

Analysing Peer Influence on Students' Motivation at Higher Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This research study examines the effects of peer influence on academic motivation of students at higher secondary level in Pakistan. Peers' personal qualities, company, social background and parental education level play a significant role in influencing the behavior, attitude, motivation and decision-making of individuals particularly adolescents and young adults.

Methodology: Using the quantitative research design, data was used through self-structured questionnaire on 351 students who were randomly selected and who were pupils of respective schools in the districts of Layyah, Muzaffargarh, and Rahim Yar Khan. Analysis was done using descriptive and inferential statistics, t-tests.

Findings: The results indicate that the peer influence is a powerful predictor of student motivation. Peers' personal qualities, their company, social and parental background have an impact on students' motivation. Good peer habits, disciplined living and academic achievements are a great motivator to students and improve their study habits.

Conclusion: Peer influence plays a significant and multifaceted role in shaping students' academic motivation. Peers act as an important socializing force during adolescence, and they strongly influence how students perceive their academic responsibilities.

Keywords: Peer Influence, Students' Motivation, Higher Secondary Level.

1. INTRODUCTION

Peer influence plays a key role in academic motivation and performance in students. Peers can either positively or negatively influence a student in a learning context, in terms of engagement, effort, and performance (Schimmelpfennig 2025). Social comparison, reinforcement, collaborative learning and behavioral modeling are some of the mechanisms by which peers can do so (Wentzel, 2022). The students tend to emulate the behaviors of their peers who possess a high level of work ethics or have a high level of passion towards achieving academic success, thus, increasing their own level of motivation. Conversely, vice tendencies can also be transferred and have a negative impact on academic motivation (Mendoza & King, 2020). According to the social learning theory, individuals acquire behaviors by

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observing and imitating them (Bandura & Walters, 1977). In this way, personality of peers can be considered as effective motivation factor of students.

The personality of a peer is influenced by his background. Characters inspiring or discouraging others are all influenced by the socioeconomic status and cultural upbringing and family environment. Consistently stable and educationally supportive backgrounds usually lead to confident, resilient, growth-mindset students, which positively affect other students (Skinner, 2023). By contrast, disadvantaged people may experience low self-efficacy, which may affect group motivation by default (Shifrer, 2019). In addition, the social environment of students, especially classmates (peers) have an influence on student learning outcomes (Shao et al., 2024). A factor that is so important but often escapes the attention of teachers and parents is the role of peers. (Laugen et al., 2024).

The educational level of the parents poses a vital impact on peer personal development. Students who have well-educated parents internalize a stronger academic orientation which then transfers to peer interaction in academic discussion, cooperative learning and goal-setting. Conversely, peers whose parents are less educated may not receive as high a level of direct academic support, which can also be differentially structured into peer groups (Kazim, 2025). Differences in motivational climate within peer networks are therefore based on such intergenerational transmission of educational values.

Peer influence has a stronger academic motivation impact than other institutional influences (Jarvenoja et al., 2025). It may also include observational learning, social comparison, and normative conformity. Students are constantly measuring their performance against those of others and this can either motivate them to put in extreme efforts or it can demoralize them according to the prevailing peer situation. In addition, the wish to fit in socially tends to cause a learner to adapt study behaviors to group norms, which magnifies the effects of peers (Mckenzie & Jensen, 2024).

The motivation among students in the higher secondary level is a very important factor that influences performance and attendance of academics. It has been revealed that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can significantly affect the learning results of students (Khuhro, 2024). Intrinsic motivation is linked to personal interest and curiosity, and it is commonly associated with greater cognitive engagement, but rewards or parental pressure are examples of extrinsic motivation that may lead to superficial learning (Shanshan & Loang, 2024). It has been shown that students in this age group tend to be extrinsically motivated due to social and family pressure to perform well in school and gain university admission instead of being interested in the subjects they are studying (Qadeer et al., 2025). This trend is a reason to worry about the long-term knowledge and critical thinking retention.

1.1 Statement of Problem

In Pakistan, students at the higher secondary level face significant academic, social, and emotional challenges that influence their motivation to learn. Among these factors, peer influence plays a critical role due to strong cultural emphasis on group belonging, collective identity, and social approval. While peer influence can encourage academic engagement, cooperation, and healthy competition, it can also lead to negative outcomes such as distraction, low academic motivation, involvement in non-academic activities, or adoption of unproductive attitudes toward studies. This study seeks to analyze the various aspects of students' peers' personality i.e. peers' social background, parents' education, influence of peers' company and its impact on students' motivation at the higher secondary level in Pakistan.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To study the impact of peers' personal qualities on students' motivation.
2. To identify the influence of peer's company on students' motivation.
3. To explore the effect of peer's social background on his personality.
4. To describe the impact of peers' parents' educational background on his personality.
5. To study the relationship between peer influence and students' motivation at higher secondary level.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic participation and performance are also influenced by peer influence. Kiuru et al. (2007) carried out a longitudinal study and found that student academic motivation and performance is highly dependent on the level of motivation of the peer group. Personal performance is improved when positive peer norms are present such as the value of schoolwork and high-school aspirations. Conversely, the negative peer impacts such as identification with disengaged peers are linked with worsening academic performance (Shin & Ryan, 2017). Here, the importance of peer networks in the learning process becomes apparent and one may suppose that any measures that would enhance positive peer relationships would result in the enhancement of student achievement.

Students are motivated by peers who encourage them to participate more actively in academic activities. As it was explained that peer dynamics have a considerable impact on engagement in learning as students will be more likely to engage in learning activities when they see their peers show interest in learning. Students learn together in groups and cannot help but feel a shared sense of responsibility and motivational drive (Van Ryzin, 2020).

Disciplined peers are in a position to influence classmates positively through academic standards set by their peers. Dong et al. (2024) opined that students who have highly motivated peers are more likely to choose to use time management and self-regulation strategies, particularly in an online learning environment. As peers exchange favorable studying strategies, like goal-setting and active learning approaches, and persuade others to adopt them, it boosts the performance of the latter in Finally academic performance.

Intrinsic motivation is achieved through emotional and intellectual peer support that creates a sense of belonging. According to Valiente et al. (2020), when students are encouraged by their peers, they will have a higher chance to develop a true interest in learning as opposed to using external rewards only. It is this intrinsic motivation that is essential to long-term academic persistence since students who study based on curiosity and mastery interests achieve higher performance compared to students that study based on grades only (Filgona et al., 2020).

The procrastination can be minimized among students by using peer groups which focus on the accountability. Koppenborg and Klingsieck (2022) discovered that students who communicated with goal-oriented students were less prone to procrastinate on their assignments, because discussions in groups and shared deadlines gave the students a feeling of responsibility. Discipline is strengthened through peer-guided learning and reciprocal academic task review, as well as maintenance of academic diligence.

The support system that includes peers supports students through the academic challenges and enables them to become more resilient. A study conducted found that learners who share the problem with other students are more effective at stress and motivation management. Pepper support has been shown to alleviate feelings of isolation, especially during the study of a challenging course such as science, whether the learning occurs in person or online (Willoughby, 2024).

2.1 Peers' Personal Qualities

Positive peer relationships are commonly associated with empathy, resilience and conscientiousness (Al Doghan & Zakariya, 2025). Caring colleagues form supportive environments and help reduce conflict and improve group cohesion in school and the workplace (Portt et al., 2020). The indirect positive effect on peer groups is through stability mediated by resilience, which also is associated with increased coping in the face of adversity (Frisby et al., 2024). These findings suggest that individual elements are relevant to group performance. The emotional intelligence of a peer has also been examined in relation to its influence on social and academic success. Some of the most valuable indicators of effective cooperation are emotional regulation, and social awareness (Altaras et al., 2024). Emotional intelligence contributes to avoiding conflicts and building a good relationship, which in turn contributes to better cooperation at

school and work (Woime & Shato, 2025). In addition, these peers tend to take an informal mentoring role, and their instruction has been demonstrated to increase collective performance (Prummer et al., 2024). This points to the role of emotional competencies when dealing with peers.

The other important theme is the way responsible peers can affect their peers. They are also known to influence the academic motivation of their peers and their discipline in a positive way (Lea III et al., 2025). Their conscientious and structured character naturally tends to form behavioral patterns that other people follow to achieve improved results (Choudhury et al., 2023). Nevertheless, it is not that simple a feature as other researchers also say that overabundant conscientiousness can lead to peer influence or peer pressure, particularly in competition (Liu et al., 2021). Openness to experience has a situation-dependent impact on peer dynamics. Very open people are likely to support creativity and flexibility within a group (Giletta et al., 2021). The willingness to embrace a new perspective on issues can lead to new collaborative approaches that are productive. On the other hand, the reverse is true since in more structured settings, there are highly open peers who cannot easily adapt to the existing norms, and this creates tension (Siddiqui et al., 2025).

2.2 The influence of Peers' company on motivation

The influence of peers on motivation is a burning research topic during the last several years and it has been possible to demonstrate both positive and negative effects. It has also been proposed that in the majority of instances, availability of peers can be a motivational or a driving factor because it is a social enabling situation where an individual would do more when others are available due to arousal and responsibility (Firmansyah et al., 2025). Those students who had to work in groups were more assertive in academic assignments than those who did not as they felt a collective will because of the support of other students (Lodder et al., 2016). However, the peer relations were characterized as decision-making ones as the conflict or the lack of supportive followers may have a negative effect on the intrinsic motivation (Putri, 2024).

Peer comparisons were found to be strongly associated with self-efficacy and goal-setting behaviors. As Chakraborty (2023) showed, upward social comparisons, or seeing high-achieving peers, tended more to motivate individuals to work harder and perform better particularly when they held the belief that the difference is not too huge. On the other hand, that also implied a negative impact on motivation and self-esteem by the negative comparisons on already low-confidence individuals (Shamsie, 2024). The second variable was perception of peer performance; the lower the perceived performance of the rest of the students had been the less threatening and encouraging said also it was (Crawford & Katherine., 2024).

The other significant research field was the use of peer feedback in motivation development. In situations where a positive peer response was connected to the engagement and learning of the skills, specifically, in a collaborative learning context (Dahri et al., 2024). However, negative or overly critical feedback, on the contrary, was discouraging and reduced the motivation to continue accomplishing additional tasks. Systematic systems of peer-assessment standardized the feedback, minimized and were goal-focused and linked to long-term motivation. The impact of group belongingness on motivation was also explained by the theory of social identity. Individuals that identified with a peer group could easily be initiated into the fold and move towards the group goals (Kacha, 2024). This may be reflected in the school and workplace setup, where in-group pressures were more tenacious and diligent.

2.3 Relationship between Peer Influence and Students' Motivation

The relationship between peer pressure and student motivation is a subject, which has been researched extensively during recent years, and researchers have investigated the problem in a tremendous number of ways. Some studies found out that peer contacts affected academic motivation of students either positively/negatively, based on the kind of influence (Shen & French, 2024). Positive peer behaviors identified as a source of intrinsic motivation were sense of belonging and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2015). The negative peer effect, disengagement/disruptive behavior, on the other hand, was also more

likely to worsen the involvement in the student academic activity (Daumiller & Hemi, 2025). These findings suggested that peer relations quality was an important determinant of motivational outcomes.

Academic motivation was also influenced by social norms and peer comparisons at the classroom. The students have also disclosed that the students who believed there was a group of students who were high-achievers were more inclined to obey the norms of the society based on the assistance of the motivational strategies (Butera et al., 2024). However, peer competition at times led to anxiety and low levels of self-efficacy, particularly in students who were unable to process the perceived academic threat (Wan et al., 2024). The theory of social comparison was used to understand how students evaluated their abilities relative to the competencies of their classmates, which in turn affected their amount of effort and perseverance (Tong & Shakibaei, 2025). Thus, the peer influence was both direct and indirect since it was applied directly and in reference to academic norms.

The other significant element in the new literature was that of peer support in the development of autonomous motivation. Emotionally and academically supported, the peers also made a choice to become more willing to become self-determined motivated, i.e. became more engaged and liked the learning process (Juvonen et al., 2012). Motivational enhancement was the most successful area of peer mentoring because of role model effects and reduced academic stress in instances where older students mentored younger students (Mateos-Gonzalez et al., 2025). The same results did not reject the theory of self-determination which emphasized the concept of relatedness as a key ingredient in the maintenance of intrinsic motivation (Van Ryzin et al., 2022). Positive peer groups were thus perceived to provide a buffer against the loss of drive during hard academic transitions.

The influence of peer feedback on motivation was also discussed and the results obtained showed that positive peer feedback positively affected self-regulation and participation in activities amongst the students (Zhan & Teng, 2025). Particular and supportive feedback provided by peers increased the mastery orientation and resiliency of the students (Butler, 2021). On the other hand, too harsh and too inconsistent peer feedback was linked to avoidance behavior, and low academic confidence (Kluger et al., 2024). The effectiveness of the peer feedback systems was dependent on the building up of trust and respect within learning environments. The formal peer review framework in the schools where it was applied showed more favorable motivational results that justify the importance of peer-mediated learning interventions.

2.4 The effect of peer influence on students' motivation

Peer influence is not a recent approach to student motivation, and numerous researchers have conducted studies to prove its impact on the learning process. According to a study conducted by Svendsen et al (2025), peers can either build or ruin the intrinsic motivation of students depending on the nature of the social interactions. Positive peer relationships brought with them a feeling of belonging which increased the participation and persistence of the students in their school academics. In contrast, negative peer pressure was more likely to result in the absence of motivation, especially when students thought that their classmates were neither interested nor helpful. The results put emphasis on the two-fold nature of peer influence in promoting academic motivation or deterring it.

Woreta et al. (2025) also researched the effect of peer comparisons on motivation and discovered that students who made comparisons with high-achievers were more motivated to improve compared to low-achiever peers. This was however reliant on the self-efficacy of the students; low self-efficacy students were more likely to be discouraged than to be inspired. As indicated in the paper, the peer influence did not exist in a uniform manner but was founded on individual differences in perceptions regarding self and academic resilience. This meant that any intervention that would attempt to take advantage of the strength of peers must be conscious of the psychological readiness of the students to make positive comparisons.

The social identity theory also provided an explanation of how peer groups affect motivation. Oladunni et al. (2025) believed that secondary school academic motivation in students was the result of shared goals

and shared efficacy when the students strongly felt the sense of belonging to high-achieving peer groups. Conversely, those students who associated themselves with disengaged students were not as motivated as they assumed that group norms stipulated that minimum effort was needed. The researchers felt that peer influence had an effect at the level of an individual or the level of the group and this is why it is significant to promote good academic cultures in classrooms.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study quantitative research design was employed to investigate how peer influence students' motivation at higher secondary level. A survey questionnaire was developed and validated by a panel of experts in USP Multan and piloted to determine the reliability. To ensure the questionnaire's reliability, the researcher conducted a pilot test and calculated Cronbach's alpha value which was 0.82. The population of this research study comprises students of public schools within the districts Layyah, Muzaffargarh and Rahim Yar Khan. The sample of the study comprised of 351 Higher Secondary school students (145 males and 206 female). The results were derived using both inferential and descriptive statistics.

4. FINDINGS: ANALYSES OF STUDENTS' RESPONSES

4.1 Descriptive Analyses

4.1.1 Peer Personal Qualities/Habits

According to the results of the mean scores and standard deviation, the data demonstrate that the personal qualities and habits of their peers affect the respondents in a strong and consistent positive and motivational way. All the means of statements are concentrated within a high and narrow range of between 3.64 and 3.89 (on a 1-5 scale) which means that, on an average, the respondents would lean between agree and strongly agree with the positive statements. The large degree of agreement is also supported by the fact that all the standard deviations are less than 1.0 and some less than 0.8, indicating that the responses were clustered around the mean and there was very limited variation or disagreement in the answers of the participants. Simply put, the peer group is seen as a great influence in terms of inspiration, like imitating good and disciplined habits, getting inspired by good grades, or getting to know what to shun by negative behaviors and poor performers.

4.1.2 The influence of peer's company

According to the average scores (3.62 to 3.84) and the average standard deviation (all less than 1.04), the results also suggest that there is a strong agreement between the respondents that the academic company they are currently in has a significant and unmistakable effect on their own study behavior and achievement. The general opinion of respondents on positive pressure given by intelligent, serious, and ambitious peers is overwhelming and that they also improve their good habits and they concur that non-serious or "bad" company has a tangible negative and distracting influence. Interestingly, another perceived advantage of being in the company of low-achieving peers is also reflected in the data as the respondents concur that in such a setting, they feel relaxed and happy when there is less academic pressure on them and as a consequence the peer influence is never always positive but depends on the specific social and academic dynamics at work.

4.1.3 Background of peers

According to the average scores and standard deviation in this table, it seems the respondents recognize the role of peer socio-economic and geographical background, but they seem to be more moderate in their more homogenous agreement with other factors. The standard deviations show a neutral-to-positive scale (3.59 to 3.69) range of the means which mean that there exists a general, but not so strong, agreement/disagreement with the statements, and at the same time the higher standard deviations indicate that there exist much more agreement and disagreement in the answers of individuals. This implies that a general appreciation of the fact that urban backgrounds are in a way appealing and that country

counterparts have certain distinguishing attributes is present, but the group is highly fragmented on the physical effects of the same.

4.1.4 Parents (Educated/Un-educated)

The data indicates that there is a high level of agreement between the respondents based on the fairly high mean scores (ranging between 3.68 and 3.75) and moderate low standard deviations (all less than 1.0) indicating that the parental level of education of a peer is viewed by the respondents as a strong factor in their habits, manners, and motivation to study. The general attitudes of the respondents show that educated parents influence the attitudes of their children in a positive way, as well as they nurture better habits among children; people also believe that the uneducated parents are contributing to the variation in the behavior among children and the less accepted manners. It shows that there is a common perception that parental education and the support connected with it is also one of the major factors that influence the formation of personal and academic characteristics of the student.

4.1.5 Relationship Between Peer Influence and Students' Motivation

As indicated by the consistently high mean scores of between 3.49 and 3.73 and the standard deviations all being less than 1.0, a strong and clear agreement that the student motivation is a strong and positive factor that is driven by peer influence can be seen. The vast majority of respondents confirm that academic motivation is boosted by a collection of peer relationships, such as direct motivation, witnessing the stories of success and good work ethics of peers, and positive competition. The fact that responses fell in these high means so closely means that there is a general consensus that peers are an important part of influencing study habits, establishing higher academic goals, and giving the inspiration and encouragement that is needed to get through difficult times and perform.

4.1.6 Relationship Between Students' Motivation and academic achievement

Judging by the high mean scores and low standard deviation of all of the mean scores, which are in the range of 3.55 to 3.61, all lower than 1.0, the data clearly shows that the respondents agree that student motivation, which is heavily influenced by peers, is one of the key aspects affecting academic success. There is a distinct agreement among respondents that their motivation to succeed is supported by these positive peer influences and effects including competition, encouragement and observing other study-oriented behavior and also validate that un-motivated or lazy peers create a challenge in their concentration. This shows a known and direct correlation between the motivational climate that peers provoke and one's academic undertakings and performance.

4.2 Inferential Statistical Analysis of Students' Responses

An inferential statistical analysis of the data was conducted to examine variations in students' opinions across different demographic factors such as mean, t-value, p-value and standard deviation were used.

Table 1: Comparison of variables on gender based

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p-value
Peer Personal Qualities	Male	145	3.72	0.68	378	-1.24	0.216
	Female	206	3.79	0.65			
Parental Education Influence	Male	145	3.71	0.85	378	-0.32	0.752
	Female	206	3.73	0.82			
Peer Motivation Influence	Male	145	3.62	0.88	378	-1.05	0.294
	Female	206	3.68	0.85			

According to the results of the independent samples t-test provided in the table, the analysis has shown that the scores of male and female students with respect to their perception of peer influence have no statistically significant differences on the three variables measured. This is concluded by the fact that all the p-values (0.216, 0.752, and 0.294) are significantly higher than the usual level of significance of 0.05.

Table 2: Comparison of variables on location based

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-value	p-value
Peer Personal Qualities	Urban	195	3.81	0.64	378	2.01	0.045
	Rural	156	3.71	0.69			
Parental Education Influence	Urban	195	3.77	0.81	378	0.81	1.89
	Rural	156	3.67	0.86			
Peer Motivation Influence	Urban	195	3.71	0.84	378	0.84	2.12
	Rural	156	3.60	0.89			

According to the independent samples t-test in the table, the analysis shows that, one of the three variables, student location, has statistically significant difference according to student location, the other two variables have incongruent results with the conventional statistical reporting and should be checked.

The difference in the variable Peer Personal Qualities is significant (p-value = 0.045) which is below the usual significance level of 0.05. The difference between urban and rural students in terms of their means (3.81 and 3.71, respectively) allows concluding that urban students see the personal qualities of their peers as a much stronger positive factor.

Table 3: Comparison of motivation across subject groups (Pre-medical, Pre-engineering, I.C.S., I. Com, F.A-IT, F.A):

Variable		Sum of square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Peer Personal Qualities	Between groups	10.51	5	2.10	4.32	0.001
	Within groups	166.84	345	0.483		
Parental Education Influence						
Total		177.35	350			

The outcome of the One-Way ANOVA shows that statistically significant difference exists in the perception of the influence of Personal Qualities of Peers in the various subject groups of pre-medical, pre-engineering, I.C.S., and so on. I. Com, F.A-IT, F.A).

5. CONCLUSION

The research confirms the reality that peers form a significant factor in student achievement and academic motivation. There was a positive constant effect of successful, strict and encouraging peers on effort and goal-setting and a negative specific effect of disengaged peers. This supports the idea that schools need to make active efforts to promote good peer cultures through cooperative learning and mentorship programs. Schools can capitalize on this by having peer-learning programs along the lines of the different academic streams. Finally, the findings also show that teachers need to learn that peer influence is a two-edged sword. Even though good peer groups can cause success, bad groups can be a hinder to development. Activities that proactively empower students to leverage the power of peer influence in a positive way can include peer mentoring, group learning, and social-emotional programs.

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