

Locus of Control and Peer Pressure Among Secondary School Students in Nigeria

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Abstract

The issues revolving around peer pressure influence among secondary school students had remain dominant in discussion relating to attitude and behaviour of students. Therefore, there is need to continue to investigate factors that determine and dictate the pace of peer pressure among students in secondary schools with the view to come up with recommendations relating to peer pressure influence. This study, therefore, addressed the concept of locus of control and peer pressure among secondary school students in Nigeria. The study adopted the qualitative approach of data collection which involved the content analysis of studies and write-ups on locus of control and peer pressure among secondary school students in Nigeria. The study revealed locus of control as a very important factor that determines the pace of peer pressure among secondary school students in Nigeria. The study recommended the need for parents and teachers to encourage students to develop their internal locus of control to enable them resist negative peer influence from their peers.

Keywords: Locus of control, Peer pressure, Secondary school students, Nigeria

Introduction

Peer pressure are predominant among secondary school students and usually have great impact on their overall development and behaviour in the society. Peer pressure is a phenomenon where students tend to get influenced by the life styles and the ways of thinking of their peers. It can be described as a situation when members or friends of the same group try to influence or talk a friend to doing things that they would not have done. According to Correa (2010), peer pressure becomes an important influence on behaviour during adolescence, and has been called a hallmark of an adolescent experience. Peer pressure among students is most pronounced with respect to style, taste, appearance, ideologies and values. Peer pressure is commonly associated with episodes of adolescent risk taking (such as delinquency, drug abuse, sexual behaviours, and reckless driving) because these activities commonly occur in the company of peers but it can also occur in learning activities and media usage among students (Martens, 2010). Affiliation with friends has been shown to be a strong predictor of an adolescent's own behaviour. However, peer pressure can also have positive effects when students are pressured by their peers towards positive behaviour, such as volunteering for academic and extra-curricular activities disseminated in the school through certain media.

Peers could have influence on each other and this may affect the student's attitudes, values or behaviour towards everything. Secondary school students feel social pressure to conform to the group of peers with whom they socialise. This pressure can influence how they dress, what kind of music they listen to and what type of behaviour they engage in. Peer groups are usually cliques of friend who are about the same age. Peer pressure could begin in early childhood with children trying to get others to play the games they want and generally increases through childhood and reaches its intensity in the pre-teen and teen years. Virtually all secondary school students deal with peer pressure often on daily basis. This is because

secondary school students spend more time with their friends and less time with their parents and family members. Although some students remain loners and not part of a group, most secondary school students tend to be part of a small group of friends called clique.

Secondary school students who find themselves in more academically motivated peer groups not only have higher self-esteem and strong sense of self-concept, but also have a higher regard for academic achievement, (Theng and Lim, 2011). Secondary school students need the approval and respect of their peers such that if a student is not understood at home and also not accepted by their peers, the student is likely to become emotionally unstable and have difficulty fitting into society. Some secondary school students give in to peer pressure because they want to be liked, to fit in, or because they worry that other students may make fun of them if they do not go along with the group. Others may go along because they are curious to try something new that others are doing. Experience has shown how peer pressure can influence students to change their minds from what they know for sure is acceptable behaviour to unacceptable behaviour just because everyone else in their group is doing it. Students cannot always avoid negative peer pressure. It may continue to be a fact of life through childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.

Donahue (2013) found three kinds of peer pressure and the most common among them is a desire to do something that is neither right nor wrong to fit in with others because others are doing it, doing something that is known to be wrong, and lastly peer permission which is seeking permission from their mates to do things they should not have done in a hurry. However, it is difficult or doubtful for secondary school students to maintain neutrality or holding to norms and attitudes carefully imparted by parents in the face of enormous pressure from peers in secondary school setting. Sometimes, peer pressure is not easy to define as a group can only make subtle signals without saying anything at all, letting such student know that he must adopt particular attitudes towards others in order to win acceptance and approval.

The pressure to conform to do what other students are doing can be powerful and hard to resist. A student might feel pressured to do certain things just because others are doing it. This is because students usually transit from depending on their parents at home to depending on their peers at school. In addition, the students may rely on peer group because they are new to the college environment and are attempting to adapt to the college life-style. Although, peers may provide essential coping mechanism during this transitional period, the increase in peer involvement in a student's everyday life may influence the increase in peer pressure as well. Indeed, peers act as an influential model by introducing risky behaviours. Several factors have relationship with peer group influence, one of which is the locus of control of students.

Locus of control is the extent to which students believe they have power over events in their lives. Pizitz (2012), described locus of control as the extent to which students believe that they can control events that affects them and can either be internal or external. A student with an external locus of control is more likely to believe that fate is determined by chance or external forces beyond their personal control. A student with internal locus of control will take responsibility for their actions and regards themselves as being in control of their lives and ultimately their destinies. Ogunmakin and Akomolafe (2013), presented locus of control as referring to the extent to which students believe that they can control events that affect them. It could therefore be inferred that locus of control has the possibility of determining knowledge and skills acquisition by students.

Cherry (2012), also postulated that locus of control is continuum and no one has 100 percent external or internal locus of control because most students lie somewhere on the continuum between the two extremes. Locus of control can also be classified along a spectrum from internal to external; where a student falls along the spectrum determines the extent to which they believe they can affect the events around them. Students with internal locus of control believes that rewards in life are guided by their own decisions and efforts such that success in life is dependent on their own luck or efforts. Hence, a student with internal locus of control has been shown to grow with development of self-regulatory abilities. On the other hand, students with external locus of control believe that an external person or force is responsible for their success or failure. In other words, those who hold themselves accountable for their own success or failure uses internal locus of control while those who believe in the environment and opportunities are external locus of control.

Moreover, on one side of the locus continuum are students who believe that locus of control can fix their ability to control life events, whereas on the other side, there are students who believe that life events occur in conjunction with external factors such as accident, by chance or destiny (Borich and Tombaric 1995). The later can be explained by factors such as effort and ability which are derived from within a student having a core of internal causality. Factors such as the difficulty level of a task and chance, both of which arise from outside the student are considered to be part of external locus of control (Fosterling 2001). Students with internal locus of control believe that through their behaviour they can control the likelihood of receiving reinforcers, while students with external locus of control do not see as much link between their behaviour and the likelihood of receiving reward. Rotter (1994), found students with internal locus of control to be highly motivated and are more likely to believe that they possess all of the abilities that are necessary to complete a task. Strong as internal and external locus of control could be in the lives of secondary school are sometimes subtly influenced or bullied by peers. It is the light of the foregoing that this study did a critical review of literature to establish relationship between peer pressure and locus of control among secondary school students in Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopts the exploratory research design using a qualitative approach. An exploratory design is conducted about a research problem when there are few or no earlier studies to refer to or rely upon to predict an outcome with a specific focus on gaining insights. Content analyses of many studies on emerging technologies appropriation in school libraries for library service delivery were done to summarise existing knowledge and develop a new understanding of the research problem using synoptic reasoning. Studies in journals, conference proceedings, books were thematically analysed.

Literature Review

Locus of Control Among Students

Locus of Control as a psychology concept is one of the most researched ideas that stems from Rotter (1978) social learning theory. It refers to the notion that a student view life either as something that they can control or something that controls them. Locus of control basically is either internal or external. It may also be possible that students operate with an internal Locus of Control in some aspects of life while operating from an external Locus of Control in other areas. Locus of Control as a concept is a dimensional construct representing the degree to

which a student perceives reinforcements in their lives to the result of their own actions internal locus of control or fate of external locus of control (Bandura 1986, Rotter 1966). Locus of Control as a concept meaningfully relates to several variables. Contrary to popular opinion, Joelson (2017) in a study on locus of control and how it determines success or failure found that locus of control is an inborn personality component and submitted that it is shaped by childhood experiences which includes interactions with their parents. Unlike some other influences on students, Locus of Control reflects a student implicit response to fundamental philosophical and scientific questions about the nature of human life and experiential reality. For this reason, locus of control as a concept offers a bridge between the concepts and other variables.

According to, Adnerman and Midgley (1997), students who believe that their poor performance is caused by factors out of their control are unlikely to see any reason to hope for improvement. In contrast, if a student attributes their poor performance to lack of important skills or poor habits, are more likely to persist in the future. In other words, students with external locus of control are more likely to respond to failure by giving up hope of trying harder, whereas those with an internal locus of control are likely to respond to failure by trying harder to improve (Noel, et al 1987). According to this scholar, Locus of Control focuses on ability to cope with uncertainty. Consequently, students who have less tolerance resist while the ones with high tolerance can adapt to change more easily. Therefore, locus of control tries to identify the reaction given to change according to its status. Cherry (2017), in a study titled "locus of control and your life, are you in control of your destiny"?, submitted that locus of control does not only influence how students respond to events but motivation to take necessary action.

Moreover, when students most often believe their success or failure are due to the factors within their control, they are viewed as having an internal locus of control which implies that success or failure happened because of the effort the students put forward or did not put forward. If a student most often believed their successes or failures are due to something outside their control, the belief is that successes or failures happened because of luck or task difficulty), then it is believed that the external locus of control is at play. Assouline et al (2006), Carbon and Nowicki (1994), Okwaraji, (2018) in a study on locus of control, self-esteem and depression on students in two Nigerian rural communities found that high level of external locus of control, low self-esteem and depression were responsible for poor performance established among the students in the rural communities surveyed.

There are advantages and disadvantages to having an internal locus of control in different settings. Many psychologists and researchers agreed that having an internal locus of control is ultimately the healthier attributes (Crandall and Crandall, 1983). Studies conducted with college students indicated those students with an internal locus of control show more success in adjustment to college life than those with an external locus of control (Martin and Dixon, 1994). Those students with an internal locus of control had above average course grades, (Kirkpatricketal, 2008).

Peer Pressure Among Students

Peer pressure plays an important role in the life of secondary school students even while the family continues to be significant. In general peer pressure offer students with positive opportunities despite the negative connotations that peer relationship has to many of us. Peer relationships are actually important for healthy development of secondary school students into a healthy after-school life and be properly transited into the larger society, (Maria, 2007).

According to this scholar, peer pressure also has the potential to encourage problem behaviours. Although the negative influence of peers is often over-emphasized, more can be done to help students experience the family values and the peer group as mutual constructive environments.

Huefner, (2017), studied positive and negative peer pressure in a residential care. Clinical records for 886 residential (secondary school students) were used in a Hierarchical Linear Model and found that both negative and positive peer pressure had toll on the students. This happened over time in a naturally occurring patterns of serious problem behaviour. Korir and Kipkemboi (2014) study was based on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, and considers learning as an interaction between environment, behaviour and one's psychological processes, particularly peer influence. The study established that school environment and peer pressure (influence) made significant contributions to the student performance in school. School climate is closely linked to the interpersonal relations between the students and even the teachers.

According to Howard (2004) secondary school students have always been exposed to peer influence but the kind of peer pressure that they encounter have changed tremendously in the recent past. Peers can influence everything from what they choose to wear to whether or not student engages in drugs related or other delinquent behaviour. The choice they make regarding their motivation, engagement and achievement in school, society and the satisfaction they obtain from their choices depend in part on the context in which they make those choices (Ryan 2000). According to another scholar Lahbrook (2000) students are well aware that they influence each other and noted that peer pressure can provide many positive elements in student's life. It is therefore important to remember that peer pressure can potentially have a deadly impact and other various negative effects. It is vital for educators and other related professionals to understand the complex aspects of peer pressure in order to stop these negative effects before they occur. Clara (2018) found in a survey titled dealing with peer pressure in a teenage classroom that some students refused to participate, no matter how many times the teacher asked a question. The study revealed that the students were teased for not speaking good english every time and they decided not speak in class.

Peer pressure is an important influence on behaviour during adolescence, and peer pressure has been called a hallmark of an adolescence experience (Sternberg and Monahan 2007). According to the researcher, peer pressure among secondary school students is most pronounced in respect of style, taste, appearance, ideology and values. Peer pressure can also have positive effects when students are pressured by their peers towards positive behaviour such as volunteering for charity or excelling in academics (Estrada, 2013).

Theoretical Underpinnings

Locus of control theory as a dimensional construct representing the degree to which students perceive reinforcing events in their lives to the result of their own actions or fate. It also explains how students explain success and failures in their lives. Locus of control was defined by Kirkpatrick, Stant, Downes and Gaither (2008), as a dimensional construct representing the degree to which individuals perceive reinforcing events in their lives to be the result of their own actions or fate. The construct, locus of control is a theory that accounts for how people perceive and explain successes and failures in their lives. Locus of control can be internal or external. Individuals with internal locus of control believe that the outcomes of their actions are results of their own abilities. They believe that hard work leads to positive outcomes. They also believe that every action has its own consequences and one's attitude

determines one's attitude (Messer, 1971). External locus of control dowses the morale to work hard towards a goal and makes people resign to fate. Individuals with external locus of control attribute outcomes of events to external circumstances. They believe that many things that happen in their lives are not within their control and blame others rather than themselves for any negative outcome.

Locus of Control in Rotter's Perspective, (Rotter, 1954, 1966, 1987, cited in Pervin, 1993), is a part of social learning theory of personality. This theory was originated from the integration of two major approaches in American psychology viz: the stimulus-response (S-R) theory and the cognitive or field position related to Lewin's theory (Graham and Weiner, 1996). By integrating these theories, Rotter (1966) cited in Pervin, (1993), explained that human motivational behaviour is a function of expectancy and reinforcement value. Rotter (1954), cited in Graham and Weiner (1996), stated that reinforcement value is related to the degree of preference for any reinforcement that is relative, and expectancy is related to individuals' expectancies for success which is determined by people's past history of successful or unsuccessful experiences. Exploring the influences of expectancies in human behaviour, (Rotter, 1966, cited in Graham and Weiner, 1996) found that expectancies of success are either skill-related situations or chance-related contexts.

Studying more details of these situations, Rotter, (1966) cited in Graham and Weiner, (1996), realised that people manifest two broad yet different perceptions of situations and of their success that reflected either internal or external control. Later, Rotter (1966), postulated that individuals' personality is determined by having either internal locus of control or external locus of control (Pervin, 1993; Graham and Weiner, 1996; Corr and Matthews, 2009). Both types of personality traits, internal or external locus of control, create different motivational behaviours, tendencies, and cognitions. Behaviour potential (the likelihood of engaging in a particular behaviour) is defined as a function of expectancy (the probability that a given behaviour will lead to a particular outcome) and reinforcements such as the outcomes of our behaviour (Lefcourt, 1976 cited in April, Dharani and Peters, 2012). Since locus of control refers to the individuals' belief about controllability over what happens to them in life, it is defined as a personality trait or construct that reveals how individuals perceive their ability to control life events or environment (2012). This belief can be characterised on one continuum on which two extremes can be recognised.

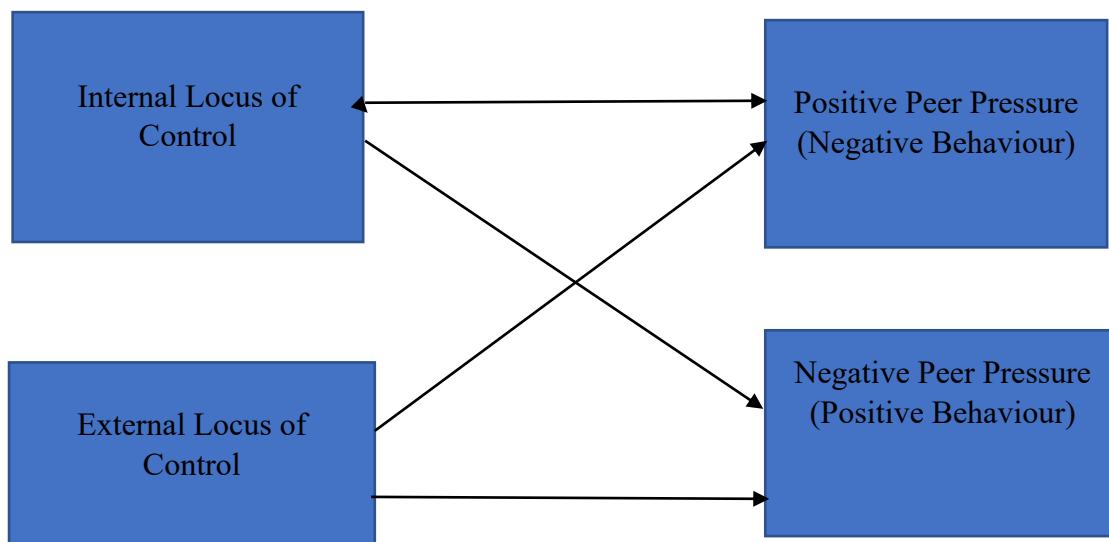
Based on the locus of control theory, students who would believe that an outcome is dependent on their own behaviour, and feel individually responsible for the events that happen to them have internal locus of control (Lloyd and Hastings, 2009; Pannells and Claxton, 2008). In contrast, people with external locus of control would believe that outcomes are not as a result of their own actions and are the consequences of fate, luck, chance and environmental influences (Pannells and Claxton, 2008; Lloyd and Hastings, 2009). The continuum of locus of control in Rotter's single-trait theory is situation specific (Rotter, 1975 cited in Lloyd and Hastings, 2009). Rotter (1975) demonstrated that locus of control is not typology or predisposition, but it is a general belief or expectancy and situation-based trait. Thus, an individual's locus of control can vary across situations depending on two main factors: history of success and reinforcement and his or her expectancies (Graham and Weiner, 1996; Lloyd and Hastings, 2009). Based on this specific characteristic of locus of control, it has been found that individuals who faced rich meaningful experiences changed their causal attribution orientations (Lefcourt, 1976 cited in Bozorgi, 2009).

Karayurt and Dicle (2008) also demonstrated that when students' progress in their educational programmes their locus of control shift to internal. They have indicated that when students are faced with problem-based learning program, they are supported by their internal locus of control. (Karayurt and Dicle, 2008). Based on similar finding, Sandler and Lakey, (1982) cited in Bozorgi (2009) found that stress-challenge environment and controlled risk-taking education (for example outdoor adventure programs) can influence people's locus of control. Not only involving in social experiences can shift individuals' locus of control from external to internal. These finding are congruent with social learning theory in which locus of control is situation based, that is, having more social experiences can change locus of control (Rotter, 1975). It is also noted that persons with internal locus of control had high level of grade points and felt self-confident in predicting their success for academic performance (Rose, Hall, Bolen and Webster, 1996 cited in Bozorgi, 2009).

Conclusion

This study reviewed relationship between locus of control and peer pressure. The review established that locus of control of secondary school student has the tendency to determine the extent to which the students are influenced by their peers. Students with dominant internal locus of control have the ability are not easily influenced by peers as they take responsibility of their actions without. Such student also tends to succeed more than students with dominant external locus of control. On the other hand, students with external locus of control are easily influenced by their peers and place responsibility of whatever happens to them on external forces. Such students have low possibility of success especially when exposed to negative peer influence. Peer pressure among secondary school students is most pronounced in respect of style, taste, appearance, ideology and values. Peer pressure also has positive effects when students are pressured by their peers towards positive behaviour such as volunteering for charity or excelling in academics.

Model for Locus of Control and Peer Pressure



Recommendations

1. The services of Guidance Counsellors should be engaged to guide the students in secondary schools in Nigeria not to fall prey to negative pressure from school mates and peers.
2. Students should be taught and trained on how to develop their internal locus of control and believe in themselves more than relying on other students' perception and judgement about their behaviours. This will also help in developing the self-esteem of the students.
3. School authorities should add religious and moral lessons to extra curricula activities.
4. Authorities of schools in Nigeria should engage the services of guidance counsellors to provide counselling sessions for students as psychological factors may interfere in teaching and learning process.

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