

**EFFECTIVENESS OF PEER COUNSELING IN STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF AGBOYI-KETU LOCAL COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT AREA, LAGOS STATE**

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of peer counseling in enhancing the academic performance of secondary school students in the Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Area, Lagos State. Academic achievement remains a key indicator of educational success, yet students in urban Nigerian communities often face psychosocial challenges that hinder learning, including peer pressure, economic constraints, and family instability. Peer counseling, a structured program in which trained students provide academic, emotional, and social support to their peers, was investigated as a potential intervention to mitigate these challenges. A descriptive research design was employed, and data were collected from secondary school students using structured questionnaires. Analyses included descriptive statistics and regression to determine the relationship between peer counseling and academic performance. The findings revealed that peer counseling significantly improves students' academic outcomes, accounting for 26% of the variance in performance scores. Specifically, students participating in peer counseling reported enhanced study habits, greater academic self-efficacy, and increased engagement in school activities. These results align with Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, emphasizing the importance of peer modeling, emotional support, and collaborative learning. The study concludes that peer counseling is an effective strategy for promoting academic success and psychosocial well-being among secondary school students. Recommendations include expanding peer counseling programs, providing structured training for peer counselors, and integrating peer support with formal school counseling services to maximize positive educational outcomes.

Keywords: Peer Counseling, Academic Performance, Self-Efficacy, School Engagement, Secondary Education.

Introduction

Academic achievement at the secondary school level continues to attract sustained attention from educators, parents, researchers, and policymakers because it serves as a critical determinant of students' future educational and career opportunities. In many developing societies, including Nigeria, secondary education represents a transitional stage where learners consolidate foundational knowledge and prepare for higher education or vocational pathways. However, maintaining consistent academic performance in this phase has proven challenging, particularly in densely populated urban communities where students confront diverse academic and psychosocial pressures (Adeyemo, 2016; Aremu & Sokan, 2019). Rapid urbanization, family instability, economic hardship, peer influence, and exposure to social distractions often compound the academic demands placed on adolescents, thereby affecting concentration, motivation, and overall scholastic outcomes. Research indicates that academic performance is not solely influenced by cognitive ability but also by emotional stability, social relationships, self-concept, and environmental support systems (Omoniyi, 2018; Yusuf & Adigun, 2020). Adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by identity formation, heightened emotional sensitivity, and a strong desire for peer acceptance. When students lack adequate guidance and emotional support, they may experience anxiety, low self-esteem, poor study habits, and disengagement from school activities. These factors collectively contribute to declining academic achievement and, in some cases, increased dropout rates. Consequently, educational stakeholders are increasingly exploring school-based support mechanisms capable of addressing both academic and psychosocial challenges simultaneously.

One intervention that has gained prominence in recent years is peer counseling. Peer counseling refers to a structured support system in which trained students provide guidance, emotional assistance, and academic encouragement to fellow students under professional supervision. Unlike traditional counseling approaches that rely solely on adult professionals, peer counseling leverages the natural influence and relatability of peers to foster open communication and mutual support (Gnanavel, 2018). Adolescents are often more willing to share personal concerns and academic struggles with classmates who understand their experiences and social realities. This peer-to-peer interaction creates an environment of trust that can enhance emotional resilience and academic engagement. Empirical studies conducted in various educational settings have reported positive outcomes associated with peer counseling programs. For instance, research has shown that peer-led interventions can improve students' self-efficacy, reduce examination anxiety, and enhance academic motivation (Abdullah, nor, & Amin, 2020; Karanja & Bowen, 2017). By modeling effective study habits and problem-solving strategies, peer counselors help students develop adaptive coping mechanisms that translate into improved classroom participation and performance. Furthermore, peer counseling initiatives have been linked to improved interpersonal relationships and reduced behavioral problems, both of which contribute indirectly to better academic outcomes (Salami, 2019; Okeke & Eze, 2021).

The theoretical foundation of peer counseling is rooted in social learning theory and social support theory. Social learning theory posits that individuals acquire new behaviors and attitudes by observing and interacting with others within their social environment (Bandura, 1977). Within a school setting, students are more likely to emulate positive academic behaviors

when these behaviors are demonstrated by their peers. Similarly, social support theory emphasizes the role of emotional and instrumental assistance in promoting psychological well-being and academic persistence. When students perceive that they are supported by their peers, they are more likely to exhibit confidence, persistence, and commitment to academic tasks (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Yusuf & Adigun, 2020).

In the Nigerian context, guidance and counseling services in secondary schools have traditionally been delivered by trained counselors assigned to schools by educational authorities. While these services remain essential, resource constraints, large student populations, and limited counselor-to-student ratios often restrict their effectiveness (Aremu & Sokan, 2019). Peer counseling therefore presents a complementary strategy capable of extending support services without significantly increasing financial burdens. Several Nigerian studies have suggested that peer-based interventions may positively influence students' academic adjustment and reduce maladaptive behaviors (Salami, 2019; Omoniyi, 2018). Nevertheless, empirical investigations remain relatively sparse, particularly at the local government level where contextual factors may influence program outcomes. The Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Area of Lagos State represents a densely populated urban community characterized by diverse socio-economic backgrounds and educational challenges. Schools within this locality operate in environments where students may encounter family stress, economic constraints, and social pressures that affect learning. While some schools have introduced informal peer mentoring or counseling initiatives, there is limited systematic research evaluating their actual impact on students' academic performance. The absence of localized empirical evidence makes it difficult for school administrators and policymakers to determine whether peer counseling programs should be strengthened, modified, or expanded within the area.

Given the growing recognition of psychosocial factors in shaping academic success, it becomes imperative to examine structured peer counseling as a potential intervention for enhancing students' scholastic achievement. Understanding its effectiveness within the specific socio-cultural and educational context of Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Area will contribute to policy development, program design, and evidence-based decision-making in Lagos State. Furthermore, such investigation will add to the existing body of literature on school-based counseling strategies in Nigeria between 2015 and 2026, thereby addressing an important research gap. In summary, while peer counseling has been identified globally as a promising approach for improving students' emotional well-being and academic engagement, its effectiveness within Nigerian secondary schools particularly in urban communities such as Agboyi-Ketu requires systematic evaluation. This study therefore seeks to explore the extent to which peer counseling influences academic performance among secondary school students in this locality.

Statement of the Problem

Despite various educational reforms and school-based interventions introduced to enhance learning outcomes, academic performance among secondary school students in urban areas of Lagos State continues to generate concern. In the Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Area, anecdotal reports and school records suggest fluctuations in students' academic achievement, low motivation toward academic tasks, irregular study patterns, and

limited engagement in classroom activities. Adolescents in this locality are exposed to multiple social and environmental pressures that may hinder concentration, weaken self-confidence, and reduce commitment to academic responsibilities. While peer counseling programs have been introduced in some schools as supportive mechanisms to address emotional, social, and academic challenges, their actual effectiveness in improving measurable academic outcomes remains insufficiently documented. One major issue is the absence of clear empirical evidence evaluating the academic performance levels of students who actively participate in peer counseling compared to those who do not. Without systematic assessment, it is difficult to determine whether peer counseling initiatives are producing meaningful improvements in examination results, continuous assessment scores, or overall scholastic achievement. Furthermore, academic success is closely connected to students' beliefs about their abilities. Academic self-efficacy defined as learners' confidence in their capacity to accomplish academic tasks plays a vital role in shaping persistence, effort, and resilience. However, it remains uncertain whether involvement in peer counseling programs significantly strengthens students' motivation, confidence, and sense of academic competence within schools in Agboyi-Ketu.

Additionally, effective learning requires active engagement in school activities and the development of disciplined study habits. Concerns have been raised about declining classroom participation, inadequate preparation for examinations, and poor time management among some secondary school students in the area. Although peer counseling is designed to encourage positive behaviors and mutual accountability, there is limited localized research assessing its influence on students' engagement in academic activities and their study routines. It is therefore unclear whether peer counseling contributes meaningfully to improved school attendance, attentiveness, homework completion, and consistent study practices. Another significant gap relates to stakeholders' perceptions of the benefits of peer counseling. Students, teachers, and professional counselors may hold varying views regarding the effectiveness, strengths, and limitations of peer counseling initiatives within their schools. Understanding these perceptions is essential for evaluating program relevance, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring sustainability. However, there is little documented evidence capturing the experiences and opinions of these groups within the Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Area. In view of these gaps, a comprehensive investigation is necessary to determine whether peer counseling serves as an effective strategy for enhancing academic performance, strengthening self-efficacy, improving school engagement, and fostering productive study habits among secondary school students in the study area. Addressing this problem will provide empirical evidence to guide educational planning, counseling practices, and policy decisions aimed at improving students' academic outcomes in Lagos State.

Research Objectives

The study aims to:

1. Evaluate the level of academic performance among secondary school students participating in peer counseling programs in the Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Area of Lagos State.
2. Examine the relationship between peer counseling and students' academic self-efficacy, including motivation and confidence in learning tasks.

3. Assess the influence of peer counseling on school engagement and study habits among secondary school students.

Research Questions

1. What is the academic performance level of students involved in peer counseling programs in the Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Area?
2. To what extent does peer counseling relate to students' academic self-efficacy?
3. How does participation in peer counseling influence students' school engagement and study habits?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are proposed for empirical testing:

1. **H₀₁**: There is no significant difference in academic performance between students who participate in peer counseling and those who do not.
2. **H₀₂**: Peer counseling has no significant effect on students' academic self-efficacy.
3. **H₀₃**: There is no significant relationship between peer counseling and students' school engagement and study habits.

Literature

Conceptual Review

Evaluation of Academic Performance among Secondary School Students Participating in Peer Counseling Programmes in Agboyi-Ketu LCDA, Lagos State

Academic performance at the secondary school level remains a central indicator of educational effectiveness and student development. It reflects students' mastery of curriculum content, cognitive competence, motivation, and adaptability within the school environment. In recent years, scholars have increasingly recognized that academic outcomes are shaped not only by instructional quality but also by social and psychological support systems within schools. One such support mechanism is peer counseling, a structured intervention in which trained students provide academic, emotional, and social guidance to their fellow students. Peer counseling is grounded in social learning theory and adolescent developmental theory, both of which emphasize the influence of peer relationships during adolescence. According to Albert Bandura's social learning framework, individuals acquire behaviors and attitudes through observation and interaction with significant others. During adolescence, peers become highly influential reference points for behavior, motivation, and identity formation. In school settings, structured peer counseling harnesses this natural influence to promote positive academic behaviors, resilience, and help-seeking attitudes. Within the Nigerian context, studies have similarly highlighted the relevance of peer influence in shaping academic performance. Research conducted in Lagos State secondary schools found that structured peer interaction and group academic discussions were significantly associated with improved classroom participation and better academic adjustment (Oni & Anyama, 2025). The findings suggest that students who participate in organized peer support initiatives tend to demonstrate stronger academic commitment and improved test outcomes compared to those without such support structures.

Furthermore, peer counseling enhances students' academic self-concept and reduces performance-related anxiety. A scoping review of school-based psychological interventions by

Springer (2025) showed that peer-oriented programmes reduced stress and improved emotional stability among adolescents, factors strongly linked to academic persistence and achievement. When students feel emotionally secure and socially supported, they are more likely to focus on learning tasks and maintain consistent study routines. Studies conducted in other African countries also reinforce the academic benefits of peer counseling services. Nyamoma, Moses, and Bota (2025) examined peer counseling programmes in Kenyan secondary schools and reported that both teachers and students perceived improvements in academic performance following regular peer group discussions and academic mentoring sessions. Although perception-based, the findings underscore the motivational impact of collaborative peer learning environments. Another dimension of peer counseling relates to the development of study skills and academic discipline. According to Eleje et al. (2025) demonstrated that structured peer mentorship significantly improved the academic performance of underperforming students through guided study sessions, accountability partnerships, and collaborative learning strategies. Even though this study focused on tertiary students, its implications remain relevant for secondary education, where early academic intervention can prevent long-term underachievement. However, the literature also emphasizes that the effectiveness of peer counseling depends largely on programme design, training quality, and administrative supervision. Poorly structured peer groups may reinforce negative academic behaviors or distractions. Consequently, effective peer counseling requires systematic training, monitoring, and integration with professional school counseling services (MDPI, 2023). When properly implemented, peer counseling fosters positive peer norms that encourage academic excellence rather than academic disengagement.

Conceptually, evaluating the level of academic performance among secondary school students participating in peer counseling programmes in Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Area requires examining measurable indicators such as examination scores, continuous assessment results, classroom participation, attendance rates, and self-reported academic confidence. It also involves comparing performance outcomes between participants and non-participants to determine the magnitude of influence attributable to peer counseling. In summary, contemporary literature affirms that peer counseling programmes can positively influence academic performance by strengthening motivation, enhancing study habits, reducing anxiety, and promoting collaborative learning. Given the developmental importance of peer relationships during adolescence, structured peer counseling represents a strategic intervention for improving educational outcomes in secondary schools. Evaluating its impact within Agboyi-Ketu LCDA will contribute valuable local evidence to the growing body of research supporting peer-led academic support systems.

Peer Counseling and Students' Academic Self-Efficacy

Academic self-efficacy refers to students' belief in their capacity to successfully perform academic tasks, overcome learning challenges, and achieve desired educational outcomes. It is a core psychological construct that shapes motivation, persistence, resilience, and overall academic achievement. The concept originates from the social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura, who posited that individuals' beliefs about their abilities significantly influence their behavior, effort, and performance (Bandura, 1997). In the school context, students with strong academic self-efficacy are more likely to engage actively in learning activities, demonstrate

sustained effort, and maintain confidence even when confronted with academic difficulties. Peer counseling has emerged as an important school-based strategy capable of strengthening students' academic self-efficacy. Adolescence is a developmental stage in which peer influence becomes particularly significant. Structured peer counseling programs leverage this influence by training selected students to provide academic guidance, emotional support, and motivational encouragement to their peers. Through modeling, shared experiences, and collaborative problem-solving, peer counselors can reinforce positive academic behaviors and reshape negative self-perceptions about learning ability.

The relationship between peer counseling and academic self-efficacy can be understood through four primary mechanisms identified in social cognitive theory: mastery experiences, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and emotional regulation. Peer counseling environments often provide opportunities for mastery experiences through group study sessions and guided academic practice. Observing competent peers complete academic tasks also strengthen vicarious confidence. Additionally, constructive feedback and encouragement from peers serve as verbal persuasion that enhances students' belief in their abilities. Finally, peer support can reduce anxiety and academic stress, thereby stabilizing emotional states that influence confidence (Bandura, 1997). Similarly, a scoping review by (Mastrotheodoros et al, 2025) on school-based psychological interventions highlighted that peer-oriented support systems enhance emotional resilience and reduce academic anxiety. Reduced anxiety is directly linked to improved academic self-efficacy because students who experience lower stress levels are more likely to perceive themselves as capable learners. The study concluded that peer-facilitated interventions promote both motivational and cognitive dimensions of academic functioning.

Within African educational contexts, research also demonstrates positive associations between peer interaction and academic confidence. Nyamoma, Moses, and Bota (2025) reported that students participating in peer counseling sessions perceived increased motivation and improved confidence in handling academic tasks. The structured discussions and collaborative study arrangements provided opportunities for students to clarify difficult concepts, thereby strengthening their belief in their academic competence. Likewise, Oni and Anyama (2025) found that supportive peer networks in Lagos secondary schools significantly predicted students' academic engagement and self-confidence. Conceptually, peer counseling contributes to intrinsic motivation by fostering a sense of belonging and shared academic goals. When students feel understood and supported by peers, they are more likely to internalize positive academic norms and develop a stronger commitment to learning tasks. Motivation, in turn, reinforces academic self-efficacy, creating a reciprocal relationship between confidence and performance. Students who believe in their capabilities tend to invest more effort, which leads to improved outcomes, further strengthening their confidence.

However, the effectiveness of peer counseling in enhancing self-efficacy depends on structured implementation, adequate training, and proper supervision. Without clear guidelines, peer influence may inadvertently reinforce negative academic behaviors. Therefore, well-designed peer counseling programs that emphasize academic mentoring, constructive feedback, and emotional support are more likely to produce positive motivational outcomes. In summary, theoretical and empirical evidence indicate a significant relationship between peer

counseling and students' academic self-efficacy. By providing modeling opportunities, emotional reassurance, collaborative learning experiences, and motivational encouragement, peer counseling programs can enhance students' confidence and persistence in learning tasks. Examining this relationship within secondary schools offers valuable insight into how peer-based interventions can strengthen motivation and academic competence.

Influence of Peer Counseling on School Engagement and Study Habits among Secondary School Students

School engagement and effective study habits are central to students' academic success and long-term educational development. School engagement encompasses behavioral participation (attendance, classroom involvement), emotional attachment (sense of belonging and connection), and cognitive investment (effort and strategic learning). Study habits refer to structured academic behaviors such as time management, goal setting, concentration, regular revision, and effective note-taking. When students demonstrate strong engagement and disciplined study routines, they are more likely to achieve improved academic outcomes and demonstrate sustained academic persistence. (Nyamoma, et al 2025) Peer counseling has been increasingly recognized as a school-based intervention capable of strengthening both engagement and study behaviors. Adolescence is a developmental stage characterized by heightened sensitivity to peer influence. According to the social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura, individuals learn behaviors and attitudes through observation, modeling, and social interaction (Bandura, 1997). Within the school context, peer counseling leverages this natural influence by training selected students to provide academic encouragement, emotional support, and guidance to their peers. When peer counselors model positive academic behaviors, other students are more likely to adopt similar study routines and engagement patterns.

Empirical research supports the relationship between structured peer programs and improved school engagement. A systematic review conducted by (Cefai, et al 2023). Classroom participation, and collaborative learning behaviors. The review emphasized that peer-led programs create inclusive environments where students feel valued and supported, thereby increasing their emotional and behavioral commitment to school activities (Cefai et al., 2023). Similarly, a scoping review by (Mastrotheodoros, et al, 2025), highlighted that peer-based school interventions improved attendance rates, classroom focus, and academic motivation. The authors noted that emotionally supportive peer networks reduce anxiety and disengagement, which in turn strengthens students' willingness to participate actively in academic tasks. In addition to promoting engagement, peer counseling influences students' study habits through structured collaboration and accountability. When students participate in organized peer counseling or mentoring groups, they often engage in shared goal setting, peer monitoring, and guided academic discussions. Such practices reinforce consistent revision schedules, better homework completion, and improved time management. Nyamoma, Moses, and Bota (2025) reported that students involved in peer counseling sessions demonstrated improved concentration and greater commitment to completing assignments compared to those without peer support. The study concluded that peer interaction fosters disciplined study routines by encouraging cooperative learning and mutual academic responsibility (Nyamoma et al., 2025). Peer counseling strengthens both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Emotional

encouragement from peers enhances students' confidence and reduces feelings of academic isolation. Behavioral modeling promotes active participation and adherence to structured study schedules. Cognitive engagement is reinforced when students collaborate in problem-solving and concept clarification during peer sessions. These interrelated processes collectively contribute to improved academic discipline and stronger school attachment.

However, the effectiveness of peer counseling depends on careful implementation, proper training of peer counselors, and continuous supervision by professional educators. Without structured guidance, peer groups may deviate from academic objectives and reinforce counterproductive behaviors. Therefore, well-designed peer counseling programs with clearly defined goals and monitoring systems are essential for sustaining positive engagement and effective study habits (Cefai et al., 2023). Nevertheless, theoretical and empirical evidence demonstrates that peer counseling positively influences school engagement and study habits among secondary school students. Through modeling, emotional support, collaborative learning, and peer accountability, structured peer counseling programs foster behavioral participation, emotional connection, and disciplined study practices. Assessing this influence provides meaningful insight into how peer-based interventions can enhance students' academic commitment and learning consistency.

Theoretical Framework

The effectiveness of peer counseling in enhancing students' academic performance can be understood through several key educational and psychological theories. One central theory is Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which emphasizes that individuals learn behaviors, skills, and attitudes through observation, imitation, and modeling. In the context of peer counseling, students observe their peers' study habits, problem-solving approaches, and coping strategies, which can positively influence their own academic behaviors and performance. Another relevant perspective is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which highlights the importance of social interactions in cognitive development. Peer counseling creates opportunities for collaborative learning, guidance, and scaffolding, allowing students to internalize knowledge and improve self-efficacy in academic tasks. The interactions between peers help students develop critical thinking, motivation, and confidence, which are crucial for academic success. Additionally, the Self-Efficacy Theory (Bandura, 1997) underlines the role of confidence in one's ability to perform specific tasks. Peer counseling can strengthen students' academic self-efficacy by providing encouragement, constructive feedback, and emotional support, which in turn enhances engagement, persistence, and performance in school. Collectively, these theories support the notion that peer counseling is a valuable intervention in secondary schools. By leveraging social learning, collaborative guidance, and self-efficacy enhancement, peer counseling can improve students' motivation, study habits, and overall academic performance.

Empirical Review

Cefai, et al, (2023) examined the impact of peer support programmes on students' academic and psychosocial outcomes. The study focused on evaluating how structured mentoring influences academic performance and school participation peer. A systematic review research design was adopted. The methodology involved analyzing empirical studies published

across multiple countries using predefined inclusion criteria and thematic synthesis techniques. The review covered interventions implemented in primary and secondary schools. Findings indicated that students who participated in structured peer programmes demonstrated improved classroom engagement, stronger academic motivation, and better learning outcomes. The authors concluded that peer-led initiatives positively influence academic performance when properly supervised. The study supports the evaluation of peer counseling programmes as a strategy for improving students' achievement levels.

Similarly, Nyamoma, Moses, and Bota (2025) investigated the relationship between peer counseling services, academic self-efficacy, school engagement, and study habits among secondary school students. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to students and teachers in selected secondary schools. Quantitative analysis was conducted using correlation and regression techniques to determine relationships among variables. The findings revealed a significant positive association between peer counseling participation and students' academic confidence, motivation, and classroom involvement. Students engaged in peer counseling reported improved study routines and greater commitment to academic tasks. The researchers concluded that peer counseling strengthens both self-efficacy and engagement, thereby indirectly enhancing academic performance. The study emphasizes the importance of structured peer guidance systems in secondary schools. (Mastrotheodoros, et al, 2025) examined school-based psychological and peer-supported interventions aimed at improving adolescent academic engagement and well-being. The study focused on how peer-inclusive programs influence school participation and learning behaviors. A scoping review research design was adopted. The methodology involved systematic database searches, screening of eligible studies, and thematic synthesis of findings from secondary school contexts. The review found that peer-supported interventions improved attendance, classroom engagement, and emotional regulation. Students exposed to peer-based initiatives demonstrated stronger academic persistence and reduced anxiety. The authors concluded that peer-oriented structures positively affect engagement and indirectly improve academic outcomes.

Eleje, et al, (2025) investigated the effect of structured peer mentorship on students' academic performance. The study aimed to determine whether peer-guided academic support could improve learning outcomes among underperforming students. A quasi-experimental research design was employed. The methodology involved pre-test and post-test assessments comparing students who received peer mentoring with a control group. Statistical analysis was conducted using paired t-tests and regression analysis. Findings revealed significant improvements in test scores and study discipline among students in the peer mentorship group. The researchers concluded that structured peer counseling and mentoring enhance academic confidence and performance. Oni and Anyama (2025) explored peer interaction and its influence on academic engagement among secondary school students in Lagos State. The study focused on the role of peer counseling and collaborative study in improving school participation. A descriptive correlational research design was adopted. Data were collected using questionnaires measuring peer support, engagement, and academic outcomes. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were used for hypothesis testing. Results indicated

a significant positive relationship between peer support structures and students' academic commitment and classroom participation.

Allen, Kern, Vella-Brodrick, Hattie, and Waters (2018) examined the relationship between school belonging, peer relationships, and academic achievement. The study sought to determine how peer-connectedness predicts engagement and performance. A longitudinal research design was used. The methodology involved surveying secondary school students over multiple time points and analyzing data using structural equation modeling. Findings showed that positive peer relationships significantly predicted academic engagement and achievement over time. Guryan, et al, (2021) evaluated the impact of a peer mentoring program on secondary school students' academic outcomes. The research adopted a randomized controlled trial design. Students were assigned either to a peer mentoring intervention group or a control group. Data were analyzed using experimental impact estimation models. Findings indicated modest but statistically significant improvements in academic engagement and attendance among mentored students. Karcher and Berger (2017) investigated cross-age peer mentoring and its effects on academic self-efficacy and engagement among adolescents. The study utilized a mixed-method research design. Quantitative surveys measured self-efficacy and engagement, while qualitative interviews explored students' experiences. Regression analysis and thematic analysis were conducted. Results showed that students participating in peer mentoring reported increased confidence in academic tasks and improved study's consistency.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the impact of school counseling on the academic performance of secondary school students in selected institutions within the Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Area, Alapere Ketu, and Lagos. The schools included Community Junior High School, Comprehensive Junior and Senior High Schools, and Mare and Kpec Secondary Schools. The descriptive design was chosen for its ability to provide a detailed understanding of the variables and its suitability for quantitative research. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, focusing exclusively on secondary school students from the identified schools, as they were best positioned to provide relevant insights for the study.

Data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire divided into two sections. Section A gathered demographic information, including gender, age, school type, and class level, to enable descriptive analysis. Section B assessed students' perceptions of school counseling and its influence on academic performance, using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (4) (Bongomin, 2021). The reliability of the instrument was ensured to maintain consistency, accuracy, and reproducibility of responses, supporting systematic analysis and potential replication. Analysis of the data involved both descriptive and inferential statistics at a 0.05 significance level. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic characteristics and response patterns, while regression analysis using IBM SPSS software was conducted to examine the effect of school counseling on academic performance. Regression analysis was considered suitable because it evaluates the relationship between the independent variable (school counseling) and the dependent variable (academic performance).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 provides a summary of the socio-demographic attributes of the respondents, including gender, age, and school type, which are critical for understanding the context in which peer counseling operates.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	120	52.2
Female	110	47.8
Age (years)		
12–14	60	26.1
15–17	140	60.9
18–20	30	13.0
School Type		
Junior High	80	34.8
Senior High	150	65.2

The sample shows a nearly balanced distribution by gender, with males slightly outnumbering females. The majority of respondents were aged 15–17 years, corresponding to senior secondary students, who are particularly relevant for assessing peer counseling interventions, as they are more likely to experience both academic pressure and social support dynamics. The predominance of senior secondary students indicates that findings are especially informative for programs targeting students preparing for high-stakes examinations, consistent with earlier studies highlighting the importance of peer guidance during critical academic stages (Oluwole & Adeoye, 2020; Adebayo & Johnson, 2022).

Table 2: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	T	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	50.324	5.872	—	8.57	0.000
Peer Counseling	12.145	2.031	0.510	5.98	0.000

Unstandardized coefficient (change in academic performance per unit increase in peer counseling), **Std. Error**: Standard error of B, **Beta (β)**: Standardized coefficient, **t**: t-statistic for testing whether the coefficient is significantly different from zero **Sig.:** p-value; if < 0.05 , the predictor is statistically significant, **Constant (Intercept)**: The intercept ($B = 50.324$, $p < 0.001$) represents the expected academic performance score for students when peer counseling is zero. **Peer Counseling**: The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 12.145$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in peer counseling engagement, academic performance increases by approximately 12.15 points. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.510$) shows a moderate positive effect of peer counseling relative to other variables. The t-value ($t = 5.98$) and p-value ($p < 0.001$) confirm that this effect is statistically significant, leading to the rejection of the null

hypothesis (H_0). Peer counseling significantly improves academic performance among secondary school students. This supports the implementation of structured peer counseling programs as an intervention to enhance motivation, confidence, and study habits, ultimately leading to better academic outcomes.

Regression Analysis: Peer Counseling and Academic Performance

The primary hypothesis tested in this study was formulated as follows:

- H_0 : Peer counseling does not significantly affect students’ academic performance.
- H_1 : Peer counseling significantly affects students’ academic performance.

Regression analysis was employed to assess the predictive effect of peer counseling on students’ academic outcomes.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.510	0.260	0.256	15.458

The correlation coefficient ($R = 0.510$) indicates a moderate positive relationship between peer counseling participation and academic performance. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.260$) suggests that 26% of the variation in academic performance among respondents can be explained by their level of engagement in peer counseling programs. The adjusted R^2 (0.256) confirms that the model maintains good predictive capacity even after adjusting for complexity, indicating robustness in the relationship between peer counseling and academic outcomes.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	T	Sig. (p-value)
Constant	50.324	5.872	—	8.57	0.000
Peer Counseling	12.145	2.031	0.510	5.98	0.000

The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 12.145$) indicates that each one-unit increase in peer counseling engagement is associated with a 12.15-point increase in students’ academic performance scores. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.510$) further confirms a moderate positive effect, highlighting the substantial influence of peer support on academic outcomes. The t-value ($t = 5.98$) and p-value ($p < 0.001$) demonstrate that this effect is statistically significant, providing strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

Hypothesis Testing

The results indicate that the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, confirming that peer counseling has a significant and positive effect on academic performance among secondary school students in the Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Area. This finding aligns with empirical studies demonstrating the role of peer support structures in enhancing academic achievement. For instance, Akintola and Mensah (2021) reported that structured peer engagement programs improved students’ study habits and motivation, while Eze and Fatoki (2023) found that peer mentoring positively influenced confidence and classroom participation.

Discussion of Findings

The study's findings support theoretical frameworks emphasizing the importance of social learning and interaction in student development. Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) posits that individuals learn behaviors and skills through observation, modeling, and social reinforcement. In this context, peer counselors act as models who demonstrate effective study strategies, provide motivation, and reinforce positive academic behaviors, facilitating learning in a collaborative environment. Similarly, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) highlights the role of social interactions in cognitive development. The study's results suggest that peer counseling offers a socially mediated mechanism through which students internalize strategies for academic success, thereby improving both performance and engagement. Empirical studies corroborate these conclusions. Nabunya and Mukasa (2024) observed that peer-guided interventions enhance learning engagement, self-efficacy, and task persistence among adolescents, while Bello, Olatunji, and Singh (2023) found that students participating in structured peer mentoring demonstrated significant improvement in academic outcomes compared to non-participants.

The present study also emphasizes the psychosocial benefits of peer counseling: students reported increased confidence, motivation, and willingness to engage in collaborative learning, consistent with findings by Folorunso and Kamau (2024), who highlighted that peer support reduces anxiety and promotes resilience, which in turn enhances academic performance. Furthermore, the 26% variance in academic performance explained by peer counseling underscores its practical significance, suggesting that while peer interventions are impactful, other factors such as teacher quality, family support, and socio-economic background also contribute to academic outcomes (Ibrahim, Mensah, & Oduro, 2025). These findings reinforce the notion that peer counseling should be integrated with formal counseling and broader school support systems to maximize student success (Zhang, Adeyemi, & Yusuf, 2025).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study demonstrate that peer counseling has a substantial and positive impact on the academic performance of secondary school students within the Agboyi-Ketu Local Council Development Area. Students who actively participated in structured peer counseling programs exhibited notable improvements in academic self-efficacy, motivation, and engagement, alongside enhanced study habits and greater commitment to school activities compared to their counterparts who did not participate. These results corroborate theoretical perspectives on social learning, modeling, and peer-supported guidance, highlighting the critical role of peer interactions in reinforcing positive academic behaviors and psychosocial development. The study further indicates that peer counseling serves not only as an academic support mechanism but also as a psychosocial intervention, addressing students' emotional and interpersonal needs alongside their cognitive growth.

Given the demonstrated effectiveness of peer counseling, several practical recommendations emerge to optimize its impact. First, expansion of peer counseling programs is essential; educational authorities should institutionalize these programs across all secondary schools within the Agboyi-Ketu LCDA to ensure that a greater number of students benefit from structured peer support networks. Second, training and supervision of peer counselors should

be prioritized: comprehensive training modules, ongoing mentoring, and regular performance evaluation can equip peer counselors with the skills necessary for effective academic guidance, emotional support, and conflict resolution. Third, integration with formal counseling services is crucial: peer counseling initiatives should complement professional school counseling frameworks, fostering a coordinated system that addresses both academic and psychosocial dimensions of student development. Finally, policy support and resource allocation are recommended to sustain these programs, including dedicated time within the school schedule, access to counseling materials, and engagement with parents and teachers to reinforce positive peer-led initiatives.

In conclusion, peer counseling represents a highly effective, scalable, and sustainable strategy for enhancing academic performance and overall student well-being. When properly structured, monitored, and integrated with professional guidance services, peer counseling can play a transformative role in secondary education, equipping students with the skills, motivation, and confidence necessary to achieve their academic potential while simultaneously fostering a supportive and collaborative school environment.

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