

A Study on the Influence of Peer Groups on the Academic Performance of Adolescent College Girls During COVID-19 Pandemic Season

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruptions to global education systems, shifting learning from traditional classrooms to online platforms. This abrupt transition not only transformed the mode of instruction but also affected peer group dynamics, which are an essential element of academic development, especially among adolescent college girls. This study explores the influence of peer group interactions on the academic performance of adolescent college girls during the COVID-19 pandemic, with particular attention to both the supportive and challenging aspects of peer relationships in a remote learning environment. The research examines how peer group interactions shaped academic motivation and performance during the pandemic. It further evaluates the role of both online and offline peer relationships in influencing students' study habits, academic engagement, and learning outcomes. In addition, it analyzes the positive and negative effects of peer pressure and peer support during remote education. The study's findings reveal that peer support helped students maintain academic motivation and emotional well-being during isolation. Online study groups, peer encouragement, and virtual discussions emerged as key tools in helping students remain connected and focused. However, negative aspects such as peer-induced stress, distractions from digital platforms, and pressure to conform also impacted academic performance adversely for some students. This research highlights the dual nature of peer influence during times of crisis and underscores the importance of encouraging positive peer interactions, even in virtual academic settings. The findings offer valuable insights into how adolescent college girls socially and academically adapted during the pandemic and emphasize the need for structured peer support systems to enhance academic resilience and success in future educational challenges.*

Keywords: Peer group influence, Academic performance, Adolescent college girls, COVID-19 pandemic, Online learning, Remote education, Peer pressure, Study habits

1. Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 caused an unprecedented disruption to global education systems, prompting a sudden shift from face-to-face learning to online platforms. This transformation drastically altered the mode of academic instruction and the social and emotional environments in which students traditionally functioned. During this transition, one key area of concern has been the role of peer group interactions, which are considered crucial to adolescent development and academic success (Wentzel, 2005). For adolescent college girls, peer relationships often serve as significant sources of motivation, emotional support, and academic guidance. During adolescence, peer groups play a vital role in shaping behavior, self-esteem, and study habits (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007). Positive peer interactions foster academic resilience, enhance learning engagement, and reduce stress. Conversely, negative peer pressure may lead to distractions, decreased academic performance, and emotional distress. The shift to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly altered the nature and accessibility of these interactions. Many students reported reduced social contact, isolation, and difficulties maintaining academic focus (Aristovnik et al., 2020). This study specifically examines the influence of online and offline peer group interactions on adolescent college girls' academic performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to assess how peer communication and support systems functioned without physical classroom environments and how these dynamics contributed to or hindered academic motivation and outcomes. While some students formed virtual study groups and maintained

motivation through online platforms, others experienced peer-related stress, lack of collaboration, and social disconnection. Moreover, gender-specific factors must also be considered, as adolescent girls often rely on peer networks for emotional sharing and collaborative learning (Rose & Rudolph, 2006). Understanding how these networks adapted or failed under remote learning conditions is essential to developing effective academic support systems in times of crisis. This research analyzes peer relationships' supportive and detrimental aspects during the pandemic. It explores the dual impact of peer support as a motivator and stressor on academic achievement. The study also emphasizes the importance of designing structured peer interaction strategies and mental health support systems that cater to the needs of adolescent learners, especially in times of educational disruption. Focusing on this unique context, the research contributes to the broader discourse on adolescent learning, peer dynamics, and academic resilience in crisis environments. It offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals aiming to support student communities in a digitally mediated learning environment.

Objectives of study

- To examine the role of peer group interactions in shaping adolescent college girls' academic motivation and performance during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To assess the extent to which online and offline peer relationships influenced study habits, engagement, and academic outcomes during the pandemic.
- To analyze the positive and negative impacts of peer pressure and support on the academic performance of

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adolescent college girls in a remote learning environment.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design based on a secondary data analysis approach. The primary aim is to examine the impact of online and offline peer group interactions on the academic motivation, study habits, and performance of adolescent college girls during the COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative and quantitative synthesis of existing literature, government reports, academic journals, and education-focused surveys forms the core of the study.

Sources: Government education reports (e. g., NCERT, UGC), research articles (Google Scholar, JSTOR, ERIC), institutional survey results, and online education analytics.

Pandemic Peer Group Impact

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the academic environment of adolescent college girls experienced a significant transformation. The sudden shift to online learning disrupted conventional classroom settings and peer group interactions, often critical to maintaining academic motivation and engagement. Despite these changes, peer group relationships continued to play an influential role, both positively and negatively, in students' academic lives (Wentzel, 2020). One of the most significant positive effects of peer interaction during the pandemic was emotional support. Many adolescent girls face mental health challenges such as loneliness, anxiety, and uncertainty about the future. Peer groups, often connected through online platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Zoom, helped reduce these feelings by providing a sense of community and shared experience. This emotional backing was crucial for maintaining focus and motivation toward academic tasks (Singh et al., 2020). The emotional comfort offered by

friends often translated into better academic performance, as students were more likely to attend virtual classes and complete assignments when supported by peers. Academic collaboration among peers became a key strategy for overcoming the limitations of online learning. With less access to instructors and classroom discussions, students began relying more on each other for notes, explanations, and study groups. Platforms, like Google Docs shared PDFs and group calls, became standard tools for peer-assisted learning. These collaborative practices enhanced understanding, boosted confidence, and, in many cases, helped students achieve better academic outcomes (Zhao & Zhang, 2021). Peer tutoring and mentoring within these circles emerged as informal yet effective educational supports. Moreover, peer groups played an important role in sustaining academic motivation through encouragement and healthy competition. Friendly academic rivalry pushed many students to keep up with coursework and strive for higher grades, even without physical classroom environments. Kaur and Arora (2021) noted that students who actively interacted with their peers showed greater persistence in online learning environments than those who studied in isolation. The motivation to perform well was often linked to feedback and recognition from peer circles, reinforcing positive academic behavior. Not all peer interactions led to beneficial outcomes.

In some cases, the same social connections became sources of distraction and academic disengagement. Prolonged, non-academic conversations in group chats, late-night online meetups, and peer pressure to skip classes or delay assignments contributed to reduced focus and lower academic achievement. Mishra et al. (2021) reported that students who engaged in such behaviors often felt overwhelmed and lagged academically. These negative influences highlight that while peer groups can be a source of motivation, they can also contribute to academic decline when boundaries are not maintained.

Aspects of Peer Interaction	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Emotional Support	Reduced stress and improved morale	Could reinforce fear and misinformation
Academic Collaboration	Increased understanding and shared resources	Unequal contribution may demotivate some members
Motivation & Engagement	Boosted academic enthusiasm through competition and accountability	Pressure to compete may cause anxiety
Distraction & Time Management Issues	N/A	Increased time spent in gossip or unrelated chats

Online and Offline Peer Influence

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the sudden transition to remote learning significantly altered peer relationships and their impact on students' academic behaviors. Both online and limited offline peer interactions played a crucial role in shaping adolescent college girls' study habits, engagement levels, and academic outcomes. Online platforms like Zoom, WhatsApp, and Google Meet became the primary mediums for peer connection, enabling students to form virtual study groups and maintain academic support systems even in isolation (Zhao & Zhang, 2021). Online peer relationships proved instrumental in building accountability and routine. For instance, students often created shared timetables, conducted joint revision sessions, and helped clarify concepts, which led to more disciplined study habits. According to Singh et al. (2020), students who consistently

engaged with peers online during lockdown were likelier to stick to regular study schedules than those without peer contact.

Additionally, these virtual relationships helped minimize distractions and reinforced focus, positively affecting academic outcomes. Offline peer interactions still existed, although limited due to restrictions, especially among hostelmates or close neighbors. These in-person interactions offered emotional relief and more natural study environments. Students who lived in shared accommodations or had safe access to peers reported more collaborative learning and motivation (Kaur & Arora, 2021). Face-to-face discussions helped me gain a more profound understanding of subjects and engage better with course materials.

However, both online and offline peer engagements had drawbacks. Some students reported feeling overwhelmed due to excessive online group activity, which led to fatigue and reduced concentration. In offline contexts, peer pressure and social distractions also impacted study time. Mishra et al. (2021) noted that students involved in unproductive peer circles tended to perform poorly due to a lack of time

management and academic focus. Overall, digital and physical peer relationships significantly influenced how adolescent college girls adapted to academic challenges during the pandemic. The quality, frequency, and intention behind these interactions determined the extent of their influence.

Type of Peer Interaction	Influence on Study Habits	Impact on Engagement	Effect on Academic Outcomes
Online Peer Relationships	Promoted routine and collaborative learning	Increased participation in virtual discussions	Improved performance in assignments and tests
Offline Peer Relationships	Encouraged emotional and academic support in limited settings	Enhanced focus through face-to-face learning	Deeper subject understanding and peer-based revision
Negative Peer Influence	Disrupted study habits due to distraction or pressure	Reduced attention span and mental fatigue	Lower academic performance and missed deadlines

Remote Learning Peer Influence

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the shift to remote learning environments significantly altered the dynamics of peer influence among adolescent college girls. Peer pressure and peer support, two key dimensions of peer interactions, played constructive and detrimental roles in shaping students' academic performance. Without face-to-face classroom learning, digital platforms like WhatsApp, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams became the main channels through which peer interactions occurred (Zhao & Zhang, 2021). Positive peer support emerged as a crucial motivator. Encouraging friends, shared study sessions, and academic collaboration helped students stay focused and emotionally resilient during the challenges of isolation (Singh et al., 2020). Such support often led to improved participation in online classes, better time management, and higher academic achievement. According to Kaur and Arora (2021), students who received emotional and academic support from peers had significantly better learning outcomes than those without peer contact.

In contrast, negative peer pressure manifested as distraction, procrastination, and disengagement from academic responsibilities. Unproductive group chats, peer-induced stress to skip sessions, or peer comparison led to decreased self-esteem and poor academic performance (Mishra et al., 2021). Some students also experienced social anxiety and performance pressure within online peer groups. Therefore, while peer support acted as a buffer against academic and emotional stress, peer pressure, when poorly regulated, decreased motivation and lower academic results. The balance between positive support and negative pressure greatly influenced academic success in remote learning contexts.

Preventive Measures

- Encourage Structured Peer Interaction
- Organize guided online peer study groups with clear academic goals to avoid distractions and promote focus.
- Provide Peer Counseling and Mentorship
- Introduce peer mentors or senior students to guide juniors and provide emotional and academic support.
- Set Boundaries for Digital Communication
- Establish rules for group chats and academic discussions to reduce off-topic conversations and digital burnout.
- Promote Healthy Peer Competition

- Foster a culture of self-improvement rather than comparison to reduce negative pressure and boost confidence.
- Train Students in Time Management
- Conduct workshops to help students balance peer interaction with individual study time and self-care.
- Monitor Online Group Activities
- Encourage faculty to check in periodically on peer-led groups to ensure they are productive and inclusive.
- Raise Awareness About Peer Pressure
- Conduct awareness sessions to help students identify and resist negative peer pressure.
- Encourage Offline Interaction Where Safe
- Where possible and safe, promote in-person academic collaboration to improve engagement and reduce isolation.
- Support Mental Health Services
- Provide access to online counseling services to help students manage anxiety caused by peer expectations or isolation.
- Recognize and Reward Positive Peer Influence
- Acknowledge students who create supportive academic environments and promote peer learning.

3. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly transformed the educational experience of adolescent college girls, with peer group interactions playing a central role in shaping academic outcomes. This study highlights how online and offline peer relationships influenced students' motivation, study habits, and academic performance during remote learning. Positive peer support enhanced emotional resilience, engagement, and academic achievement, particularly through collaborative learning and encouragement in virtual environments. Conversely, negative peer pressure increases distraction, procrastination, and stress, adversely affecting academic outcomes. The extent of peer influence, whether beneficial or harmful, was primarily determined by the interaction's nature, quality, and purpose. Well-structured peer groups acted as academic lifelines, while unregulated peer influence hindered progress. The study emphasizes the need for institutions to actively promote constructive peer engagement through mentorship, guidance, and awareness programs. In conclusion, while peer dynamics posed challenges during the pandemic, they also offered valuable opportunities for mutual growth and support. Strengthening

positive peer interactions and minimizing harmful influences is essential for fostering academic success and emotional well-being in any remote or hybrid learning environment, especially for adolescent college girls navigating such transitional academic phases.

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