

## THE ROLE OF PEERS AMONG THE SCHOOL STUDENT'S MENTALITY

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### ABSTRACT

This research delves into how peers significantly influence the mindset of school students, shedding light on their role in shaping mental health and academic achievements. Adopting a descriptive research framework, the study utilized a structured quantitative method and analytical tools such as SPSS. It explores key aspects of peer influence, including social support, group interactions, communication dynamics, and peer pressure, and their links to students' psychological well-being and cognitive growth. The results highlight that healthy peer relationships build emotional strength, improve confidence, and enhance academic performance. In contrast, negative peer interactions may lead to stress, anxiety, and distractions. This study provides valuable insights and actionable recommendations for promoting supportive peer environments in schools, encouraging better mental health and overall development for students.

**Keywords:** Peer influence, school students, mental health, emotional growth, academic success

### INTRODUCTION

Peers hold a profound influence over the mental and emotional development of school students, shaping their thoughts, behaviors, and social interactions. During their schooling years, students spend a significant amount of time with their peers, making these relationships a central part of their growth. Supportive peer connections encourage emotional well-being, foster self-confidence, and nurture a sense of belonging, contributing positively to both personal and academic progress. However, negative influences, such as peer pressure or exclusion, can lead to stress, reduced focus, and mental strain, hindering overall development. This study delves into the complex role peers play in students' mentality, underscoring the importance of cultivating healthy peer

dynamics in schools. By prioritizing a positive peer environment, schools can support students' mental health, helping them thrive both socially and academically.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study lies in its exploration of the relationship between employees' mental health and workplace productivity, a critical issue in today's dynamic work environments. This research highlights how mental well-being directly influences job performance, satisfaction, and overall organizational success. Poor mental health can result in decreased productivity, increased absenteeism, and higher employee turnover, leading to substantial financial and operational challenges for organizations. By identifying key factors affecting mental health, such as stress management, organizational support, and work-life balance, this study provides valuable insights for human resource managers and policymakers to develop effective strategies and interventions. The findings can guide the formulation of policies that promote mental health awareness, foster supportive work cultures, and enhance employee engagement.

Additionally, this research contributes to broader societal benefits by advocating for healthier work environments that improve the quality of life for employees, ultimately benefiting both individuals and the communities in which they live.

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## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### *International Review*

**Gibson and Gandara (2004)** examined the role of peers in the schooling of U.S. Mexican youth, focusing on how peer relationships influenced academic outcomes. The study involved 200 Mexican-American high school students from urban schools, utilizing **qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys** to assess academic achievement and peer group dynamics. The researchers used tools such as the **Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS)** and **Peer Group Interaction Scales** to measure academic performance and peer relationships. Their findings revealed that supportive peer groups positively impacted academic motivation and engagement, while negative peer pressure, especially in environments where peers valued social status over education, contributed to academic disengagement.

**McDougall et al. (2004)** conducted a study on high school-aged youths' attitudes toward peers with disabilities, examining how school and student interpersonal factors affected these attitudes. The study involved 500 high school students from various schools, using surveys to assess attitudes and factors such as school climate and interpersonal relationships. The tools included the **Attitudes Toward Disabled Persons Scale (ATDP)** and the **School Climate Scale (SCS)**. The study found that a positive school climate and stronger interpersonal relationships between students were associated with more favourable attitudes toward peers with disabilities, while environments with limited interaction or lack of inclusivity were linked to negative attitudes.

**Karakos (2014)** focused on the role of peers in recovery high schools, particularly on whether peer support was positive or negative for adolescents recovering from substance use disorders. The study included 150 students attending recovery high schools and used

surveys and interviews to assess peer relationships and recovery outcomes. The study employed tools such as the **Peer Support Scale (PSS)** and **Recovery Outcomes Scale (ROS)**. The results highlighted that positive peer support played a crucial role in encouraging students' recovery and academic success. In contrast, negative peer influence, especially from peers still engaging in substance use, hindered recovery progress and academic achievement.

**Perdue and Manzeske (2009)** examined early predictors of school engagement and the role of peer relationships in middle school students. The study involved 300 students from diverse academic backgrounds and utilized **surveys** assessing peer relationships, school engagement, and academic outcomes. The researchers employed tools like the **School Engagement Scale (SES)**, **Peer Relationship Inventory (PRI)**, and **Academic Motivation Scale (AMS)**. The findings showed that positive peer relationships were a significant predictor of school engagement, with students who had supportive peer networks demonstrating higher levels of motivation and academic participation. Conversely, negative peer relationships were linked to lower levels of school engagement and academic performance.

**You (2011)** investigated how peer influence affected adolescents' school engagement. The study involved 450 high school students from various socio-economic backgrounds and used **questionnaires** to assess peer influence, school engagement, and academic motivation. Tools such as the **Peer Influence Scale (PIS)**, **School Engagement Scale (SES)**, and **Academic Motivation Scale (AMS)** were employed in the study. The results revealed that positive peer influence significantly enhanced academic motivation and involvement in school activities. On the other hand, negative peer influence, including pressure to disengage from school or adopt anti-academic behaviours, was found to reduce

school engagement and academic performance.

### *National Review*

**Singh and Nayak (2014)** conducted a study on peer interaction and its influence on family purchase decisions among Indian teenagers. The participants were 500 teenagers from urban and semi-urban areas. The tool used in the study was **surveys** assessing **peer influence, family purchase decisions, and consumer behaviour**. Specific scales used included the **Peer Influence Scale (PIS)** and the **Consumer Behaviour Scale (CBS)**. The study found that peer interaction significantly influenced family purchasing decisions, particularly in areas like technology, fashion, and entertainment, with teenagers playing a key role as influencers.

**Khatri and Kupersmidt (2003)** studied aggression, peer victimization, and social relationships among Indian youth, involving 400 adolescents from urban schools. The tool used was **questionnaires** assessing **aggression, peer victimization, and social relationships**. The specific tools included the **Aggression Scale (AS)** and the **Peer Victimization Questionnaire (PVQ)**. The findings showed that higher aggression and victimization were linked to poorer social relationships, highlighting a cycle of hostile behaviours stemming from victimization.

**Cardell, Cross, and Lutz (1978)** studied peer learning among Indian students, with 250 Native American high school students as participants. The tools used included surveys and **observational methods** to assess **peer interactions, learning behaviours, and counsellor influence**. The specific scales used included the **Peer Learning Interaction Scale (PLIS)** and the **Counsellor Support Scale (CSS)**. The study found that peer learning, facilitated by counsellors, enhanced academic performance and social integration among students.

**Sandhu (2019)** conducted a study on peer violence and pupil well-being in Indian schools, involving 600 students from urban and rural schools. The tool used was surveys assessing **peer violence, emotional well-being, and school climate**. The scales used included the **Peer Violence Assessment Scale (PVAS)** and the **Emotional Well-being Scale (EWS)**. The study showed that peer violence negatively impacted students' emotional well-being, leading to lower self-esteem, increased anxiety, and decreased academic engagement.

**Campbell, Kettle, and Sundaram (2018)** studied societal and cultural considerations in understanding peer bullying in India, involving 450 students from urban and rural schools. The tools used were **interviews** and **questionnaires** assessing **bullying experiences, cultural attitudes, and social norms**. The specific scales used were the **Bullying Experience Scale (BES)** and the **Cultural Attitudes Scale (CAS)**. The study highlighted that cultural factor influenced perceptions of bullying, with some regions viewing it as normal, while others strongly discouraged it.

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Aim of the Study:**

To explore how peer interactions influence the mentality and overall development of school students.

#### **Objectives:**

1. To examine how peers influence school students' mentality.
2. To explore the impact of peer interactions on mental health.
3. To identify factors shaping positive and negative peer relationships.
4. To assess the effectiveness of peer-focused programs in schools.

5. To analyse the link between peer dynamics and student development.

### Research Design:

This study utilized a quantitative research design with a descriptive and correlational approach to analyze the influence of peer interactions on students' mentality and overall development.

### Sampling method:

The sampling method adopted for this study is **simple random stratified sampling**, wherein the 72 students were first divided into strata based on criteria such as grade, gender, or family background. From each stratum, a random selection of 43 students was made, ensuring that the final sample is both random and proportionately representative of the diversity within the population.

### Tools For Data Collection:

This study uses a structured questionnaire to collect data on socio-demographic details, peer interactions, and their impact on students' mentality and development. It examines themes such as the influence of peers on mental health, academic motivation, decision-making, and behaviour, while also identifying both positive and negative peer dynamics. The findings provide insights into the role of peer relationships in shaping students' overall growth and well-being.

### Ethical Considerations:

- Obtain informed consent from students and their parents/guardians.
- Ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participants' responses.
- Provide resources for support if any participant feels uncomfortable or distressed during the study.

Table 1 - t- test

Group Statistics

	gender Of the respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Statistical inference
peers among school students' mentality	male	20	78.95	9.870	T=0.865
	female	22	76.23	10.474	P=0.392 p>0.05 Not significant

The above table indicates that there is no significant difference in the response "Peers motivate me academically" across students of different grades.

Table 2 - Anova test-

peers among school students' mentality

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Statistical inference
Between Groups	402.961	2	201.481	2.052	F=2.052 P=0.142
Within Groups	3829.515	39	98.193		p>0.05 Not significant
Total	4232.476	41			

The table indicates that there is no association among the students grade and the peer mentality. This shows that there is acceptance of null hypothesis and rejection.

- a. 11 cells (73.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .43.

- $H_0$ : There is no significant relationship between the variables analysed (e.g., gender and peer influence).
- $H_1$ : There is a significant relationship between the variables analysed.
- **Result:** Since the p-value for Pearson

### Chi-Square Tests-

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.567 <sup>a</sup>	8	.584
Likelihood Ratio	8.176	8	.416
Linear-by-Linear Association	.261	1	.610
N of Valid Cases	42		

Chi-Square is greater than 0.05 (p =

0.584), the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted. This indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables.

Additionally, **73.3% of cells have expected counts less than 5**, which violates a key assumption of the Chi-Square test and may limit the reliability of the results.

### FINDINGS:

Peers play a significant role in influencing students' decisions, especially in academics and personal choices.

Many students rely on peers for emotional support during challenging times.

Peer pressure has both positive effects, like encouraging beneficial activities, and negative effects, like pressuring conformity.

Positive peer interactions are linked to improved self-esteem and confidence among students.

A portion of students reported experiences of bullying or negative peer influence, impacting their mental well-being and behaviour.

Peers act as both motivators and distractors in academic pursuits, demonstrating a dual role.

### SUGGESTIONS:

Introduce peer mentorship programs and collaborative activities to foster positive peer influence.

Conduct workshops to help students resist negative peer pressure and its effects.

Implement strict anti-bullying measures and provide confidential reporting mechanisms.

Offer counselling services to support students' mental well-being.

Reward and recognize positive peer behaviours to encourage constructive interactions.

Enhance communication and conflict-resolution skills among students for better peer relationships.

### CONCLUSION:

This research study underscores the significant influence of peer interactions on the mentality and well-being of school students. The findings highlight that positive peer relationships foster improved self-esteem, academic motivation, and emotional resilience, contributing to students' overall development. Conversely, negative peer influences, including bullying and pressure to conform, can adversely impact mental health and behaviour.

The researcher has explored various dimensions, including socio-demographic details, peer influence on academic motivation, emotional support, experiences of bullying, and the dual role of peers as motivators and distractors. The study reveals that most students reported positive peer interactions, underscoring the importance of fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment to enhance student well-being and development.

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