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## The Effect of Peer and Parent Pressure on the Academic Achievement of University Students

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### Abstract

The study aims at exploring the effect of peer and parent pressure on the academic achievement of university students. The male and female university students of Masters class were the population of the study. 156 students were selected by using cluster sampling technique from three departments of university (Business Administration, Computer Science and Economics) as a sample for the study. An opinionnaire was used to elicit the opinions of the students regarding peer and parent pressure. The findings of the study were the parent pressure effect positively and peer pressure effects negatively the academic achievement of students and especially female university students. No effect of peer and parent pressure was found on the achievement male students. The parent's pressure has positive effect on the academic achievement of Business Administration students.

**Key words:** Peer Pressure, Parent Pressure, Academic achievement, University Students

### 1. Introduction

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People cannot live alone in society. The need of social belongingness attached them and they feel affiliation for others. This need for affiliation is based on genetics or experience. It constitutes a relatively stable trait or behavior. Basically people need social contacts that suit them. Some times they need parent's help, love, care and guidance and some time they need friend's intimacy, affection and love. Generally speaking adolescents find their friendships to be enjoyable: together they relax, joke, watch television, and participate in sports activities and talk.

The person's first contact is with parents and then with friends. Parent attachment is stronger during infancy and childhood whereas friend's attachment is strong during adolescence. Attachment level varies with the ages and stages of life. According to Dacey & Kenny (1997) "adolescents who feel accepted by their peer group and their parents are likely to feel good about themselves". The peer acceptance and attachment is as important as the parent attachment. Reisman (1985) concluded after reviewing different research studies that "the adolescents who have poor peer relationships are more likely to have adjustment difficulties in adulthood". This attachment influence their feelings, thinking, decisions and living styles. The strong attachment has strong influence on personality. When this influence effects the decisions or liking, disliking of a person and a person feel forced to left their own mottos, feelings and fulfill the friends or parents expectation, this is called pressure. Weiten and Lloyd (2004) said that the "pressure involves expectations or demands that one behave in a certain way". They divide pressure in two types the pressure to perform and the pressure to confirm. The power of pressure is violating personal standards in order to be liked by other members of cohesive group (Weiten and Lloyd, 2004). No one can deny this power of pressure.

The adolescents learn about themselves from friends may differs from what they learn about themselves from parents. The skills, values and behavior rewarded by one group may be different from those rewarded by the other. Parent's has certain value system and norms they want from their children to follow them and fulfill their expectations this is parent pressure. Whereas, the peer pressure is defined as the influence exerted by a peer group in encouraging a person to change his or her attitude, values, behavior in order to confirm the group norms (Elliot, 2001). The pressure in itself is neither positive nor negative. It is positive if it encourages positive attitude, healthy values, respect and hard work. It is negative if it encourages negative attitude. The positive pressure strengthens the potential of a person and the negative pressure reduces the person's strength. The positive pressure leads towards the success whereas the negative leads to the failure in academic life.

- **Peer pressure and its effect on achievement**

The children at adolescent age share their problems and feeling with their friends. The nature of relationship with friends depends on the parenting style. The strong relationship with parents may result in the weak relationship with friends and vice versa.

The findings of the research of Carvallo & Gabriel (2006) showed that “even the people who claim to have little or no need for affiliation do have affiliation need”. One or the other way people need friends for social acceptance. The other reason may be the people are curious they need to know the people around them, so they are socially influenced.

The social influence can occur at three levels. According to Atwater and Duffy (1999) at the first level one can publicly go with others but refuse to change his private beliefs at this stage little peer pressure can affect. The second level of social influence is when people behave like others because they are attracted with them. They change their style and adopt the group or person has and when they apart one returned on their own. At this stage one has no personal intention; he/she will do the same as the others in group will do. They can return to their original beliefs when the peer pressure removed. The third level is where someone has truly influenced and changes his own forever. This is the crucial stage one can build or destroy his future because of this influence or pressure.

The individuals are influenced by their families and by their friends. Boujlaleb (2006) said that “peers have a more powerful influence on adolescents as compared to families”. In another research Haynie (2002) find out that “adolescents get their self-esteem from the group they are belonging to and they cannot imagine themselves outside the gathering”. Without a group or friends, one has low self-esteem and they are powerless. They see friends or peers as vital component in their life without which they cannot live. Now the one go where the peers go if they are good in studies have healthy competition everyone in the group will be academically good and a high achiever but if they are indulged in negative activities then it’s difficult for one to prevent him not to involve in it. So they will be low achievers.

Many research studies were conducted to investigate the peer pressure and its relationship with the academic and social factors. One of them was Taylor and Wong (1996). The study highlighted that gender difference exists in the perception of peer. Study further indicated that the adolescents who have a high level of conformity to unconventional peer behavior tend to have lower GPA then those who have lower level of conformity. The boys’ grades are more strongly affected by peer orientation than girls. The male peers who exhibits negative behavior has lower utility for school.

Carman and Zhang (2008) also conducted a research on “classroom peer effects and academic achievement”. The sample of the research was 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade students of China. During the study the peer and teachers remain the same for three years. The peer effect on the achievement of Mathematics, China and English was observed. The linear in mean model was used to control the individual and teacher interaction by test fixed effects. The findings were the significant positive peer effect on the mathematics test score and positive but not significant effect on Chinese test score and no effect on English test score.

Bellemare, Lepage and Shearer (2009) conducted a study to present the stimulating conditions at work place. The main variables were peer pressure, incentives and gender. The major finding was that very high and very low level of peer pressure can significantly decrease the productivity of workers.

Tope (2011) investigated the influence of peer group on adolescent's academic performance. The sample of the study was 150 randomly selected students from four secondary schools. The findings were the peer group could either positively or negatively influence the academic performance in school. Tope recommended that parents and teachers may provide adequate guidance to adolescents to help them understand how the friends can positively or negatively influence their academic performance.

- **Parent Pressure and its effect on achievement**

Parents brought up their children. They feel responsible to develop their self-concept to help them in leading successful life. To reach the adolescent age one has developed self-concept. Atwater & Duffy, (1999) describes the self-concept as "it is the overall image or awareness one has of him/her self. It includes all those perceptions of "I" and "me" together with the feelings, beliefs and values associated with them". Self-concept provide personal identity or sense of who am I. It has its roots in family value system. The children know their parents value system and act accordingly during early adolescence as they are dependent on them. It means that adolescents are mostly influenced by their parents and environment at home.

Parent-children relationship depends on the time and care given to the children by the mother and father and their own relationship. Baumrind, (1989) described four parenting styles. The authoritative parenting style is the most common and considered most successful style. It is democratic parenting style. These parents' holds high expectations, provide explanations for rules, and create an environment of warmth and caring for their children. Baumrind (1991a) suggests that authoritative parents "monitor and impart clear standards for their children's conduct. They are not intrusive and restrictive. Their disciplinary methods are supportive, rather than punitive. They want their children to be assertive as well as socially responsible, and self-regulated as well as cooperative". The permissive style parents decide to give lots of freedom and hope to their children they will do what is best. According to Baumrind (1991b) the permissive parents "are more responsive than they are demanding. They are nontraditional and lenient, do not require mature behavior, allow considerable self regulation, and avoid confrontation".

The authoritarian parents seek to control their children through rules they use reward and punishment to make their children follow the rules. They gave orders and are not likely to explain them. The uninvolved parents have few demands, low responsiveness and little communication with their children. Although they fulfill the

child's basic needs, but they are generally detached from their children's life. The children's of these parents have low self-esteem, less confidence, lack of self control and less competent. The parent pressure is directly linked with the parenting style. The parent pressure can be felt from any of the parenting style. Some parenting style cause low parent pressure or no pressure like uninvolved parenting style, and some create high pressure like authoritative and authoritarian parenting style. The authoritative and authoritarian both parenting style parents involve in the activities of the children, both cause parent pressure the authoritative parent's child want to fulfill their expectations keep them happy and satisfied and the authoritarian parent's child feel forced to fulfill parents expectations to avoid punishment. The parenting style effects the academic achievement of their children and they perform accordingly. High parent pressure may result high achievement and low parent pressure may be the reason of low achievement.

Many research studies showed the importance of parents' involvement or parent pressure and its effect on academic achievement of adolescents. One of them is of Desforges and Abouchaar, (2003). They defined parent's involvement by many forms, like parenting style, stable and secure environment, intellectual stimulation, parent child discussion, contact with school, participation in school events and activities. The findings consistently showed that parent involvement has strong positive influence on the child level of attainment: the more the parental involvement the higher the attainment. They concluded that at home parenting has a significant positive effect on children's achievement and adjustment. It was further stressed that parental involvement has greater positive effect on achievement of students as compared to the quality of school.

Opdenakker and Damme (2005) conducted a research study "enhancing effort and achievement: the importance of parent involvement and home school partnerships". The findings indicated that the parents' attitude (parent pressure) and activities like coaching and support to the formal education of their child has a unique and positive effect on effort and achievement of children; although it is weakly related to the socio-economic status of parents.

Moula (2010) tried to investigate "the relationship between academic achievement motivation and home environment among standard eight pupils". He define the home environment by five factors i.e. parental encouragement, parents' occupation, parents' education, Family size, Learning facilities at home. The findings showed that four factors (parents' occupation, parents' education, family size and learning facilities) significantly effects the achievement motivation and parental encouragement was the only factor which showed low correlation with academic motivation.

Keeping in view the above discussion this study aimed at investigating the effect of peer and parent pressure on academic achievement of university students. Peer and parent pressure was identified as independent variables and academic achievement as dependent variable.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to:

- i. explore the relationship between the academic achievement and peer pressure of university students.
- ii. investigate the relationship between the academic achievement and the parent pressure of university students.
- iii. study gender-wise comparison of relationship between peer and parent pressure and academic achievement of university students.
- iv. study department-wise comparison of relationship between peer and parent pressure and academic achievement of university students.

## 3. Methodology

The study was descriptive in nature. A survey was conducted.

### • Population

The population of the study was postgraduate male and female students of Business Administration, Economics and Computer Science departments of International Islamic University, Islamabad.

### • Sample

The sample of the study was 156 students enrolled in semester Fall 2010 in M.A./M.Sc class of Business Administration, Economics and Computer Science departments. Cluster sampling technique was used to select the sample. All the students who were present on data collection day were selected as the sample of the study. The department-wise break down of sample is presented in following table.

Table.1 Break-down of the sample of study

Serial no	Department	Total
1	Computer Science	38
2	Economics	35
3	Business Administration	83

### • Instrument

The instrument was a three point rating scale developed by the researcher. It consists of 29 statements. Fifteen statements were about the peer pressure and fourteen statements were regarding the parent pressure. The statements were rated on three indicators; always true, seldom true and never true. The response of students was scored: peer pressure and parent pressure score was obtained. The over-all marks of the students in their graduate examination were used as their academic achievement.

- **Validity and reliability of the instrument**

The instrument was discussed with the experts of different departments working at different institutions in different capacities. In the light of their opinion and suggestions the instrument was finalized. The developed instrument was then administered to the students of master's class studying in same university but in different department. Cronbach alpha was used to calculate the reliability of the developed instrument. The calculated value of reliability was found .65 which is the moderate value of the "r".

#### 4. **Data Analysis**

Pearson correlation was used to study the effect of peer and parent pressure on academic achievement. The data was analyzed and interpreted in following tables.

Table.2 The relationship between academic achievement and peer and parent pressure

Groups	N	Pearson Correlation(r)	p value	Significance
Peer Pressure	156	-0.095	0.239	ns
Parent Pressure	156	0.269*	0.001	s

\* Significant at  $\alpha=.05$

Table.2 shows that the parent pressure and academic achievement has significant positive relationship, whereas the peer pressure and academic achievement has not significant negative relationship.

Table.3 Gender-wise relationship between academic achievement and peer and parent pressure

Groups	Male student's			Female student's		
	N	r	p	N	r	p
Peer Pressure	76	0.034	0.768	80	-0.252*	0.024
Parent Pressure	76	0.097	0.405	80	0.264*	0.018

N = Total number of respondents

r = Pearson's correlation

\* Significant at  $\alpha=.05$

p = level of significance

Table.3 highlighted that the academic achievement of female students has significant negative correlation with peer pressure and significant positive correlation with parent pressure. Whereas table further highlighted that the academic achievement of male students showed no significant correlation with the peer and parent pressure.

Table.4 Department-wise relationship between academic achievement and peer and parent pressure

Groups	N	Peer Pressure		Parent Pressure	
		r	p	r	p
Computer Science	38	-.039	.815	.164	.324
Economics	35	-.163	.351	.252	.145
Business Administration	83	-.031	.779	.241*	.028

\* Significant at  $\alpha=.05$

Table.4 indicated the academic achievement of the students of Business Administration department has significant positive correlation with parent pressure. The academic achievement of the students of other departments showed positive correlation with parent pressure which is not significant. Table further highlighted that the academic achievement of the students of Computer Science, Economics and Business Administration departments has negative correlation with peer pressure which is also not significant.

## 5. Findings

The findings of the research study are as follows.

- i. Parent pressure showed significant positive relationship with academic achievement of university students.
- ii. Peer pressure showed negative relationship with academic achievement of university students.

- iii. Parent pressure showed significant positive relationship with academic achievement of female university students whereas it has no relationship with academic achievement of male university students.
- iv. Peer pressure has significant negative relationship with academic achievement of female students and no relationship with the academic achievement of male university students.
- v. Academic achievement of students from Business Administration Department showed significant positive relationship with parent pressure and negative relationship with peer pressure.
- vi. Academic achievement of students from Computer Science Department and Economics department showed positive relationship with parent pressure and negative relationship with peer pressure.

## 6. **Conclusion**

- i. Parent's pressure effects academic achievement positively whereas peer pressure effects academic achievement of university students negatively.
- ii. Parent pressure has greater influence on female's academic achievement as compared to male students.
- iii. The peer pressure negatively effect the academic achievement of female students as compared to male students.
- iv. The academic achievement of Business Administration students is positively correlated with parent pressure as compared to the academic achievement of the students of Computer Science and Economics Departments.

## 7. **Discussion**

Peer and Parent pressure are the strong variables which affect the total personality of the student so as the academic achievement. The findings of the study showed that parent pressure has significant positive effect on academic achievement. It means that if parents are in contact with the studies of their children it can enhance their academic performance, where as the findings further highlighted that the peer pressure has negative effect on the academic achievement of the university students. Under the parent pressure the students feel forced to attend the classes, to be punctual in their assignments, presentations and project work, to fulfill the parent expectations.

The peer pressure demand to help their friends even at the cast of bunking classes, going out with friends during the academic activities, completing the others assignments and missing their own, rejecting the parent norm to confirm the affiliation with groups.

The female students are dependents either on parents or on peers. The findings of the study indicated that the academic achievement of female student is high where there is parent pressure and adverse where they have more peer pressure as compared to male

students. In Pakistani culture the parents are more protective for their female child as compared to male it create dependency in females. So where the parent takes more care of their female child they depend on them and where the parents don't care for them they are dependent on peers.

Study further highlighted that the parents are more concerned about the academic achievement of students studying at Business Administration department as compared to the students enrolled at Economics and Computer Science department. The reason may be the high expenditure of this department. The spent more on the education of their children enrolled at this department so they expect more and this cause parent pressure and it effects positively the achievement of student.

The results of the study are consistent and aligned with the findings of already conducted researches. The finding of the study that peer pressure effects negatively the students achievement verify the result of research studies conducted by Bellemare, Lepagie and Shearer (2009)and Tope (2011). The finding of the study that peer pressure significantly effects the academic achievement of female students is against the findings of the research of Taylor and Wong (1996). They concluded that peer pressure effects negatively the academic achievement of male students. Study concluded that parent pressure is the important variable which effects positively the academic achievement of students and it is not related to the socio-economic status of the parents and quality of school (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003, Opdenakker and Damme, 2005) and this finding is opposite to the findings of the research of Moula (2010) which highlighted that the parental encouragement showed low correlation with academic motivation. The reason may be the parent demanded high achievement by pressurizing children and this might create the anxiety and fear of failure, instead of providing effective motivation to do well in their academic work. The parents need to realize that it is not the amount of encouragement and pressure that matters but the way the encouragement is given matters. It is recommended that parents need to be aware of the importance of their role in their children academic achievement. They may intact with their children studies so that they can provide the necessary facilities at home which help to understand how the peer pressure is effecting their achievement.

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