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Influence Of Parental Neglect And Peer Pressure On Engagement In Academic Activities Among Secondary School Students In Ethiope West Local Government Area

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between parental neglect and students' engagement in academic activities among secondary school learners in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State. Findings revealed a significant association, indicating that students who experience neglect tend to exhibit lower levels of participation, reduced motivation, and diminished academic persistence. These results align with existing evidence that children from neglectful environments often struggle to develop the socio-emotional competencies necessary for effective learning. The study further highlights how inadequate parental support limits students' ability to meet academic demands, interact positively with peers and teachers, and sustain attention in learning tasks. The implications of these findings are far-reaching, suggesting that academic challenges among adolescents cannot be fully addressed without considering the quality of their home environment. Meaningful improvement in student performance therefore requires both school-based and family-centered interventions. Based on the findings, the study recommends that schools, counsellors, and community agencies strengthen early-warning mechanisms to identify students experiencing neglect. Targeted psychosocial support, mentoring programmes, and parental education initiatives should be institutionalized to foster healthier home-school partnerships.

Keywords: parental neglect, peer pressure, academic engagement, secondary school students, Ethiope West.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in the development of individuals and the progress of society and adequate care and attention is paramount at every stage of young children to enable them develop adequately mostly at the primary and secondary level of education. For secondary school students, engagement in academic activities is essential for acquiring knowledge, developing skills, and preparing for future careers. However, there are several factors influencing students' commitment to their studies, including family dynamics and social interactions, parental neglect and peer pressure. All these factors affect academic engagement.

Academic engagement refers to the degree to which students are invested in and enthusiastic about their academic experiences, including their participation in class, completion of assignments, and pursuit of

knowledge (Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris, 2022). It encompasses behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions, which are crucial for students' academic success and overall educational experience (Sinatra, Heddy and Lombardi, 2020). When students are academically engaged, they are more likely to achieve their academic potential, develop a love for learning, and build positive relationships with their educators (Skinner & Pitzer, 2022).

Academic engagement among secondary school students is influenced by various personal, familial, and environmental factors. One of the most critical determinants of student success is parental involvement. Studies have shown that parental support, including monitoring school activities, assisting with homework, and providing emotional encouragement, significantly enhances students' commitment to learning (Okafor & Anyanwu, 2022). However, when parents fail to provide this support, students are more likely to experience disengagement, leading to poor academic performance, school dropout, and even involvement in deviant behaviours (Igbokwe, 2021).

Parental neglect, on the other hand, refers to the failure of caregivers to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, and psychological needs, which can have severe and long-lasting consequences for the child's development and well-being (Hildyard & Wolfe, 2022). When parents neglect their children's educational needs, it can lead to decreased academic engagement, lower academic achievement, and increased risk of dropout (Jeynes, 2022). The impact of parental neglect on children's academic outcomes underscores the importance of parental involvement and support in fostering a positive educational experience.

Parental neglect can manifest in different forms, including physical neglect (failure to provide necessities like food and shelter), emotional neglect (lack of affection and communication), and educational neglect (disinterest in a child's academic progress). In Nigeria, where many parents are preoccupied with economic survival, cases of educational neglect are prevalent (Adebisi & Ojo, 2020). Children from neglected homes often face challenges such as lack of motivation, low self-esteem, and reduced academic aspirations. Without parental guidance and encouragement, students may struggle to develop the self-discipline needed to succeed in their studies (Igbokwe, 2021).

Peer pressure is the influence a peer group has on an individual, encouraging them to adopt the group's norms, values, and behaviors. This influence can be either positive or negative, depending on the nature of the behaviours being encouraged (Berndt, 2021). Positive peer pressure can promote prosocial behaviours, such as academic achievement and volunteerism, while negative peer pressure can lead to deviant behaviours, such as substance abuse and delinquency (Allen et al., 2021). Individuals may feel pressure to conform to their peer group's expectations in order to gain acceptance, avoid rejection, or maintain social relationships (Hartup, 2021). The impact of peer pressure can be particularly significant during adolescence, a period marked by heightened sensitivity to social influences and identity formation (Steinberg & Monahan, 2022).

The relationship between parental neglect, peer pressure, and academic engagement is complex and requires a nuanced understanding. While some students may develop resilience and excel despite negative influences, others may succumb to these pressures and perform poorly in school. This study, therefore, aims to explore the extent to which parental neglect and peer pressure can impact students' academic engagement in Ethiope West Local Government Area.

Statement of the Problem

The academic performance of secondary school students in Nigeria particularly those in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State has remained a major concern for educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Over the years, the region has continued to record persistently low achievement levels, poor examination outcomes, and inadequate readiness for further educational and career opportunities. Despite various interventions aimed at improving the quality of schooling, many students in this locality still struggle to attain expected academic standards. Through personal observation, it has become evident that parental neglect and peer pressure are two critical factors contributing to this persistent decline in academic engagement.

When parents fail to provide adequate emotional, academic, or moral support, students often feel overlooked and unsupported. Such feelings can weaken their motivation and reduce their willingness to participate actively in learning. In many communities across Delta State, including Ethiope West, parents are frequently burdened by the demands of economic survival. This often leaves them with limited time to guide, supervise, or encourage their children's academic development.

At the same time, peer pressure exerts a powerful influence on adolescents. Among secondary school students, it can manifest through encouragement to participate in risky or distracting behaviours including involvement in deviant groups, skipping classes, or prioritizing social activities over schoolwork. In Ethiope West, many students face constant pressure to conform to behaviours that pull them away from their academic responsibilities.

The interaction of parental neglect and peer pressure can produce especially harmful effects. Students who lack parental support are more vulnerable to negative peer influences, which can further diminish their interest in schoolwork. Over time, this may result in declining academic performance, reduced classroom participation, increased absenteeism, and even school dropout.

Although various studies have examined factors affecting students' academic engagement in Nigeria, there is limited research focusing specifically on how parental neglect and peer pressure jointly shape academic behaviour in Ethiope West Local Government Area. This study therefore seeks to fill that gap by investigating the combined influence of these two factors on the academic engagement of secondary school students in the area.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of parental neglect and peer pressure on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area. The specific objectives are to;

- i. To examine the influence of parental neglect on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State.
- ii. To investigate the effect of peer pressure on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State.
- iii. To determine the influence of parental neglect and peer pressure on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State.

Research Questions

- i. To what extent does parental neglect influence engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State?
- ii. To what extent does peer pressure affect engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State?
- iii. To what extent does parental neglect and peer pressure influence engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study;

- i. There is no significant relationship between parental neglect and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State.
- iii. There is no significant influence of parental neglect and peer pressure on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State.

Meaning of Parental Neglect

Parental neglect refers to a pattern of behavior where caregivers fail to provide for a child's basic physical, emotional, and psychological needs, resulting in harm or potential harm to the child's well-being and development. This can include failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical care, supervision, and emotional support, as well as ignoring a child's needs, abandoning them, or being consistently uninvolved in their life. Parental neglect can have severe and long-lasting consequences for a child's physical, emotional, and psychological health, including increased risk of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and difficulties in forming healthy relationships.

Parental neglect is a multifaceted and deeply consequential form of child maltreatment that involves the consistent failure of a caregiver, typically a parent or guardian, to provide the basic needs such as physical, emotional, educational, medical, and psychological needs of a child. Unlike overt acts of violence or abuse that leave visible scars, neglect is characterized by absence, absence of care, supervision, and attention. This omission, whether due to willful disregard, ignorance, substance abuse, mental illness, poverty, or other debilitating circumstances, often leads to severe and enduring developmental harm. The significance of parental neglect lies not only in its prevalence but in its often-invisible nature, which makes it particularly insidious and difficult to detect or redress in time (Dubowitz & Bennett, 2022).

Meaning of Peer Pressure

Peer pressure refers to the influence that individuals within the same social circle particularly those of similar age, status, or shared experiences have on one another's thoughts, values, and behaviour. It is a natural and powerful social force that shapes human development, especially during adolescence. At this stage of life, young people are highly sensitive to the opinions of others and are actively searching for acceptance, identity, and belonging. Because of this, peer pressure can push adolescents toward behaviours that are either constructive or destructive, depending on the nature of the influence. At its core, peer pressure is driven by the human need to fit in and the fear of being rejected. As adolescents gradually assert their independence from parental authority, they tend to rely more on their peer groups, whose attitudes and behaviours strongly shape their emerging sense of self.

Psychologically, peer pressure operates through the processes of conformity and social approval. Adolescents pay close attention to how their peers perceive them, and this awareness can influence the choices they make. Research shows that peer influence can alter how teenagers judge risks and control impulses, sometimes leading them to make decisions they might avoid if acting alone. These decisions may involve experimenting with substances, engaging in risky social behaviour, following certain fashion or lifestyle trends, or neglecting schoolwork. However, peer pressure is not always harmful; it can also inspire positive actions such as excelling in academics, joining sports teams, or participating in community service. This dual effect shows that peer pressure is part of a larger socialization process rather than an inherently negative force.

Cultural and environmental contexts also shape how peer pressure is expressed and experienced. In collectivist societies where group loyalty and cohesion are prioritized, the pressure to conform may be stronger than in societies that emphasize individual choice. In communities where deviant behaviour is common or socially rewarded often those facing economic hardship peer pressure may encourage risky or antisocial actions. Studies have shown that adolescents are particularly susceptible to peer influence when in group settings, where collective energy can heighten risk-taking and reduce personal restraint. This highlights the importance of understanding peer pressure as a product of broader social conditions rather than a purely personal interaction.

Families, schools, and communities play a crucial role in guiding adolescents through these pressures. Schools are central spaces where peer interactions unfold daily, and where young people learn to navigate complex social expectations. Supportive teachers, counselors, and parents can help students build confidence, think critically, and make responsible decisions. Strong communication and emotional support within the family can protect adolescents from harmful peer influences by grounding them in clear values and fostering independence. In contrast, young people who lack stable support systems or

positive role models may turn to peers for validation, making them more susceptible to negative forms of peer pressure.

Types of Peer Pressure

Peer pressure manifests in various forms, each shaped by the context in which it occurs and the relational dynamics involved. Understanding the different types of peer pressure is crucial for recognizing how social influences operate within youth culture, especially during adolescence when individuals are most susceptible to external input in their identity formation and decision-making processes. Peer pressure is not monolithic; it encompasses subtle, overt, direct, and indirect forms of influence that can lead to both constructive and destructive behaviors. Scholars have categorized peer pressure into distinct types based on how it is exerted, perceived, and responded to by individuals within peer networks (Prinstein & Dodge, 2020).

One of the most commonly discussed types is direct peer pressure, which involves an explicit and often verbal request or demand from peers to engage in a particular behavior. This type is overt and easily identifiable, often taking the form of dares or challenges. Direct peer pressure can be particularly compelling because it places the individual in a situation of immediate choice, either to conform and gain acceptance or to resist and risk social exclusion. According to Sim and Koh (2021), direct peer pressure is frequently encountered in settings where conformity is highly valued, such as among school cliques or social gangs, and it often relates to activities like substance use, truancy, or defiance of authority figures.

In contrast, indirect peer pressure operates through more subtle social cues rather than overt requests. This form of influence often involves the observation of peers' behaviors and an internalized expectation to align with group norms. For example, an adolescent may feel pressured to wear certain types of clothing or use slang common in their peer group, not because someone told them to, but because they fear being perceived as different or socially out of place. Indirect peer pressure is particularly insidious because it is often unspoken and unconscious, yet it has a powerful effect on shaping attitudes and behaviors. Research by Santor, Messervey, and Kusumakar (2020) shows that adolescents are highly sensitive to perceived norms and tend to conform even when the group's expectations are implicit or imagined.

Another important category is passive peer pressure, which entails adopting certain behaviors or attitudes simply by being part of a peer environment where such actions are normalized. It lacks any active solicitation, but the constant exposure to specific behaviors fosters a gradual alignment. For instance, in a school where cheating during exams is widespread and unchallenged, students may begin to rationalize and engage in such behavior to avoid feeling left out. Passive peer pressure often reflects the social learning process, wherein individuals internalize observed behaviors through repeated exposure. According to Ryan (2020), this form of pressure is significant because it fosters normalization of deviant behaviors without direct coercion, making it more difficult to identify and counteract.

There is also the phenomenon of self-imposed peer pressure, a psychological form in which individuals impose on themselves the need to conform, even in the absence of any external prompt. This internalized pressure arises from the desire to be accepted or to meet perceived standards set by one's social circle. Here, the individual anticipates disapproval or social ridicule and adjusts their behavior preemptively. Parkhurst and Hopmeyer (2023) explain that self-imposed peer pressure is strongly related to adolescents' sensitivity to social evaluation and is often exacerbated by low self-esteem or social anxiety. In this case, the pressure stems not from what peers say or do, but from what the individual assumes they expect.

Concept of Engagement in Academic Activities

Engagement in academic activities describes the level of interest, focus, enthusiasm, and effort students put into learning both in the classroom and in other learning spaces. It goes beyond simply being present in school; it reflects how deeply students participate in their education, how curious they are, and how much persistence they show when faced with academic demands. Scholars view engagement as a multidimensional concept involving behavioural, emotional, and cognitive components, each playing a vital role in shaping how well students participate in and respond to school activities. It includes visible actions such as completing assignments or attending classes, as well as less visible aspects like motivation, enjoyment, and the willingness to think critically. Meaningful engagement often leads to

stronger performance, personal growth, and long-term academic success, especially in structured learning environments that require continuous involvement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2021).

Behavioural engagement represents the outward signs of learning commitment regular attendance, punctuality, attentiveness, participation in lessons, and completion of schoolwork. While this is the most observable form of engagement, it does not tell the entire story. Emotional engagement involves the feelings students attach to learning, including their sense of belonging, their level of enjoyment, and the emotional ties they form with peers and teachers. A learner who is emotionally connected to school is more likely to value education and feel motivated to excel. Cognitive engagement, however, refers to the mental effort and intellectual investment students put into understanding content, solving problems, and thinking deeply. Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong (2020) suggest that highly cognitively engaged students think beyond the surface, ask questions, and take responsibility for their own learning.

Academic engagement is significant because it has strong links to academic achievement, persistence, and overall learning outcomes. Years of research indicate that students who are actively engaged often record higher grades, show better comprehension, and enjoy school experiences more meaningfully. It also plays a protective role by reducing the likelihood of failure, disengagement, or dropping out. Engagement builds resilience, especially for students who may be navigating difficult social or economic circumstances. Li and Lerner (2021) note that active involvement in school can help students overcome environmental challenges by offering structure, purpose, and a positive outlet for personal growth.

In contemporary education, engagement is no longer restricted to physical classroom interactions. With increasing access to technology, learning now takes place through digital tools, virtual classrooms, online discussions, and multimedia platforms. As a result, the idea of academic engagement has broadened to include how students interact with digital content, collaborate online, and participate in virtual learning communities. Reeve and Tseng (2021) emphasize that teaching approaches which support autonomy whether face-to-face or online help students feel more in control of their learning and ultimately boost engagement in diverse academic settings.

Concept of Influence of Peer Pressure and Engagement in Academic Activities

Peer pressure plays a significant role in shaping students' engagement in academic activities, especially during adolescence, a developmental phase characterized by increased sensitivity to social influence and a heightened need for peer approval. As students transition from dependence on parental guidance to seeking affirmation from their peer groups, their academic behaviors, attitudes, and values often begin to reflect those of their close friends and social networks. Peer pressure can function as either a motivational force or a deterrent, depending on the prevailing norms and behaviors within the peer group. Whether positive or negative, the influence of peers has the power to affect how deeply students participate in educational pursuits, how persistently they strive toward academic goals, and how effectively they navigate academic challenges (Ryan, 2021).

Positive peer pressure, though less frequently highlighted, can enhance engagement by fostering an environment where academic success is valued and celebrated. In peer groups that prioritize scholastic achievement, members are more likely to adopt behaviors such as regular attendance, diligent study habits, and active classroom participation. These behaviors, in turn, reinforce cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of academic engagement. According to Altermatt and Pomerantz (2021), peers who model high academic motivation can encourage others to internalize similar values, particularly when those peers are perceived as socially competent or popular. This peer-based encouragement creates a reinforcing loop where shared academic goals contribute to mutual accountability and collective success.

Conversely, negative peer pressure can significantly undermine academic engagement by encouraging behaviors that distract from or devalue academic pursuits. Adolescents in peer groups that dismiss academic effort as "uncool" or stigmatize high achievement may withdraw from learning activities to avoid social ridicule. This pressure to conform can result in reduced participation in classroom discussions, failure to complete assignments, or even school truancy. Brown, Lohr, and McClenahan (1986) found that adolescents who associated with deviant peers exhibited lower academic engagement

and higher incidences of academic misconduct. These students may begin to internalize anti-academic attitudes that hinder not only their current educational performance but also their long-term academic aspirations.

The mechanisms through which peer pressure impacts engagement are both social and psychological. Socially, students tend to emulate peers who command respect within the group, adjusting their behavior to align with group norms. Psychologically, the fear of rejection or social isolation acts as a powerful motivator for conformity. For students with low self-esteem or weak family support, peer approval may become their primary source of identity and validation. In such cases, the academic behaviors modeled and encouraged by peers take precedence over institutional expectations or parental guidance. As Wentzel and Caldwell (2019) noted, the relational dynamics within peer groups, such as acceptance, popularity, and perceived status, can either bolster or erode academic motivation depending on how learning is valued within those relationships.

Moreover, the influence of peer pressure on academic engagement is mediated by individual differences such as personality, gender, and prior academic achievement. Some students possess stronger internal motivations and are better equipped to resist negative peer influences, while others are more susceptible to conforming in order to gain social approval. Eccles and Harold (2019) observed that girls are often more academically engaged than boys but may also experience peer pressure in nuanced ways that reflect different social expectations. While boys may be encouraged to reject authority or resist school rules, girls may experience pressure to conform to behavioral norms that do not always align with academic assertiveness or competitiveness. These gendered dynamics highlight the complexity of peer influence as it relates to academic engagement.

Effects of Parental Neglect and Peer Pressure on Engagement in Academic Activities

Parental neglect and peer pressure are powerful social forces that shape students' academic experiences, particularly during adolescence a stage marked by rapid emotional, cognitive, and social changes. Although these two influences stem from different sources, they often intersect in ways that significantly affect how students participate in schoolwork. Academic engagement, which refers to the level of interest, involvement, and commitment students bring to learning tasks, can be strengthened or weakened depending on the support they receive at home and the influence of their peer group. When parental care is lacking and peer influences are negative, the outcome is often poor academic performance, behavioural problems, and a general lack of connection to school.

A major consequence of parental neglect is emotional withdrawal from learning. Students who do not receive affection, encouragement, or a stable home environment tend to lack the emotional foundation needed for academic success. They may struggle with low self-worth, weak motivation, and limited resilience, which often shows up as poor class participation, irregular attendance, or an unwillingness to set academic goals. For many, school becomes an unwelcomed obligation rather than a meaningful pursuit because their home environment does not reinforce the value of education. Research has shown that children raised in neglectful settings are more vulnerable to poor academic outcomes because they often lack supportive relationships and self-regulation skills that help them cope with learning demands. Without active parental involvement, these students face academic challenges alone, often without the emotional tools required to stay engaged.

Parental neglect also affects students on a cognitive level. Children who grow up with minimal guidance, stimulation, or academic support frequently arrive at school without the basic skills needed to thrive. This may include weaknesses in literacy, numeracy, or problem-solving, as well as difficulties with concentration and planning. Over time, these cognitive gaps can lead to repeated academic struggles and feelings of frustration. Students may begin to doubt their abilities, developing a sense of helplessness that further reduces their engagement. Such patterns can create a cycle where academic setbacks reinforce low motivation, ultimately widening the gap between the student and meaningful learning.

The influence of peer pressure on academic engagement is equally significant, though more variable. Peer groups can motivate students to participate actively in school when they model positive behaviours, such as collaboration, healthy competition, and diligence. In environments where academic achievement is

valued, students are more likely to show enthusiasm for learning and persevere through difficult tasks. Adolescents who associate with peers who take school seriously often feel a stronger sense of belonging and are more likely to stay committed to academic work.

However, peer pressure can also undermine academic engagement when it encourages behaviour that conflicts with school expectations. In groups where skipping classes, cheating, or downplaying academic success is normalized, students may feel compelled to conform, even if doing so harms their academic progress. Many adolescents experience tension between wanting to succeed academically and wanting to fit in socially. This conflict becomes particularly harmful when students fear being isolated or mocked for being hardworking or aligned with teachers. In such settings, peer groups may elevate disengagement as a path to social acceptance, making students hesitant to participate fully in their academic lives. As a result, poor performance is often a reflection not of ability, but of the social pressure to appear indifferent to school.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an ex-post facto research design to investigate the influence of parental neglect and peer pressure on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiopia West Local Government Area. The ex-post facto approach was deemed most appropriate because it allows the researcher to examine existing conditions and analyze their relationships without manipulating the variables under study. The target population for the study comprise of students in secondary schools within Ethiopia West Local Government Area of Delta State. There are 21,954 students in thirty one (31) registered private and public secondary schools within Ethiopia West Local Government Area of Delta State (Source: Delta State Ministry of Education, 2025). The sample used for the study by the researcher was three hundred (300) secondary school students since it will be impossible to include the entire population in the sample due to limited time and finance. The sample was drawn from six secondary schools, evenly divided between public and private schools to ensure representation across different school types. Specifically, Idjerhe Grammar School, Jesses Town, Jesse Grammar School, Jesse Town, and Masogar Secondary School College, Mosogar were selected as the public schools, each contributing fifty (50) students to the sample. On the other hand, Kings and Queens Standard Secondary School, Ogharefe, Sage Global Secondary School, Oghara, and Our Lady of Nigeria Secondary School, Oghareki were chosen from the private sector, also with fifty (50) students sampled from each school. This equal allocation of respondents across the six schools not only simplified the sampling process but also provided a balanced view of students' experiences in both public and private educational settings. The random sampling technique was used for the study by the researcher to ensured that every school within the population of thirty-one registered secondary schools in the Local Government Area had an equal opportunity to be included in the study. The process involved listing all thirty-one schools on separate pieces of paper, folding each piece, and placing them in a container from which six schools were drawn. This method was deliberate to eliminate selection bias and enhance the representativeness of the sample. Furthermore, the choice to include three public and three private schools reflects the researcher's intention to capture possible differences in student experiences attributable to school type, providing comparative insights between government-operated and privately-managed institutions. The questionnaire as a quantitative means of data collection was used to generate information in this research work. The questionnaire is divided into two parts; Part A and B. Part A contained the respondent's socio-demographic characteristics while Part B contained relevant ten (10) items which will be measured with a four point scale of SA (4), A (3), D (2), SD (1). The study employed face and content validity, as these types of validity focus on evaluating the appropriateness and relevance of a measuring instrument based on careful examination. To ensure this, the draft questionnaire was submitted to the project supervisor for review. Any necessary modifications or corrections was incorporated, and the final version of the instrument was developed in accordance with the supervisor's recommendations. The administration of questionnaire was done personally by the researcher who visited the respondents at their respective

schools. In this study, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to answer the research questions and test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question 1: *To what extent does parental neglect influence engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State?*

Table 4.1: Pearson correlation on parental neglect influence on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students

Variable	N	M (SD)	Df	R	r ²	r%
Parental neglect		2.22 (.58)				
Academic activities	286	1.47 (.42)	2.85	.275	0.075	7.5

From the table 4.1 analysis, it can be seen that the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between parental neglect and academic activities is .275. The coefficient of determination (r²) is 0.075, meaning that parental neglect accounts for 7.5% of the variance in academic activities. This implies that parental neglect significantly influences engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State.

Research Question 2: *To what extent does peer pressure affect engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State?*

Table 4.2: Pearson correlation on peer pressure and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students

Variable	N	M (SD)	Df	R	r ²	r%
Peer pressure		3.14 (.65)				
Academic activities	286	1.47 (.42)	2.85	.450	0.203	20.3

From the Table 4.2 analysis it can be seen that the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) between peer pressure and academic activities is .450. The coefficient of determination (r²) is 0.203, which means that 20.3% of the variance in peer pressure can be explained by academic activities. This implies that peer pressure significantly affects engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State.

Research Question 3: *To what extent does parental neglect and peer pressure influence engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State?*

Table 4.3: Pearson correlation on parental neglect, peer pressure and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students

Variable	N	M (SD)	Df	R	r ²	r%
Parental neglect		2.22 (.58)				
Peer pressure	286	3.14 (.65)	2.85	.422	0.178	17.8
Academic activities		1.47 (.42)				

From the table 4.3 analysis, it can be seen that the correlation between parental neglect, peer pressure and academic activities is r=.178, suggesting a correlation between parental neglect and peer pressure are associated with academic engagement. The coefficient of determination (r²) is 0.178. This implies that parental neglect and peer pressure significantly influences engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State.

Testing Hypotheses

Hypothesis I: There is no significant relationship between parental neglect and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State

Table 4.6: Pearson (r) Analysis of parental neglect and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students

		Parental neglect	Academic activities
Parental neglect	Pearson Correlation	1	.275*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	286	286
Academic activities	Pearson Correlation	.275*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	286	286

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Table 4.6 shows a Pearson’s r-value of 0.275 and a p-value of 0.00. Testing at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value is less than the alpha level, so, the null hypothesis which states that “There is no significant relationship between parental neglect and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State is rejected. Consequently, there is significant relationship between parental neglect and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between peer pressure and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State

Table 4.7: Pearson (r) Analysis of peer pressure and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students

		Peer pressure	Academic activities
Peer pressure	Pearson Correlation	1	.450*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	286	286
Academic activities	Pearson Correlation	.450*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	286	286

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Table 4.7 shows a Pearson’s r-value of 0.450 and a p-value of 0.010. Testing the hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, it is seen that the p-value is less than the alpha level, so, the null hypothesis which states that “there is no significant relationship between peer pressure and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State” is rejected. Consequently, there is significant relationship between peer pressure and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant influence of parental neglect and peer pressure on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State

Table 4.8: Pearson (r) Analysis of influence of parental neglect and peer pressure on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students

		Parental neglect & peer pressure	Academic activities
Parental neglect & peer pressure	Pearson Correlation	1	.422*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	286	286
Academic activities	Pearson Correlation	.422*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	286	286

* **Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)**

Table 4.8 shows a Pearson’s r-value of 0.422 and a p-value of 0.001. Testing the hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value, which is 0.010 is less than the alpha level, so, the null hypothesis which states “there is no significant influence of parental neglect and peer pressure on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State” is rejected. The conclusion is that “there is significant influence of parental neglect and peer pressure on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State”.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of research finding 1 revealed that there is significant relationship between parental neglect and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State. This finding agrees with Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Rouse, and Chen (2022) who noted that students from neglectful households often enter school environments with fewer social-emotional competencies, making it difficult to navigate the demands of structured learning and interpersonal relationships. These students may also struggle with concentration, impulse control, and stress management, factors that directly undermine cognitive engagement and academic performance. One of the most profound impacts of parental neglect is its disruption of emotional stability and cognitive focus, two elements that are essential for sustained academic engagement. Children who experience neglect often exhibit signs of low self-esteem, lack of motivation, and emotional detachment. These emotional deficiencies manifest in academic settings through absenteeism, disengagement, inattentiveness, and resistance to learning tasks.

The result of the second research finding revealed that there is significant relationship between peer pressure and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State. This finding agrees with Ryan (2021) who noted that peer pressure plays a significant role in shaping students' engagement in academic activities, especially during adolescence, a developmental phase characterized by increased sensitivity to social influence and a heightened need for peer approval. As students transition from dependence on parental guidance to seeking affirmation from their peer groups, their academic behaviors, attitudes, and values often begin to reflect those of their close friends and social networks. Peer pressure can function as either a motivational force or a deterrent, depending on the prevailing norms and behaviors within the peer group. Whether positive or negative, the influence of peers has the power to affect how deeply students participate in educational pursuits, how persistently they strive toward academic goals, and how effectively they navigate academic challenges.

The result of the third finding revealed that there is significant influence of parental neglect and peer pressure on engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State. This finding agrees with Garcia-Bacete et al., (2019) who asserted that the academic engagement of secondary school students is influenced by a complex interplay of familial and social factors, among which parental neglect and peer pressure are particularly significant. These two variables, though both social in nature, differ fundamentally in their origin, mechanism, and manifestation. Parental neglect, stemming from the failure of caregivers to provide consistent emotional, physical, or academic support, often leads to foundational developmental setbacks. Peer pressure, on the other hand, emerges from interactions within social groups and is driven by adolescents' desire for acceptance and conformity. Although both factors can either diminish or enhance academic engagement depending on their expression, their points of impact and the nature of their influence on students are markedly different.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there is a significant relationship between parental neglect and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State. This outcome highlights that students who experience inadequate care, supervision, or emotional support from their parents are more likely to display low participation and poor commitment to learning. The study also establishes a significant relationship between peer pressure and engagement in academic activities among secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State. This result shows that peer influence plays a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes toward their studies. The study further reveals a significant joint influence of parental neglect and peer pressure on students' engagement in academic activities within the study area. Regarding gender dynamics, the study finds that parental neglect and peer pressure exert a significant influence on the academic engagement of mostly male secondary school students in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State. Finally, the study concludes that parental neglect and peer pressure significantly influence engagement in academic activities among students in predominantly rural areas of Ethiope West Local Government Area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Schools and community stakeholders should implement programs that promote parental involvement in students' education, including regular parent-teacher interactions, workshops on effective parenting, and awareness campaigns on the impact of neglect on academic engagement.
2. Educational authorities should introduce peer mentorship and guidance programs that encourage positive peer influence, fostering a culture of academic commitment and discouraging behaviors that negatively affect students' engagement.
3. Interventions should adopt a holistic approach addressing both family and peer contexts simultaneously, such as combined parental engagement initiatives and school-based peer support systems, to mitigate the compounded effects of neglect and peer pressure on academic participation.

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