The influence of peer group on academic performance of adolescent students in secondary schools in Tanzania

Mary A. Mosha

Accepted 28 November, 217

Faculty of Education, University of Bagamoyo, P.O BOX 31285, Dares Salaam, Tanzania.E-mail:marymosha@hotmail.com.

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of peer group on adolescent students' academic performance in secondary schools in Tanzania. To achieve the objective of the study, three research questions were formulated. A total of 144 participants (120 students and 24 teachers) were involved in the study. The sample was purposively selected from two secondary schools (one government and one private). Instruments used were interview checklists and questionnaires. The study applied case study design. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilized in the study. The study established that peer group had both positive and negative influence on adolescent students' academic performance at the selected schools. Comparatively, the influence was found higher in government than the private owned secondary schools. It was further established that peers relationship, socialization, environment, globalization, and drug use had a great influence in determining students' academic performance. Based on the findings, guidance and counseling services were recommended at the schools for purposes of building self-confidence. It might help the students cope with challenges that were found to affect their performance at schools. Additionally, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training should provide in-service training to teachers on guidance and counseling in order for them to modify adolescent students' behavior and attitude to develop a good identity.

Keywords: Personalities, attitude, perception, maturation, communication.

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a time of transformation in many areas of an individual's life. In the midst of these rapid physical, emotional, and social changes, youth begin to question adult standards and the need for parental guidance. It is also a time for individuals to make important decisions about their commitment to academics, family, and perhaps religion (Ryan, 2002). As adolescents make the transition to middle school and then high school, peer networks increase, and peer crowd affiliation becomes an important aspect of peer relations (La Greca and Prinstein, 1999). Also during adolescence, close friends begin to surpass parents as adolescents' primary source of social support and contribute in important ways to adolescents' self-concept and well-being (Furman and Buhrmester, 1992). In addition, dating relationships

emerge and take on increasing importance. By age 16, a majority of adolescents report having had a romantic relationship (Carver, Joyner, and Udry, 2003).

Adolescence is characterized by changes in terms of physical, thinking, and problem-solving as well as emotional and sexual maturation (Santrok, 2008). In addition, adolescents have always been exposed to peer influence, but the kinds of peer influence that they encounter have changed tremendously in the past years. Peers can influence everything from what an adolescent chooses to wear, to whether or not an adolescent engages in drug-related or other delinquent behavior (Temitope and Christy, 2015). This is an important issue to be studied because if society and education related professionals understand the issue surrounding negative

peer influence, they are more likely to prevent it and be more adequately prepared to help a teenager facing negative aspects of peer pressure.

The influence of the peer educational climate is defined by the amount and the style of help that children receive from the peer group. This is determined by elements of the peer context, like the dynamic of communication and effective relationships, attitude towards value, expectations, etc. (Temitope and Christy, 2015). Along these same lines, Marchesi and Martin (2002) opined that adolescents' expectations have a notable influence on academic results, even when controlling for initial knowledge and socio-economic context. For instance, Castejon and Peret (1998) found an indirect relationship with performance from the student perception of how much importance his or her peer groups assign to studying at home. Other studies show that the levels of peers cohesion and family relationship prove themselves capable of predicting academic performance (Caplan, 2002 and De Guzman, 2007).

While friendship emerges relatively early in childhood, research on peer networks has demonstrated that the influence and importance of peers appear to increase beginning in early adolescence. This trend continues until the influence of peers peaks in middle adolescence and begins a gradual decline into later adolescence (Collins and Steinberg, 2006). This pattern indicates that adolescence may be an ideal time to study changes in the peer network and implications of these changes for developing youth. For instance, Piaget (1950) argued that adolescence is able to think logically, planning for his future life and also is able to solve life problems but the capacity of thinking depends on maturation of the brain. Santrok (2008) adds that an adolescent during this age can set his own goals, and is able to cope with stress and manage emotions. At this stage an adolescent can start to ask himself *"is the school important to me?"* If the answer is "yes," he will make more effort in studies; if "no" is likely to skip classes.

Background to the Problem

The Government of Tanzania made greater effort to ensure that adolescence education is provided to adolescent students at the schools. For instance, Swiss Centre for International Health in collaboration with Ministry of Education and Vocation Training in Tanzania (MoEVT) provided a nine-year programme that aimed at counseling peer adolescents in Tanzania from (2003-2012) in Mtwara, Lindi, Mbeya, Morogoro, Ruvuma, Iringa, and Kilimanjaro regions (Kessler, 2012). Despite the great effort made by the government to ensure awareness among adolescents still the influence of peer group in adolescent students has a greater magnitude on behavior and decision making. It also affects academic performance negatively. For example, the study done by Mlowasa (2014) revealed that poor academic

performance at the schools was influenced by negative peer groups. Since peer group plays a significant role in determining students' academic performance either positively or negatively, this study, therefore, investigated the influence of peer group in adolescent students' academic performance in private and government secondary schools.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of peer group on the academic performance of adolescent students at two selected secondary schools.

Research Questions

i. Do peer groups have an influence on the academic performance of adolescent students at schools?
ii. What are the factors affecting adolescent students' performance at schools?
iii. How does socialization affect academic performance among adolescent students?

Conceptual framework

Learning occurs through imitation or modeling. Adolescents learn good or bad behavior from media, parents, fellow peers and family members through imitation or modeling (Santrok, 2008). The model in this study examines the relationship between variables and its outcomes (Figure 1).

The family is a primary socialization agent. That is, it is within family relationships that the child learns first his first lesson in social living, social roles, and social behavior and in the general way of life of his society. Using the family as his reference group he learns some patterns of behaviour, perceives some realities and acquires habits (Godia and Waiyaki, 1988). In his peer group, the child learns adult values such as cooperation, responsibility, following rules, honesty, fair play, and good habits. The peer group helps the child to learn his sex roles and acts as a source of information for its members (Godia and Waiyaki, 1988). Media is a socialization agent among adolescents as well as adults. It can influence an adolescent to form identity (Brown, 1990). Adolescents use media to learn sexual and romantic scripts (Brown et al., 2000). This can lead to early pregnancy hence school dropout.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer Groups

Peer groups are essential to social and general development. Communication with peers increases significantly during adolescence and peer relationships
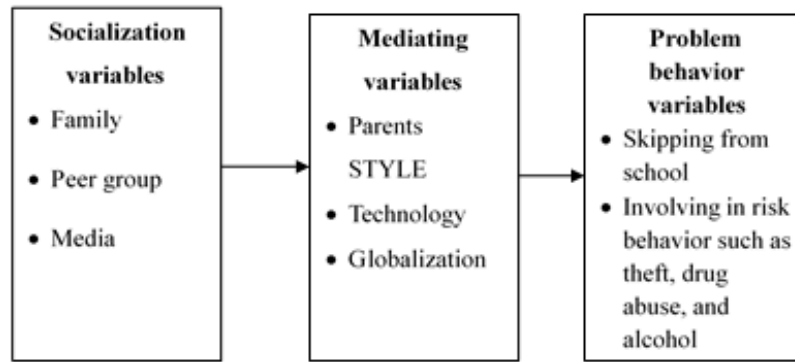
Figure 1. Model for Explaining Socialization Influences.

become more intense than in other stages (Papalia, Feldman and Kruk, 2004) and more influential to the teen, affecting both the decisions and choices being made (Swanson, Edwards, and Spencer, 2010). High-quality friendships may enhance children's development regardless of the characteristics of those friends. As children begin to bond with various people and create friendships, it later helps them when they are adolescent and sets up the framework for adolescence and peer groups (Berndt and Thomas, 2002).

Peer groups are especially important during adolescence, a period of development characterized by a dramatic increase in time spent with peers and a decrease in adult supervision (Larson and Richards, 1991). Adolescents also associate with friends of the opposite sex much more than in childhood Brown (1990) and tend to identify with larger groups of peers based on shared characteristics (Eder, 1985). It is also common for adolescents to use friends as coping devices in different situations (Brown, 1990).

Acceptance by peers is an important part of adolescent self-identity and has a strong influence on psychological adjustment (Harter, 1997). In part to seek support and acceptance from peers, many adolescents affiliate with a peer crowd. Peer crowds are "reputation-based collectives of similarly stereotyped individuals who may or may not spend much time together" (Brown, 1990). Specifically, peer crowds include a high-status, image-oriented crowd (Populars or Hot Shots); an athletically oriented crowd (Jocks or Athletes); an academically oriented crowd (Brains); a crowd that rebels against social norms (Alternatives or Nonconformists); a deviant, rule-breaking crowd (Burnouts, Dirts, or Druggies); and a crowd of misfits who keep to themselves (Loners or Nobodies) (Brown, 1990; Dolcini and Adler, 1994).

In school set-ups, teachers can take advantage of peer group to plan group activities for learning and to promote peer counseling. However, peer groups may socialize negatively, for example, when they inculcate antisocial behavior, immoral conduct, and experimentation with drug and substance abuse (Thungun et al., 2008).

Adolescence

Adolescence is a critical period in social development because adolescents can be easily influenced by the people they develop close relationships with. This is the first time individuals can truly make their own decisions, which also makes this a sensitive period. Relationships are vital in the social development of an adolescent due to the extreme influence peers can have over an individual. These relationships become significant because they begin to help the adolescent understand the concept of personalities, how they form, and why a person has that specific type of personality. The relationships adolescents have with their peers, family, and members of their social sphere play a vital role in the social development of an adolescent. As an adolescent's social sphere develops rapidly as they distinguish the differences between friends and acquaintances, they often become heavily emotionally invested in friends (Barenboim, 1981).

Adolescence is a time when peers play an increasingly important role in the lives of youth. Teens begin to develop friendships that are more ultimate, exclusive, and more constant than in earlier years. In many ways, these friendships are an essential component of development. They provide safe venues where youth can explore their identities, where they can feel accepted and where they can develop a sense of belongingness. Friendships also allow youth to practice and foster social skills necessary for future success (De Guzman, 2007).

Peer Influence

Peer influence can be both negative and positive. While we tend to think that peer influence leads teens to engage in unhealthy and unsafe behaviours, it can actually motivate youth to study harder in school, volunteer for community and social services, and participate in sports and other productive endeavors (De Guzman, 2007). Negative peer influences do exist and should be an educational related professional issue.

Negative peer influence leads an adolescent's students to be involved in antisocial behavior, hence, lead to the formation of negative peer group (Howard and Medway, 2004).

Peer influence is not a simple process where youth are passive recipients of influence from others. In fact, peers who become friends tend to already have a lot of things in common. Peers with similar interests, similar academic standing, and enjoy doing the same things tend to gravitate towards each other (De Guzman, 2007). However, a student who associates with fellow peers who are not motivated in learning affects academic negatively (Ryan, 2000). Literature indicates that peers who are interested in academic issues are more likely to associate with students who have the same interest. They often study together, sharing course materials, and information (Mapesa, 2013). For instance, it has been noted by Landau (2002) that students who form positive peer group make more effort during learning, doing social activities, also fear to engage in delinquent activities. However, Ryan (2000) argued that those students who are identified as jock-popular perceived more pressure in the area of school involvement and less pressure toward misconduct.

The influence of the peer educational climate is defined by the amount and the style of help that children receive from the peer group; this is determined by elements of the peer context, like the dynamic of communication and effective relationships, attitude towards value, expectations, etc. (Temitope and Christy, 2015). It is thought that intelligent student does help their peer bring up their academic performance. Likewise, girls with good friends who are considered intelligent tend to do better in school, all attributable to the fact that they share a common team of similar aspiration (Landau, 2002).

Peers influence each other in several ways. Not all of them are bad. Variable of peer influence in this context include the ethnicity of the student, the socio-economic background of the student, family relationship and group interest, also the positive and negative influence is going to be considered. Many peer groups can exert a positive influence on their friend. It is thought that intelligent student does help their peer bring up their academic performance. Likewise, girls with good friends who are considered intelligent tend to do better in school, all attributable to the fact that they share a common team of similar aspiration (Landau, 2002). Also, there are some peer groups who can exert a negative influence on their friends and these groups tend to share low aspiration of going to tertiary institution or pursuing certain careers. There may be other value in place, such as taking care of the family or making quick money rather than pursuing tertiary education first (Ide, 2006).

Peer relationships

Peer relationships provide a context not only for the acquisition and maintenance of friendships and friendship networks but also for the development of key social skills, social problem-solving skills, and empathy. Peer relationships are not entirely positive, however, and peers may also play a role in the development of negative outcomes, such as poor academic adjustment (Buhs et al., 2006). Relationships are vital in the social development of an adolescent due to the extreme influence peers can have over an individual. These relationships become significant because they begin to help the adolescent understand the concept of personalities, how they form, and why a person has that specific type of personality (Barenboim, 1981).

Teacher student relationship in learning environment

The relationship between teacher and student in learning environment influences a student to develop either positive or negative attitude toward school. Students are motivated to learn if the learning environment is safe and supportive. This means that positive relationship between teacher and student will lead to developing a positive attitude toward school while a negative relationship leads to a negative attitude toward school. The teacher needs to develop a caring relationship with their students in order to develop in-depth students' understanding of learning and positive attitude toward school (Labaree, 2000).

Communication

Communication within peer groups allows adolescents to explore their feelings and identity as well as develop and evaluate their social skills. Peer groups offer members the opportunity to develop social skills such as empathy, sharing, and leadership. Adolescents choose peer groups based on characteristics similarly found in them (Rawlins, 1992). By utilizing these relationships, adolescents become more accepting of whom they are becoming. Group norms and values are incorporated into an adolescent's own self-concept (Larson and Richards, 1991). Through developing new communication skills and reflecting upon those of their peers, as well as self-opinions and values, an adolescent can share and express emotions and other concerns without fear of rejection or judgment. Peer groups can have positive influences on an individual, such as on academic motivation and performance. However, while peers may facilitate social development for one another they may also hinder it (Brown, 2004).

Factors affecting Adolescents

Researches of Marchesi and Martin (2002); Howard (2004) and Mlowasa (2014) show that peer group is among the social forces that affect adolescents' behaviors, attitude, and beliefs. For instance, Brown et

al., (2000) reported that peers tend to share internet information such as watching movies and pornography. They also tend to socialize by using internet services.

In a contemporary society, peer groups have become an increasingly important context in which adolescents spend time. Modernization has led more and more to age segregation in schools, workplace, and in the community. How much time one spends with friends will play a great part in the development of the adolescent into the mature adult (Barbour et al., 2002).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study applied case study research design. Case study design was used because it focuses on one particular study area or issue such as one region or one school, even if this has been criticized as descriptive and takes more of a qualitative than quantitative approach. For instance, Kothari (2004) asserts that case study design is needed because it facilitates the smooth sailing of the various research operations. Kothari *ibid* adds that the case study design allows participants to speak for themselves, thereby enabling the situation to be seen through the eyes of participants. Creswell (2009) maintains that case study attempts to know more about a little known. In this study, the design helped the researcher to obtain and interpret meaning and experiences of informants and respondents in their natural settings.

Approach

The study applied both qualitative and quantitative approaches despite their philosophical difference. Qualitative was the major approach because it implied an emphasis on the qualities of entities, process, and meaning that cannot be experimentally examined (Kothari, 2004). Data from the interview were qualitative in nature. A quantitative approach was used to gather broad and quantifiable data from the questionnaires. Cresswell (2009) argues that quantitative approach measure attitude and information which is analyzed using statistical procedures. The combination of qualitative and quantitative in this study was necessary because each had advantage and disadvantage (Bryman, 2006).

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Kothari (2004) defines sampling as a process of selecting numbers of participants from a large group of people. The sample of the study included 120 students, 20 teachers, two discipline teachers, and two academic masters. The study had a total of 144 people. The study utilized purposive sampling technique to select the students because it was selective in nature. Thus the respondents

and informants who met the specific needs of the study were selected. For instance, participants who freely express their ideas were given first priority in order to collect valid and valuable data. Kothari (2004) finds that the organizers of an inquiry deliberately choose particular respondents and informants to ensure sample will be typical or representative of the whole. In this study, teachers were selected for two reasons: firstly, the experience they had on teaching adolescent students and secondly, they were the ones who evaluated students' academic performance at the schools.

Research Instruments

The study utilized two instruments to increase the probability of getting highly accurate, valid, and reliable information. Interviews and questionnaires were used to collect data. Interviews were for the teachers teaching in the classrooms, discipline teachers, and academic masters. Semi-structured interviews were used because of the nature of the topic and the type of the information needed. Kothari (2004) maintains that the instrument leads to more information and greater depth. In addition to that, Enon (1995) finds that this instrument is flexible and the information collected is detailed. Questionnaires were for the students. There were both open and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions were used to allow respondents to elaborate fully their own lines of response. Thungu et al. (2008) find the instrument cheap as well as reducing bias that may occur with other methods.

Data Analysis

Cohen et al. (2000) assert that for qualitative data analysis the researchers have at their disposal a range of techniques, for example, coding and analysis of field notes, case studies, narrative accounts, cognitive mapping, and seeking to pattern of responses. They add that the criteria for deciding which forms of data analysis to undertake are governed both by fitness for purpose and legitimacy. Following these expositions, the researcher utilized content analysis of field notes when analyzing qualitative data. Quantitative data from questionnaires were subjected to descriptive data analysis and presented in percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

It has long been recognized that adolescents' peer relations and friendships contribute in important ways to their psychosocial functioning as well as performance. The study investigated the influence of peer group on adolescent students' academic performance in two secondary schools (private and government). Findings are presented according to research questions as follows:

Do peer groups have an influence on adolescent students' academic performance of at schools?

Results from the study showed that peer group had an influence on adolescent students' academic performance in two folds; positively and negatively. For instance, findings indicated that 48 students out of 120 (40%) had a positive influence on adolescent students' academic performance at the selected schools. This is because adolescents associate with friends based on shared characteristics. In this context, peer group had friends who liked studying together at the schools. That meant that if peer group had interest in studying hard and performed well, it is likely that they would influence their fellow adolescent students to perform better like them. The finding concurs with that of Landau (2002) that students who form positive peer group make more effort during learning, doing social activities, also fear to engage in delinquent activities. In the same vein, the finding is similar to those of Tope (2011) and Mwinsukha (2009) who found out that peer group can influence adolescent students in academic performance either in the positive or negative way. However, findings from the study indicated that 72 students (60%) had a negative influence on adolescent students' academic performance at the schools. This result concurs with that of Howard (2004) that negative peer influence does exist and should be an educational related professional issue. The fact that adolescents use friends as coping devices, in this study the influence of peer group to adolescent students in academic performance was found to be lower than expected.

In the study, the use of cellular phones in sharing information through the internet on educational matters was found to have a positive contribution to adolescent students' learning but to a lower extent. For example, it was found out that when students used cellular phones in watching movies and pornographic pictures it does not contribute to students' academic performance at the schools. Results from this study concur with those of Buhs et al. (2006) that peer relationships are not entirely positive, however, peers may also play a role in the development of negative outcomes, such as poor academic adjustment. Furthermore, results showed that 70% of the students were users of newer forms of communication such as text message and social-networking such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp when communicating with peers with the aim of increasing the number of friends rather than learning. In such situation, communication within peer group allows adolescents to explore their feelings and identity as well as develop and evaluate their social skills and not learning. In the study, that kind of communication did not have an influence on adolescent students' academic performance. These results are similar to those of Rawlins (1992) that peer group offer members the opportunity to develop social skills such as empathy, sharing, and leadership.

Furthermore, results showed that students had a kind of friendship but their friendship based on economic status. For example, results indicated that 54% of peers who spent much money per day had poor academic performance (group one) while those who spent little money per day (group two) their academic performance was high (information revealed by one of the academic masters from the government secondary school). This finding is similar to that of Mapesa (2013) who found out that the amount of money which adolescent students spend at school has either positive or negative influence on students' academic performance. This means that the idea of parents giving their children money to spend at school was good in a sense that they would be able to buy food (bites) during break time because government schools do not provide food (lunch) to their students. Parents' initiative was to enable their children to perform well. However, the study found that only 30 students (25%) spent the money given by their parents at schools as required. The remaining 75% of the students did not use the money at school as expected. For instance, results showed that boys spent much money, and in different ways compared to girls. They used their money to buy alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs on one hand; on the other hand; they shared the money with their girl-friends that attracted them to go to disco and pubs for drinking rather than concentrating in their studies. In this view, peer group that engaged in such evils did not have influence on adolescent students' academic performance because some of the girls end up being pregnant and drop out from schools. The fact that only 18 students (15%) had relationships that related to academic matters means that peer groups' use of money did not much influence students' academic performance at the schools.

What are the factors influencing peer relationships at the schools?

The study investigated the factors that influenced peer relationship and its effects on adolescent students' academic performance. Results are presented in Table 1. Findings in Table 1 shows that nature of friends had (40%), globalization (20%), economic status (25%) and sharing academic matters (15%). From the table, one can find that nature of friends had a higher percentage compared to other factors. This means that the nature of friends influenced adolescent students' relationships at the schools rather than academic matters. For instance, in the interview with teachers results showed that 30 peers (25%) had a tendency of forming friendships with the students of similar economic status which led to both positive and negative influences on peers' behavior. Here is what the discipline master from the government secondary school said:

"*This school has day and boarding scholars. Our students come from families of different economic status.*

Table 1. Factors influencing peer relationships.

Factors	Number of students	Percentages
Nature of friends	48	40
Globalization	24	20
Economic status	30	25
Academic matters	18	15
Total	**120**	**100**

Source. Filed Data, 2016.

According to my experience students form friendships with peers of similar economic status. Students who spend much money every day at the school put less effort in studies than those with little money. For example, girls who are not given money from home tend to associate with boys who have much money in order to cope with the situation. The result is that they form peer groups that are much related to love than educational matters. In this way, the relationship will not influence students' academic performance".

In addition to that, the study found out that school and outside environments influenced peer groups' relationship negatively. For example, data from the interview with teachers revealed that students who were day scholars had a tendency of forming relationships with their peers who were day scholars. When going back home from school they form groups. They influence each other and stay in streets socializing instead of going home. In the streets, they discuss issued that were not related to education or what was taught in the classrooms. In this way, one cannot expect their performances to be high because they will share behaviours that are not good such as smoking cigarettes, bhangs, and marijuana. For instance, one of the teachers from the government school said:

"*Most of the students who join this school especially boys are those who do not have discipline. Their parents select this school for character training because it is known and familiar. However, some of them change their behaviors from bad to good while some do not change at all. Those who do not change influenced their peers to adopt their bad behaviors and form gangs. For instance, one day one of our undisciplined boy student committed a crime by killing a man in the street which is very bad not only to the school but also to the society. Because of this, the student is in jail*".

From the said evidence where the student killed someone, then one cannot expect such kind of student to have good performance or influence his peers in academic matters. Such kind of behavior will affect peer groups' behavior as well as performance. As a way of minimizing the problem, then corporal punishment was used by teachers but to some extent this led to truancy rather than solving a problem. However, it was found out that those teachers did not have knowledge on how to solve or deal with students with behavior problems, and

as a result they used corporal punishment instead of counseling and guidance to the students on one hand, on the other hand, it created fear and hatred that affected students' academic performance, hence, dropouts.

What are the factors affecting adolescent students' performance at schools?

Technological advancement was one of the factors that affected peer performance at the schools. It was found out that 25% of the students came to school with cellular phones as a means of socialization. Despite the fact that cellular phones were not allowed in the school environment, students were found hiding them in bags and pockets. For example, during the morning inspection students who were caught with phones had their phones taken away by the academic master and kept in office as a kind of punishment. If that kind of measure was not taken it would affect students' attention in the classrooms, hence, performance because they will chat instead of paying attention to what is taught in the class. That meant that if students are chatting while teachers are teaching, then there is no way they could learn effectively and perform well academically at the schools.

How does socialization affect the academic performance of adolescent students?

The study investigated the effects of socialization on adolescent students and how they contributed to academic performance. Data were collected from the students through questionnaires and interviews from teachers. Results showed that there were positive and negative socialization factors related to students' academic performance. Positive factors played part in students' good performance while negative factors affected their performances. For instance, data indicated that 40 students out of 120 (33.3 %) were using drugs that resulted from socialization. It was found out that students who did not use drugs are influenced by those who were using them when at the schools, particularly during break time. Through socialization, they joined peer groups and start using drugs as their fellows did. The result shows that some of them did not go back to the classes. Therefore, they skip some of the lessons which partly contributed to low performance. In a situation

where students do not attend classes normally, then one cannot expect such students to perform well at schools. For example, this is what one of the teachers said from the government secondary school:

"*Adolescent students have a tendency to learn many things from others, when they socialize they imitate what their fellow peers do. When they see fellows using drugs such as marijuana they tend to imitate and start smoking. They spend most of their time in gangs rather than in the classrooms. Most of these students are performing poorly here at the school because they do not see the importance of studying*".

Additionally, another teacher from the same school said:

"*Most of the students who study in this school are day scholars. So when they go home from the school they join their fellow peer groups outside the school compound and form gangs, as a result, they learn how to use drugs. This is possible for them to do so because teachers and parents cannot see them. We have records and the number of the students who use drugs here at school. To some extent, it has affected performances because their results were not good as they were before engaging in such behaviours. This means that as days go, their behaviours change from good towards bad in terms of language use, personality, and smartness*".

From the findings, it can be said that peers influence each other in terms of decision making such as using drugs. That means when an adolescent student form friendship with students who have bad behavior it is likely to change his behavior from good to bad.

The use of drugs also resulted in students' truancy at the schools. For example, findings showed that 52 students out of 120 (43.3%) skipped normal classes. The fact that some of the students had cellular phones made it easy for them to communicate, share, and discuss love stories and watch pornographic pictures. In doing so, they find themselves stimulated and engage themselves in sexual affairs. For example, one teacher from the private school said, "*Some of the students use cellular phones during and after school hours. They use the phones for socializing with their boyfriends or girlfriends in love stories rather than learning which ends up with sex and leads to unplanned pregnancies*". This finding relates to those of Ryan (2000) that student who associates with fellow peers who are not motivated in learning affects academic negatively. The fact that they did not attend lessons as planned, their performances were said by the teachers to be low. These students were well known by class teachers as well as their fellow students at the schools.

Results from the study also indicated that socialization had a positive impact on students' results. For instance, the interview with teachers and academic master demonstrated clearly that students' socialization improved the results of the weak students at the schools. This is what the academic master from the government school said:

"*Students who are dedicated to studies are likely to discuss academic matters frequently. If these students socialize with a weak student, then the possibility of him/her to perform better is high. For example, we had a student who always performed poorly with an average pass mark of D when she was in Form Two but due to her socializing with clever and bright peers her performance improved from D to B grade in Form Three. This is an achievement that resulted from the peer group.*"

This result is similar to that of Landau (2002) that adolescent students who are interested in academic issues are more likely to associate with students who have the same interest.

In another development, socializing with adolescent peer group in the study yielded positive results. It was found out that students developed communication skill through socialization. For instance, findings indicated that 41 students out of 120 (34.2%) developed communication skill when socializing with peers at the schools. Results showed that students discussed academic matters and personal issues in groups. Through discussions, students learn on how to communicate with other people as well to be tolerant. For example, one teacher from the government school said that there was a student who had a tendency of using abusive language. He advised the student to select good friends to socialize with. After socializing with peers who behaved well, he also changed his behavior and attitudes. That meant that students' socialization did not only improve academic performance but also behaviours.

In the study, socialization also contributed to students' self-awareness and cooperation. Data showed that 41 students out of 120 (49.2%) revealed that positive socializing contributed to self-awareness because they were able to do correct things and leave out bad ones, and 54 students (64.8%) to good cooperation. Findings revealed that students had a tendency of helping each other especially those who were friends. They form group discussions which improved their academic performances. For instance, one teacher from the private school said that one form two student used to drink but after socializing with students who had positive attitude his behavior changed. He does not drink anymore, and he is one of the disciplined students in the school. That means if a student socializes with peers who have positive attitudes, the peer group is likely to change his attitude and behavior from negative to positive.

CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the influence of peer group on adolescent students' academic performance at the secondary schools. It can be concluded that peer group had both negative and positive influences on adolescent students' academic performance. Positive influence

contributed to adolescent students' academic performance but not as expected. However, socialization was among the factors that raised students' self-awareness and cooperation. Additionally, relationships from close friends being girls or boys had been associated with adolescents' academic performance on one hand; and on the other hand; in changing negative behaviours to positive. Communicating skill was also raised through adolescents' socialization that played a part in learning during discussions. Moreover, the use of cellular phones at the schools did not have much impact on adolescents' academic performance but increased the number of friends rather than learning.

REFERENCES

Barbour C, Barbour NH, Scully PA (2002). Peer group influence. D.A http://www.education.com/reference/article/peer-group-influence/Santor (Accesses 10 October, 2017).

Barenboim C (1981). The development of person perception in childhood and adolescence: From behavioral comparisons to psychological constructs to psychological comparisons. Child Development, 52: 129-44.

Berndt TJ (2000). Friendship quality and social development:Current directions in psychological science 11 (1): 7-10. doi: 10.1111/1467-8721.00157.

Brown B (2000). Social identity theory: Past achievements, current problems and future challenges. European Journal of Social Psychology, 30(6):745-778.

Brown BB (1990). Peer groups and peer cultures. In: At the threshold: The developing adolescent. Feldman SS, and Elliot GR, (Eds.), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 171-196.

Brown BB (2004).Adolescents' relationship with peers. In: Handbook of Adolescent Psychology, Lerner RM, and Steinberg L, (Eds.), Wiley, New York, pp. 363-394.

Bryman A (2006). Integrating quantitative and qualitative research: How is it done? SAGE Publications, London, 6(1) 97-113.

Buhs ES, Ladd GW, Herald SL (2006). Peer exclusion and victimization: Processes that mediate the relation between peer group rejection and children's classroom engagement and achievement. J. Edu. Psychol. 98: 1-13.

Caplan S, Steinberg L (2002). Socio-emotional factor contributing to adjustment among early entrance college students. Gifted Child Quarterly, 46 (2): 124-134.

Carver K, Joyner K, Udry JR (2003). National estimates of adolescent romantic relationships. In: Adolescent romantic relationships and sexual behavior: Theory, research, and practical implications, Florsheim P, (Ed.), Cambridge University, New York, pp.291-329.

Castejon JL, Perez AM (1998). Un madelo casual explicativo de las variables psicsociales en del rendimiento academic (A causal explicative model of psycho- social variable in academic performance). Revisita Bordon, 50 (2): 171- 185.

Cohen L, Manion L, Morrison K (2000). Research methods in education. Routledge Falmer, London, p.44.

Collins W Steinberg L (2006). Adolescent development in interpersonal context. In: Handbook of Child Psychology Social emotional, and personality development, Damon W, Lerner RM, and Eisenberg N, (Eds.) Wiley, Hoboken, NJ, 3:1003-1067.

Creswell JW (2009). Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches 3rd Ed, Sage Publication, California, pp. 203-224.

De Guzman MRT (2007). Friendship, peer influence, and peer pressure during the teen years. University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Nebraska, pp. 1-3.

Dolcini MM, Adler NE (1994). Perceived competencies, peer group affiliation, and risk behavior among early adolescents. Health Psychology, 13:496-506.

Enon J (1995). Educational research, statistics and measurement. Makerere Press, Kampala, pp. 44-47.

Furman W, Buhrmester D (1992). Age and sex differences in perceptions of networks of personal relationships. Child Development, 63:103-115.

Godia GI, Waiyaki EM (1988). Sociology of Education. University of Nairobi, Nairobi, pp. 49-56.

Harter S (1997). The development of self-representations. In: Handbook of Child Psychology. 5th Ed, Damon W, and Eisenberg N, (Eds.), Wiley, New York, Vol. III.

Haward MS, Medway FJ (2004). Adolescents' attachment and coping with stress. Psychology in the Schools, 41(3): 391-402.

Ide K, Parkerson J, Haerted GO, Walberg HJ (2006). Peer group influence on educational outcomes. A Quant. Synth. Edu. Psychol. 73:472-484.

Kessler C (2012). Approaches to school counseling services and peer's education. Dar es Salaam, Unpublished report.

Kothari CR (2004). Research methodology. New Age International, New Delhi, pp. 55-59.

La Greca AM, Prinstein MJ (1999). The peer group. In: Developmental issues in the clinical treatment of children and adolescents, Silverman WK, and Ollendick TH, (Eds.), MA: Allyn & Bacon, Needham Heights, pp.171-198.

Labaree D (2000). On the nature of teaching and teacher education difficult practices that look easy. J. Teach. Edu. 51(3): 228-253.

Landau A (2002). Peer group and educational outcome. http://inside.bard.edu/academic/specialproj/darling/bullying/group2/alison.html (Accessed 10 May, 2017).

Larson R, Richards M (1991). Daily companionship in late childhood and early adolescence: Changing developmental contexts. Child Development, 62(2):284-300.

Marchesi A, Martin E (Eds.), (2002). Evalvacim De la education secundaria. Ffoftografia de una etapa polemica. [Evaluation in secondary education. Snapshot from a controversial era]. Institute IDEA, Madrid SM, pp. 24-29.

Mlowasa TP, Kalimanasi N, Matias DB (2014). The impact of truancy in academic performance among secondary school students. A case study of Kigamboni. Int. J. Sci. Res. Publ., (4):31-53.

Papalia DE, Olds SW, Feldman RD, Kruk R (2004). A child's world: Infancy through adolescence. McGraw-Hill, Canada, pp. 444-451.

Piaget J (1950). The psychology of intelligence. McGraw-Hill, New York.

Rawlins WK (1992). Communication and social order, Friendship matters: Communication, dialectics, and life course. Aldine de Gruyter, Hawthorne, New York, pp: 201-211.

Ryan RM, Deci EL (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development and well-being city and publisher missing. https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2000_RyanDeci_SDT.pdf (Accessed 8 September 2017).

Santrok JW (2008). Life-span: Development (4th Ed.). McGraw Hill, New York, pp. 26-27.

Swanson DP, Edwards MC, Spencer MB (2010). Adolescence: Development during a global era. Elsevier Academic Press, Boston, pp. 389-406.

Temitope BE, Christy OF (2015). Influence of peer group on academic performance of secondary school students in Ekiti State. Int. J. Innov. Res. Develop. 4(1):324-331.

Thungu J, Wandera K, Gachie L, Alumande G (2008). Mastering PTE Education. Oxford University Press, East Africa Ltd., Nairobi, pp. 277-299.