

Peer Pressure on Sense of School Belonging of Middle School Students

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate peer pressure on sense of school belonging of Middle School Students. Quantitative approach was used in this study. The inventory, modified form of the Exposure to Peer Pressure Control Scale (Allen & Yen, 2002) and the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (Goodenow, 1993) were used as research instruments. The peer pressure inventory consists of 40 items and sense of school belonging scale consists of 36 items including the three subscales (belonging, rejection and acceptance). The reliability of the instrument was checked by means of a pilot study. The data were collected during October 2018. Participants were 1000 middle school students from urban and rural schools. Independent sample *t* test revealed that there was no significant difference in sense of school belonging by gender and grade whereas rural schools' students were higher in rejection and acceptance than urban ones. Rural students felt higher in sense of school belonging than urban students. In peer pressure, it was found that significant differences exist in gender, grade and type of school. According to the result of *t* test, males had more peer pressure than females at 0.001 level. And urban students felt more peer pressure than rural ones at 0.05 level. Pearson correlation revealed that peer pressure was significantly negatively correlated with students' sense of school belonging. The study was to provide vital insights and widening the understanding the influence of peer pressure on sense of school belonging of middle school students at schools. This study would contribute to the subject area of Educational Psychology and developmental process of students.

Key Words: Peer, Peer Pressure, Belonging, Sense of Belonging, Sense of School Belonging, Rejection, Acceptance

Introduction

A student's academic interest, success or failure is not influenced by only individual intelligence or abilities, but also by situational and contextual factors (Goodenow, 1993). Interpersonal relationships that provide students with a sense of belongingness can contribute to the motivation of children's interest in school (Deci, 1992). Thus, supportive relationships are likely to enhance educational and personal development. They can also have impact on the lifestyle of a child by affecting overall adaptation in later life (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Sharf, 2004). Given that schools are the primary place where most adolescents spend their time, the opportunity to experience connectedness or a sense of belonging should be felt by all students. School belonging is an important construct that is closely related to school engagement and school performance in students. Given the amount of time children spend in educational settings and the societal importance attached to school-related activities, students' sense of belonging in those settings is particularly important for their healthy development (Goodenow, 1993). There is increasing evidence that students' experience of belonging to their school, including close relationships with school social groups, individuals within the school, and school based activities significantly facilitate motivation and academic achievement (Ryan & Stiller, 1994).

School belonging develops as the student experiences positive interactions with peers, teachers, and other members of their school community. Student teacher relationships, peer relationships, and involvement in school activities are key social experiences that tie students to their schools allowing enhancement of motivation and academic achievement (Osterman,

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2000). Having a strong sense of school belonging requires the students to establish a social bond among themselves, teachers, and the norms governing schooling institutions (Wehlage, G. G., Rutter, R. A., Smith, G. A, 1989). The research would point out the role of peer pressure on sense of belonging of middle school students. The study was very significant as it motivates sense of school belonging and teachers to improve school environments so that good behaviour might be promoted and also offer possible interventions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of peer pressure on sense of school belonging of middle school students.

Definitions of the Key Terms

Peer Pressure: Peer pressure is the influence of a social group on individual. It can be positive or negative (Wickert, 2002).

Belonging: Belonging refers to a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships. In order to satisfy this need, relationship should be positive and consistent within in a safe and supportive environment (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Sense of Belonging: Sense of belonging is a fundamental human motivation that drives people to form social bonds and influences well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Sense of School Belonging: School belonging refers to a student's sense of belonging or psychologically membership in the school or classroom. The concept of school belonging involves support and respect for personal autonomy and for the student as an individual. Students' feeling of being accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in their school (Goodenow, 1993).

Method

In this study, descriptive survey method was used. The data were collected during October 2018.

Sample

Participants were 1000 middle school students from urban and rural schools. The sample of the present study was composed of 250 Grade 9 students (125 males and 125 females) and 250 Grade 6 students (125 males and 125 females) from B.E.H.S (2) Tarmwe Township and 250 Grade 9 students (125 males and 125 females) and 250 Grade 6 students (125 males and 125 females) from B.E.H.S Nutt Sin Gyone, Kaut Mu Township.

Instruments

Two instruments were mainly used to collect data. They were The Exposure Peer Pressure questionnaires and Sense of School Belonging Inventory. Sense of School Belonging Questionnaire was developed with the reference to the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (Goodenow, 1993). The Exposure Peer Pressure Questionnaires was modified with reference to the Exposure to Peer Pressure Control Scale (Allen & Yen, 2000). The response type for each item of both instruments is a five point likert scale: Strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree, and strongly agree. The peer pressure inventory consists of 40 items and sense of school belonging scale consists of 36 items including the three subscales (belonging, rejection and acceptance). The reliability of the instrument was checked by means of a pilot study. The Cronbach alpha, reliability of the peer pressure inventory was 0.839 and

that of sense of school belonging was 0.949. After piloting some items were improved by modifying and changing words and grammar usage.

Data Analysis and Findings

To investigate the students' sense of belonging, descriptive statistics were carried out by using descriptive procedure with the data obtained and the results are shown in table 1. Since the number of items included in each subscale was not the same, the mean scores were transferred to the corresponding mean percentages.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Sense of School Belonging

Variables	Mean	Mean %	SD	Min. Score	Max. Score
Belonging	72.05	34.31%	9.581	21	107
Rejection	7.15	23.83%	2.278	3	15
Acceptance	43.93	36.61%	5.855	12	85

In order to find out whether there were significant differences in belonging, rejection and acceptance by gender, descriptive statistics was applied.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Sense of School Belonging by Gender

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Mean%	SD
Belonging	Male	500	72.13	34.35%	10.039
	Female	500	71.97	34.27%	9.11
Rejection	Male	500	7.13	23.78%	2.357
	Female	500	7.18	23.93%	2.198
Acceptance	Male	500	43.72	36.43%	6.259
	Female	500	44.14	36.78%	5.419

In order to examine whether these differences were significant or not, the independent sample *t* test was then conducted.

Table 3 The Result of Independent Sample *t* test for Sense of School Belonging by Gender

Variables	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Belonging	0.271	998	0.787	0.164
Rejection	-0.361	998	0.718	-0.052
Acceptance	-1.118	998	0.264	-0.414

According to table 3, the result of independent sample *t* test confirmed that there was no significant difference in sense of school belonging of students by gender. Male students and females expressed similarly their sense of school belonging.

In order to find out whether there were significant differences in belonging, rejection and acceptance by grade, descriptive statistics was applied.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Sense of School Belonging by Grade

Variables	Grade	N	Mean	Mean%	SD
Belonging	Grade 5	500	72.57	34.56%	.451
	Grade 8	500	71.53	34.06%	9.035
Rejection	Grade 5	500	7.26	24.2%	2.419
	Grade 8	500	7.05	23.5%	2.124
Acceptance	Grade 5	500	44.09	36.74%	5.916
	Grade 8	500	43.77	36.48%	5.795

To examine whether these differences were significant or not, the independent sample *t* test was then conducted. The result showed no significant difference by grade.

Table 5 The Result of Independent Sample *t* test for Sense of School Belonging by Grade

Variables	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Belonging	1.718	998	0.086	1.04
Rejection	1.473	998	0.141	0.212
Acceptance	0.848	998	0.397	0.314

To find out whether there were significant differences in belonging, rejection and acceptance by type of school, descriptive statistics was applied.

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Sense of School Belonging by Type of School

Variables	Type of School	N	Mean	Mean%	SD
Belonging	Urban	500	72.03	34.3%	9.999
	Rural	500	72.07	34.32%	9.154
Rejection	Urban	500	6.91	23.03%	2.263
	Rural	500	7.4	24.67%	2.268
Acceptance	Urban	500	43.51	36.26%	6.228
	Rural	500	44.35	36.96%	5.43

In order to examine whether these differences were significant or not, the independent sample *t* test was then conducted.

Table 7 The Result of Independent Sample *t* test for Sense of School Belonging by Type of School

Variables	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
belonging	-0.059	998	0.953	-0.036
rejection	-3.462**	998	0.001	-0.496
acceptance	-2.268*	998	0.024	-0.838

*The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

**The mean difference is significant at 0.01 level.

Independent sample *t*test revealed that there was no significant difference in sense of school belonging by gender and grade whereas rural school students were higher in rejection and acceptance than urban school students.

To investigate the students' peer pressure, descriptive statistics were carried out by using descriptive procedure with the data obtained and the results are shown in table 8.

Table 8 Descriptive Statistics for Peer Pressure of Students

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Peer Pressure	1000	40	174	62.37	21.405

In order to find out whether there were significant differences in peer pressure by gender, descriptive statistics was applied.

Table 9 Descriptive Statistics for Peer Pressure of Students by Gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer Pressure	male	500	64.95	22.705
	female	500	59.79	19.708

In order to examine whether these differences were significant or not, the independent sample *t*-test was then conducted.

Table 10 The Result of Independent Sample *t*test for Peer Pressure by Gender

Variable	Sig.	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Peer Pressure	0.000***	3.835	998	0.000	5.156

***The mean difference is significant at 0.001 level.

According to table 10, the result revealed that there was significant difference in peer pressure by gender. Male students were higher in peer pressure than female students.

To find out differences by grade in peer pressure, descriptive statistics was made. The means and standard deviations of two grade-groups: grade 6 and grade 9 were reported in table 11.

Table 11 Descriptive Statistics for Students' Peer Pressure by Grade

Variable	Grade	N	Mean	SD
Peer Pressuere	Grade 6	500	58.96	20.015
	Grade 9	500	65.79	22.21

In order to examine whether these differences were significant or not, the independent sample *t*test was then conducted.

Table 12 The Result of Independent Sample *t*test for Peer Pressure by Grade

Variable	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Peer Pressure	-5.11***	998	0.000	-6.832

***The mean difference is significant at 0.001 level

According to the results of table 12, peer pressure was significantly different at 0.001 level. The result showed that Grade 9 students were higher than Grade 6 students.

To find out differences by Type of School in peer pressure, descriptive statistics was made. The means and standard deviations of two groups: (urban and rural) were reported in table 13.

Table 13 Descriptive Statistics for Students' Peer Pressure by Type of School

Variable	Type of School	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Peer Pressure	Urban School	500	64.03	23.808
	Rural School	500	60.71	18.572

In order to examine whether these differences were significant or not, the independent sample *t* test was then conducted.

Table 14 The Result of Independent Sample *t* test for Peer Pressure by Type of School

Variable	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Peer Pressure	2.462*	998	0.014	3.324

*The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

According to the results of the independent sample *t* test, there was significant difference in peer pressure by type of school. It can be interpreted that students from urban school felt more peer pressure in school.

To explore the relationship of sense of school belonging and peer pressure, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated. The results of bivariate correlations were displayed in table 15.

Table 15 Inter-correlations for Sense of School Belonging and Peer Pressure

Variables	Belonging	Rejection	Acceptance	Peer Pressure
Belonging	1	0.01	.675**	-.115**
Rejection		1	0.016	.154**
Acceptance			1	-.123**
Peer Pressure				1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As expected, peer pressure and sense of school belonging were significantly negatively correlated. The result also revealed that peer pressure had negatively correlated with belonging and acceptance and positively correlated with rejection.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between peer pressure and sense of school belonging as well as the link between peer pressure and sense of school belonging of middle school students. And then, this study sought to investigate Grade 6 and 9 students' peer pressure. The second is to examine sense of school belonging of Grade 6 and 9 students. A total of 1000 middle school students (500 males and 500 females) from Yangon Regions participated in this study. Exposure to Peer Pressure Control Scale (EPP) and Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSM) were used as research instruments.

The differences between gender, grade and region differences were also investigated on overall scores as well as peer pressure and sub-scale sense of school belonging. Concerning the gender, the results revealed that peer pressure influence on gender. This indicates that male students have higher peer pressure than female students. According to grade, there were

significant differences on peer pressure. The mean score of middle school students from Grade 9 students were significantly higher than that of Grade 6 students in peer pressure.

In the analysis by schools, there were significant differences on peer pressure. The mean score of middle school students from Urban School was significantly higher than that of students from Rural School in peer pressure.

Regarding the grade differences, significant differences were found on the whole test of sense of school belonging. This may be interpreted that students from Grade 6 students were more active engagement in their school than those from Grade 9 students. In the analysis by schools, the mean score of students from urban school was significantly lower than that of students from Rural on sense of school belonging. This may be interpreted that students from Rural School had more connected to their schools and school community than students from urban school. So students from rural school were friendlier, physically happier, healthier and generally able to cope with the peer pressure of everyday life than students from rural school.

Therefore this study was to provide vital insights and widening the understanding the influence of peer pressure on sense of school belonging of middle school students at schools. This study would contribute to the subject area of Educational Psychology and developmental process of students.

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