreover, this study confirmed that the two independent variables (that is, peer influence and negative parental attitude) made a joint contribution to academic underachievement of the students from polygamous families.

Furthermore, this study showed that each of the independent variables made significant contribution to academic underachievement of students in polygamous families in Lagos State. The study also revealed that peer influence made potent contribution to academic underachievement of secondary school adolescents and this conforms with the studies of (Matthew, (2010); Oak, (2009) that peer influence has much impact on adolescent's behaviour than any other factor. Moreover, this result support the previous finding by Topor *et al.* (2010) who discovered that, based on teacher's rating, positive attitude parents have toward their child's

education, teacher, and school, was significantly related to increased academic performance. In addition, Olushola (2006) found that peer influence influenced adolescent students' attitude toward desire to excel academically. Moreover, Okorodudu (2013) confirmed that the influence from peers significantly influenced student's attitude toward examination malpractice. Komolafe (2004); Judy et al (2002) reasoned that peer influence is a factor that which its importance cannot be over-emphasized because adolescents often want to conform and model their behaviour and attitude towards academic activities. Ajibade (2016), similarly argued that the quest for sense of belongingness often make many adolescents engage in behaviours that could jeopardize the academic achievement and life aspiration. It has been observed that a group which a child belongs to could influence his learning.

One reason for the significant contribution of negative parental attitude to academic underachievement of adolescent students is that parental attitude is capable of influencing the child's values, aspirations, emotions, interest and attitudes (Okeke, 2009). In addition, Essien (2002) submitted that parental attitude is capable of having negative motivation which could lead to academic underachievement. In addition, Bongiwe, (2015) observed that when parental attitude is negative, the child is likely to face challenges in his performance. Anertt (2007) also established that the influence of parents and negative parental relationships is a main source of children's downfall in academic performance. In essence, a negative parental attitude will not make the parent to give adequate attention and care to the adolescent child, which could have grievous psychological effect, one of which is academic underachievement.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that peer influence and negative parental attitude are significant determinants of academic underachievement among adolescents in polygamous families in Lagos State. It can also be concluded that peer influence had more capacity than negative parental attitude in determining academic underachievement of adolescent students.

#### VI. RECOMMENDATION

The conclusion drawn from this study informs the following recommendations:

1. In order to curb the problem of academic underachievement; efforts should be directed at reducing the negative peer influence.
2. Similarly, effective parenting skills should be imbibed in the parents in order for them to be able to demonstrate positive attitude towards the academic endeavour and general wellbeing of the adolescent children.
3. Parents should be encouraged to pay more attention towards the education of their adolescent children.

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