



Influence of Self-Confidence and Assertiveness Skills on Secondary School Adolescents' Resistance to Peer Pressure in Delta State

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of self-confidence and assertiveness skills on secondary school adolescents' ability to resist peer pressure. Using a correlational survey research design, the population consisted of 29,500 secondary school adolescents across senior secondary schools in Delta State, with a sample of 300 students selected through stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Two research questions and hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance. Data was collected via a self-designed instrument, the *Self-Confidence, Assertiveness Skills, and Adolescents Peer Pressure Questionnaire (SCASAPPQ)*, which was validated and found to have adequate reliability through the principal component analysis method of confirmatory factor analysis. Research questions were answered using the Pearson product-moment correlation Coefficient, and hypotheses were tested through linear regression analysis at the 0.05 significance level. The results showed that adolescents with higher levels of self-confidence and assertiveness skills were more capable of resisting peer pressure, particularly in avoiding harmful behaviours such as drug use, early sexual activities, and other risky behaviours influenced by peers. The study unveiled that self-confidence and assertiveness skills significantly impact adolescents' resistance to peer pressure. The research recommended that educators, parents, and caregivers implement programs designed to foster self-confidence and assertiveness in adolescents. Such programs could help reduce the likelihood of adolescents engaging in destructive behaviours, such as drug use, cultism, and cybercrime, which are often perpetuated through peer influence. These findings highlight the importance of building self-confidence and assertiveness in helping adolescents navigate social pressures effectively.

Keywords: Self-Confidence; Assertiveness Skills; Peer Pressure; Adolescents.



Introduction

Adolescent values and cultural norms are predominantly shaped and transmitted through peer interactions within diverse social groups, such as crowds, cliques, and gangs (Oghounu & Jacob-Kolodi, 2024; Emadu & Oghounu, 2024). These groups establish distinct behavioural expectations that significantly influence adolescents' self-perception and social understanding. Within these social settings, peer pressure manifests in various forms, ranging from subtle encouragement to participate in specific activities to overt coercion to align with group norms. Adolescents who critically assess these expectations and choose to maintain their independence from cliques or gangs exhibit greater resilience against peer pressure. Patterson and Dishion (2020) highlight that individuals who prioritize their autonomy and individuality exhibit a higher propensity to base their decisions on personal convictions rather than external influences. This sense of autonomy serves as a protective mechanism against engaging in high-risk behaviours that certain peer groups may encourage. Conversely, those who succumb to peer influence may find themselves engaging in substance use, delinquency, or other harmful activities. The pursuit of social acceptance can sometimes overshadow independent judgment, leading to decisions with lasting repercussions. Chu et al. (2020) emphasize that the values and behaviours adopted during adolescence have a profound impact on long-term development and decision-making. Adolescents who successfully resist negative peer pressure and cultivate a strong sense of self exhibit a higher propensity to make well-informed, autonomous choices as they transition into adulthood (Tuoyo-Olulu & Oghounu, 2024).

Given the significant role of peer pressure in adolescent development, counsellors, educators, and parents need to equip young individuals with the skills needed to resist negative influences. While multiple strategies can be utilized, this study emphasizes Self-confidence and Assertiveness training as key interventions. Self-confidence pertains to an individual's belief in their abilities and self-worth, fostering a positive outlook that enables them to approach challenges with resilience and determination. Adolescents with high self-confidence are more inclined to trust their capabilities, take risks, and go after their aspirations despite peer influences. Likewise, assertiveness is an important skill that empowers individuals to articulate their thoughts, needs, and boundaries in a clear, direct, and respectful manner. Assertive individuals can effectively communicate their viewpoints, even in the face of opposition, without resorting to aggression or passivity (Obi & Oghounu, 2023).

The correlation between self-confidence and Resistance to peer pressure is an essential component of teenage growth. During this transformative stage, individuals experience significant psychological, emotional, and social changes. The desire for identity, autonomy, and social acceptance can make adolescents particularly susceptible to external influences, including peer pressure. Self-confidence, defined as an individual's trust in their abilities, judgments, and self-worth, plays a crucial function in assisting teenagers in navigating these challenges. According to Gibson and Cartwright (2021), adolescents with strong self-confidence exhibit a higher propensity to trust their own decisions, even when they contradict peer expectations. This confidence is rooted in a clear understanding of personal values, strengths, and aspirations. Steinberg (2017) asserts that self-confidence during adolescence is shaped by various factors, including family support, academic achievements, and social interactions. Positive reinforcement from parents and teachers, success in academic or extracurricular pursuits, and meaningful friendships contribute to a robust sense of self-esteem. Adolescents who feel valued and



supported exhibit a higher propensity to develop the confidence necessary to resist peer pressure and maintain their independence (Oyibo & Oghounu, 2023).

Peer pressure, which refers to the influence peers exert to encourage conformity to specific behaviours, attitudes, or values, becomes more pronounced during adolescence. The strong desire to gain social acceptance may lead teenagers to engage in actions that conflict with their personal beliefs, ranging from substance use and delinquency to adopting detrimental social norms. This influence can manifest subtly through implicit social expectations or overtly through direct coercion. Smith and Williams (2022) conducted a correlational study examining the correlation between self-confidence and resistance to peer pressure among adolescents in urban secondary schools. Using the Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) and the Self-Confidence Scale (SCS), they surveyed 500 adolescents and found a significant positive correlation between self-confidence and the ability to resist negative peer influences. Their findings suggest that adolescents with higher self-confidence exhibit a higher propensity to make independent choices and avoid risky behaviours such as smoking, drug use, and truancy. As a result, the study recommends implementing self-confidence enhancement initiatives in schools, including mentorship programs and peer counselling, to strengthen adolescents' capacity to resist negative influences.

Similarly, Brown and Green (2021) explored the combined effects of self-confidence and social support on adolescents' ability to resist peer pressure. Their mixed-methods study found that self-confidence was a strong predictor of peer pressure resistance. However, qualitative findings revealed that students with strong social support networks, whether from parents, teachers, or peers, were better able to translate their confidence into active resistance. While urban students experienced higher levels of peer pressure, they benefited from formal support structures such as counselling services, which helped mitigate its effects. The study recommends a comprehensive approach in schools, emphasizing not only the development of self-confidence but also the reinforcement of social support systems to help adolescents navigate peer influences. Lee and Ahmed (2023) further examined self-confidence as a predictor of adolescents' ability to resist peer pressure through a longitudinal study. Observing students in rural and suburban schools over a school year, they found that higher self-confidence at the beginning of the academic year strongly predicted greater resistance to social pressure by year-end. Notably, rural students with high self-confidence demonstrated stronger resistance than their suburban counterparts, likely due to closer community ties and reduced exposure to negative peer groups. Their findings underscore the long-term impact of self-confidence on adolescents' capacity to resist peer pressure and recommend the implementation of community-based support systems in rural schools, while suburban schools should introduce peer leadership programs to counteract specific peer pressures.

Closely linked to self-confidence, assertiveness is an essential skill that enables adolescents to stand up for themselves and make independent decisions when facing social pressures. Assertiveness involves expressing one's thoughts, feelings, and needs honestly and respectfully, maintaining a balance between passivity and aggression. Developing assertiveness is particularly crucial during adolescence, as it allows individuals to navigate social interactions with confidence while upholding their values and preserving relationships. Bowers (2017) emphasizes that adolescence is a period in which peer influence is especially powerful. As



teenagers seek acceptance and shape their identities, they become more vulnerable to pressures that encourage risky behaviours such as substance use, underage drinking, and other unsafe activities. Furthermore, peer pressure can compel adolescents to conform to social norms or appearance standards that do not align with their authentic selves. Assertiveness skills equip adolescents with strategies to resist such pressures by enabling them to set and communicate personal boundaries effectively.

Assertiveness begins with self-awareness. Adolescents must first understand their values, beliefs, and limits before they can assert themselves confidently. Assertiveness training teaches them to communicate their boundaries using "I" statements, such as "I don't drink, and I'm not comfortable doing that," which helps them assert their stance without appearing confrontational. Harris and Mairs (2019) found that assertive individuals are less likely to base their self-worth on peer approval, making them more resistant to negative influences. Their study revealed that assertive adolescents build stronger, healthier relationships with peers who respect their values, further insulating them from external pressures. Johnson and Edwards (2023) investigated the impact of assertiveness on resistance to social pressure among secondary school students through a correlational study involving 350 participants. Their findings indicated that students with higher assertiveness levels were significantly more likely to resist peer pressure, particularly in situations involving risky behaviours. Although gender differences were minimal, female students demonstrated slightly higher assertiveness in resisting social pressure. Based on these findings, the study recommended integrating assertiveness training into school curricula, with a focus on both communication and decision-making skills.

Martinez and Clark (2022) examined the effects of assertiveness training on adolescents' ability to resist peer pressure through a six-month longitudinal study. One group of students received assertiveness training, while a control group participated in regular life skills lessons. By the end of the study, students who had undergone assertiveness training exhibited a marked improvement in resisting peer pressure, particularly in situations involving substance use, academic dishonesty, and risky social behaviours. These findings underscore the effectiveness of structured assertiveness programs in empowering adolescents to make independent choices. The researchers recommend incorporating assertiveness training into standard life skills education and establishing peer mentoring initiatives where trained students can support their peers in resisting negative influences. Nguyen and Osei (2021) explored the role of assertiveness in peer pressure resistance among adolescents in rural secondary schools. Using a mixed-methods approach, they found a strong correlation between assertiveness skills and the ability to resist peer pressure. Qualitative findings indicated that adolescents with higher assertiveness levels were more confident in setting and communicating personal boundaries, particularly in academic and social settings. The study highlights the need for assertiveness training tailored to the cultural and social contexts of rural students. It recommends that rural schools collaborate with community organizations to provide assertiveness workshops, ensuring that students develop the skills necessary to handle peer pressure in both school and community environments.

Several factors can be responsible for influencing adolescent behaviour. The adolescent stage has been described as a stressful storm period characterized by rebellion against adult values while cherishing the values established by their peers. These cherished values of adolescents have always conflicted with those of societal norms and adult values. Some educators,



philosophers, and psychologists have implicated factors such as parental rearing styles and upbringing, social media, and societal and cultural values as responsible for adolescent behaviour. Attention has recently shifted to personality and psychological factors such as self-confidence, self-esteem, self-concept, assertiveness, extraversion, introversion, and neuroticism as factors that influence adolescent behaviour. Of course, adolescent behaviour is a product of peer pressure on one another. This peer pressure is passed on among adolescents in the clouds, as cliques, and as gangs as they relate with one another in school, in church, and society. The problem of the study is to what extent will self-confidence and assertiveness skills possessed by adolescents assist in resisting peer pressure?

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised:

1. What is the impact of Self-confidence on senior secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State
2. What is the impact of Assertiveness skills on senior secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant influence of Self-confidence on senior secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State
2. There is no significant influence of Assertiveness skills on senior secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State

Methods

This study adopted the correlational survey research design, with a population of 29,500 secondary school adolescents spread across Government senior secondary schools in Delta State (Post Primary Education Board). The sample for this study consists of 300 secondary school adolescents drawn from the entire population size of 29,500. A stratified sampling technique and a simple random sampling technique were used to select the sample for the study. First, the researchers stratified Delta State into three Senatorial districts, which are Delta North, Delta Central, and Delta South. Second, two local Governments were picked from each of the three senatorial Districts, making a total of six local governments. Thirdly, one school each was selected randomly from the six local governments, making a total of six schools. Finally, 50 students were picked from the six schools that made up the 300 samples for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a self-designed questionnaire titled Self-confidence, Assertiveness Skills, and Adolescents' Resistance to Peer Pressure Questionnaire (SCATARPPQ). The instrument was divided into parts A and B. Part A contains respondents' demographic data, such as sex and location. Part B has three Sections. Section A sought information on Self-confidence, section B sought information on Assertiveness skills, and section C sought information on Adolescents' Resistance to Peer Pressure. The psychometric properties



of the instrument were ascertained by the researchers. The instruments were validated for face and content validity by experts in the faculty of Education. The reliability coefficient for the instrument's scales was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha method, and it was judged to be good enough. The instrument was administered by the researchers and three research assistants. All instruments were retrieved immediately, which checked the alteration rate. The research questions were answered using Pearson product-moment correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) and coefficient of determination. The hypotheses were tested using Linear regressions at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the impact of Self-confidence on senior secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation(r) and Coefficient of Determination (r^2) of the impact of Self-confidence on secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure.

Variables	n	r	r^2	$r^2\%$	Decision
Self-Confidence Resistance to Peer Pressure	300	0.100	0.010	0.10	Positive Relationship

Table 1 shows the r-value of 0.100 as the amount of influence of Self-confidence in secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State. The coefficient of determination (r^2) was 0.010, and the amount of influence of Self-confidence on adolescents' resistance to peer pressure was 10.0%. The result showed a positive influence of Self-confidence in secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of Assertiveness skills on senior secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation(r) and Coefficient of Determination (r^2) of Influence of Assertiveness Skills on Secondary School Adolescents' Resistance to Peer Pressure in Delta State

Variables	n	r	r^2	$r^2\%$	Decision
Assertiveness Skills Resistance to Peer Pressure	300	0.105	0.011	0.11	Positive Relationship

Table 4.2 shows the r-value of 0.105 as the amount of influence of Assertiveness skills on secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State. The coefficient of determination (r^2) was 0.011, and the amount of contribution of Assertiveness skills to adolescents' resistance to peer pressure was 11.0%. The result showed a positive relationship influence of Assertiveness skills on secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State.

Hypotheses 1: There is no significant influence of Self-confidence on secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State

Table 3: Linear regression of the analysis of Self-confidence on secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	472.902	1	472.902			
Residual	46451.449	298	102.542	4.612	.03	Null hypothesis rejected
Total	46924.352	298				

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 3 reveals a linear regression output of the impact of Self-confidence on secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State. The computed F-value is 4.612, and the p-value is 0.03. Testing the hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.032 was less than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that Self-confidence had a significant influence on adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of Assertiveness skills on secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State

Table 4: Linear regression of the analysis of Assertiveness skills on secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	520.956	1	520.956			Null hypothesis rejected
Residual	46403.396	298	102.436	5.086	.03	
Total	46924.352	298				

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 4 reveals a linear regression output of the impact of Assertiveness skills on secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State. The computed F-value is 5.086, and the p-value of 0.025. Testing the hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.03 was less than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that Assertiveness skills had a significant influence on secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure in Delta State.

Discussions

The first research question and its corresponding hypothesis indicate that self-confidence has a significant impact on secondary school adolescents' ability to resist peer pressure. As a construct that includes both self-esteem and self-efficacy, self-confidence plays a crucial role in determining how adolescents navigate social influences. One key reason for this is that self-confident adolescents are generally more adept at articulating their thoughts and emotions with clarity and conviction. Their assertiveness allows them to establish and uphold personal boundaries, which is essential when confronted with peer pressure. For example, a self-assured adolescent is more likely to decline peer suggestions that contradict their values or personal goals without experiencing fear of rejection or criticism. Adolescents with a robust sense of self-esteem are also less inclined to seek external validation, choosing instead to make decisions based on their own beliefs rather than conforming to peer expectations. This confidence becomes especially critical in situations where peers promote risky behaviors or unhealthy choices. These



findings align with the research of Smith and Williams (2022), Brown and Green (2021), and Lee and Ahmed (2023).

The second research question and its corresponding hypothesis reveal that assertiveness skills play a significant role in helping secondary school adolescents resist peer pressure. These skills, which equip individuals with the ability to express themselves clearly and respectfully, are essential in empowering adolescents to stand their ground in social situations. Assertiveness involves directly and honestly communicating one's needs, preferences, and boundaries while maintaining a balance between passivity and aggression. Given that adolescence is a stage where peer approval and social acceptance are highly influential, developing assertiveness is particularly valuable. By fostering the ability to articulate thoughts and emotions in a way that respects both personal rights and those of others, assertiveness skills provide adolescents with practical strategies for navigating peer influence. One key reason assertiveness has such a strong impact is its role in enhancing self-efficacy in managing social pressures. Adolescents trained in assertiveness are better able to express their boundaries and preferences with confidence. For instance, when faced with peer pressure to engage in risky behaviours such as substance use or underage drinking, an assertive adolescent can firmly decline without fear of rejection or ridicule. This capacity to communicate personal boundaries effectively helps them resist the temptation to conform to peer expectations that do not align with their values. These findings are consistent with the studies of Johnson and Edwards (2023), Martinez and Clark (2022), Oghounu and Jacob-Kolodi (2024), and Emadu and Oghounu (2024), all of whom identified a positive relationship between assertiveness skills and adolescents' ability to resist peer pressure.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion of the impact of Self-confidence and Assertiveness skills on secondary school adolescents' resistance to peer pressure, the following conclusions were made; Assertiveness skills significantly enhance adolescents' ability to resist peer pressure by providing them with practical skills to express their thoughts, set boundaries, and handle social pressures effectively. Self-confidence plays a crucial role in adolescents' ability to resist peer pressure because adolescents with higher Self-confidence exhibit a higher propensity to trust their judgments and make independent decisions, rather than succumbing to external influences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Schools and community organizations should implement programs and activities designed to build Self-confidence among adolescents.
2. Schools should create environments that foster a positive self-image among students.
3. Schools should incorporate Assertiveness skills into their curricula and extracurricular activities.
4. Schools and community organizations should offer targeted counselling services that focus on building assertiveness and Self-confidence.



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