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EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF PEER PRESSURE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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Abstract:

Peer influence plays a significant role in shaping student academic outcomes, yet limited research has comprehensively examined the differential effects of positive peer pressure, negative peer pressure, and social media peer influence on academic performance within the Malaysian higher education context. This study quantitatively investigates the impact of these three dimensions of peer pressure on the academic performance of students at a private university in Malaysia. Employing a cross-sectional survey design, a structured questionnaire was administered to 389 undergraduate students selected through stratified random sampling. Data were analysed using SPSS software, specifically multiple regression analysis, to examine the relationships between the predictor variables and academic performance, measured through academic motivation, study habits, and self-reported grade point average. The regression model demonstrated strong explanatory power, accounting for 78.5% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.785$, $F(3, 385) = 468.29$, $p < .001$). Positive peer pressure emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.378$, $p < .001$), indicating that encouragement and academic support from peers significantly enhance students' motivation and study habits, consistent with Social Learning Theory. Negative peer pressure also significantly predicted academic performance ($\beta = 0.335$, $p < .001$),

suggesting that some students may channel adverse peer experiences into reactive motivation or competitive drive. Social media peer influence significantly predicted academic performance ($\beta = 0.225$, $p < .001$), reflecting the modern reality where digital platforms provide access to study resources, peer support networks, and collaborative learning opportunities. The study concludes that peer dynamics are a multifaceted force in higher education, with positive interactions fostering academic success, while negative and digital pressures yield complex effects depending on individual resilience and motivation. These findings provide actionable evidence for university policymakers, educators, and counsellors to implement targeted peer-mentoring programs and social media literacy workshops that optimize peer influence for enhanced student academic success in Malaysia.

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Keyword:

Academic Performance, Higher Education, Negative Peer Pressure, Positive Peer Pressure, Social Media



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Introduction

Academic performance is widely recognized as a critical indicator of students' educational achievement and a predictor of their future career opportunities. The factors influencing academic success are numerous and complex, encompassing cognitive abilities, personal motivation, environmental conditions, and social influences. Among social factors, peer pressure stands out as a potent influence shaping students' attitude, behaviours, and ultimately their academic outcomes (Smith & Johnson, 2025). Peer pressure refers to the social forces exerted by peers that encourage an individual to adopt behaviours, values, or attitudes consistent with group norms. This influence can be both constructive and detrimental to academic engagement.

Positive peer pressure often fosters healthy academic habits, encouraging students to study diligently, participate in academic discussions, and seek help when necessary. It cultivates a collaborative learning environment that can enhance academic motivation and performance. Conversely, negative peer pressure may lead students to engage in behaviours such as procrastination, absenteeism, and academic dishonesty, thereby hindering their academic success (Lee, Ahmed, & Kumar, 2024). The advent of social media platforms has amplified these peer influences by providing continuous opportunities for peer interaction. Social media offers both avenues for academic collaboration and potential distractions, with its effects on student performance being extensively debated (Chen et al., 2024; Tan & Lim, 2023). As a signatory to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, Malaysia is committed to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education that promotes lifelong learning

opportunities for all, a mandate that necessitates rigorous empirical investigation into the psychosocial determinants such as peer influence that underpin student academic success.

Understanding the multifaceted effects of peer pressure, including offline and online dimensions, is essential for educational institutions aiming to improve student outcomes. At higher education institution, the student body's cultural and socioeconomic diversity adds complexity to how peer influences manifest and affect academic performance. Although peer pressure's role is acknowledged globally, research focusing specifically on Malaysian universities, and especially on the impact of social media peer influence, remains limited (Wong & Rahman, 2023).

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the influence of peer pressure on academic performance among higher education students. It aims to examine both positive and negative aspects of peer pressure and explore how demographic variables and coping mechanisms may moderate these effects. The findings are expected to contribute valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and student support services to develop strategies that promote positive peer environments and mitigate negative influences, ultimately supporting student success and well-being.

Literature Review

There academic performance is a complex construct whose factors are cognitive, social, psychological, and environmental (Mamat et al., 2025). Although a great amount of research has been conducted on cognitive and instructional factors, there has been growing interest in the social aspects of academic performance and the effect of peer influence specifically (Casipong et al., 2026; Mamat et al., 2025). Peers may serve as effective agents of socialization in the university years and influence attitudes, behaviours, and academic endeavours either positively or negatively (Casipong et al., 2026; Hidalgo-Hidalgo & López-Pintado, 2026). In addition, the digital era has contributed to increased peer influence due to the presence of continuous and ubiquitous interactions among peers through social media (Agrawal & Jacob, 2024; Sherman et al., 2020). The combination of off- and online peer pressures is one of the modern issues of influence on student motivation, levels of stress, and, eventually, academic performance (Agrawal & Jacob, 2024; Sherman et al., 2020). Xie and Xiao (2018) found that a lower sense of school belonging was associated with higher levels of learning burnout among university students, highlighting the importance of students' social connectiveness within their academic environment for sustaining learning engagement and well-being.

Xu and Ooi (2026) demonstrated that structured mental health education programmes significantly improved students' psychological well-being, emotional resilience, and self-acceptance while reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, suggesting that interventions targeting mental health can address the psychosocial pressures such as peer influence that may otherwise compromise academic performance among higher education students. The current literature, though informative, is not exhaustive as it does not contain thorough studies that combine the two modes of peer influence face-to-face and digital particularly in the Malaysian higher education context (Mamat et al., 2025; Ahmad Mokhtar et al., 2026).

This article initially talks about academic performance, its scope, importance and ways of measuring performance. It next examines peer pressure as an independent variable, which breaks down the review to include positive peer influence, negative peer influence, and the social media.

Positive Peer Pressure

Positive peer pressure refers to the influence exerted by peers that encourages constructive behaviours, attitudes, and decision-making that benefit academic achievement and personal development. According to educational psychologists, when students are surrounded by peers with strong academic motivation and supportive attitudes, they are more likely to internalize similar values and adopt productive study habits (Bandura, 1977). Research indicates that positive peer influences can enhance students' self-confidence and motivation to excel academically by providing social reinforcement and modelling effective learning behaviours (Smith & Jones, 2023; Lee, 2024).

Positive peer pressure has been associated with increased class participation, timely completion of assignments, and higher engagement in school activities, all of which contribute to improved academic performance (Nguyen, 2022; Chen et al., 2023). These peer-driven motivations act as external social cues that indirectly raise intrinsic motivation, fostering a learning environment conducive to success.

Negative Peer Pressure

Negative peer pressure involves coercion or subtle influence by peers that leads to behaviors detrimental to academic success. This includes encouragement to skip classes, procrastinate on assignments, or engage in activities distracting from studying, such as excessive socializing or substance use (Brown & Larson, 2023). Negative peer pressure often arises from peer groups that devalue academic achievement or promote counterproductive social norms (Garcia et al., 2022). Empirical studies have linked negative peer pressure to decreased academic motivation, lower self-esteem, and increased anxiety, factors undermining academic performance (Williams & Cohen, 2023; Ahmad & Zaini, 2024). Moreover, negative peer pressure can escalate stress and disengagement, resulting in poorer grades and potential academic failure (Kumar & Suresh, 2023). Understanding these mechanisms is crucial for designing interventions to mitigate harmful effects.

Social Media Peer Influence

Social media platforms have emerged as significant arenas for peer interaction and influence, extending traditional peer pressure into digital spaces. Social media peer influence encompasses social norms, behaviours, and attitudes transmitted among student peers through platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok (Johnson, 2023). These virtual interactions can either reinforce positive academic behaviours or amplify negative pressures. Studies indicate that social media influence has a dual role: encouraging academic collaboration, knowledge sharing, and peer support, but also inciting distractions, social comparison anxieties, and fear of missing out (FoMO) (Lee et al., 2024; Tan & Lim, 2023). Continuous exposure to peers' curated online personas may reduce self-esteem and increase stress, negatively affecting academic engagement (Nguyen & Tran, 2024). Thus, social media peer

influence is a complex variable modulating peer pressure effects on academic performance in the digital age.

Academic Performance

Academic performance is a critical indicator of student success and is typically measured by academic grades, grade point average (GPA), test scores, or other standardized assessments. It reflects the extent to which students meet their educational goals and objectives (Kuncel et al., 2024). Academic performance is influenced by a wide array of factors, including individual motivation, cognitive abilities, learning environments, and importantly, social and psychological influences such as peer pressure and social media engagement (Zimmerman, 2023; Ong et al., 2024). While Wang et al (2026) found that peer support demonstrated the strongest indirect effect on academic performance by enhancing students' academic self-efficacy, suggesting that positive peer influence can serve as a critical mechanism for improving academic outcomes in higher education.

Research highlights that positive social influences enhance concentration, participation, and a sense of accountability toward academic tasks, thereby improving performance outcomes (Liu & Chen, 2023). Meanwhile, negative social influences, including peer pressure to engage in non-academic activities or social media distractions, can hinder academic focus and achievement (Baker & Huang, 2023). Furthermore, academic performance is not only a measure of cognitive ability but also an outcome shaped by emotional well-being, self-regulatory skills, and social support systems (Rodriguez & Smith, 2024). While Wang et al (2026) found that peer support demonstrated the strongest indirect effect on academic performance by enhancing students' academic self-efficacy, suggesting that positive peer influence can serve as a critical mechanism for improving academic outcomes in higher education. In the context of higher education, academic performance plays a pivotal role in students' future career prospects and personal development. Therefore, understanding the complex interplay of peer and social media influences on academic outcomes is essential for developing interventions to foster student success (Ahmad & Zaini, 2024).

Underpinning Theory: Social Learning Theory

Academic performance is a complex construct whose factors are cognitive, social, psychological, and environmental (Mamat et al., 2025). Although a great amount of research has been conducted on cognitive and instructional factors, there has been growing interest in the social aspects of academic performance and the effect of peer influence specifically (Casipong et al., 2026; Mamat et al., 2025). This interest is theoretically grounded in Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which posits that individuals learn by observing others through four essential components that are attention, motor reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1977; Schunk & Dibenedetto, 2020). In the academic context, attention refers to students' ability to selectively focus on modelled behaviours such as techniques or classroom participation displayed by high-achieving peers, while retention involves the cognitive storage of these observed behaviours for later recall and application (Schunk & Dibenedetto, 2020). Motor reproduction requires the physical and cognitive capability to replicate observed academic behaviours, such as note-taking strategies or problem-solving methods, which may be influenced by students' existing skill sets (Bandura, 1977).

Finally, motivation the driving force behind imitation is shaped by perceived outcomes; students are more likely to emulate peers who are rewarded with high grades, teacher recognition, or social approval (Schunk & Dibenedetto, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). This explains why peer influence can be both positive and negative, as students may observe and imitate either productive study habits or procrastinatory behaviours depending on the peer model's perceived consequences (Casipong et al., 2026; Hidalgo-Hidalgo & López-Pintado, 2026). Peers may serve as effective agents of socialization in the university years and influence attitudes, behaviours, and academic endeavours either positively or negatively (Casipong et al., 2026; Hidalgo-Hidalgo & López-Pintado, 2026). Ebrahim et al. (2023) examined students' perceptions of peer learning at a private Malaysia university, finding that the majority of participants regarded peer-assisted learning an essential and highly effective method for improving their academic outcomes.

In addition, the digital era has contributed to increased peer influence due to the presence of continuous and ubiquitous interactions among peers through social media (Agrawal & Jacob, 2024; Sherman et al., 2020). Social media platforms amplify observational learning opportunities by providing constant exposure to peer behaviours, achievements, and study routines, thereby influencing attention and motivation through vicarious reinforcement (Agrawal & Jacob, 2024; Sherman et al., 2020). The combination of off- and online peer pressures is one of the modern issues of influence on student motivation, levels of stress, and, eventually, academic performance (Agrawal & Jacob, 2024; Sherman et al., 2020). The current literature, though informative, is not exhaustive as it does not contain thorough studies that combine the two modes of peer influence face-to-face and digital particularly in the Malaysian higher education context through the lens of Bandura's observational learning framework (Mamat et al., 2025; Ahmad Mokhtar et al., 2026).

Empirical Evidence and Research Gap

Recent empirical studies have provided substantial evidence for the relationships between peer dynamics and academic outcomes. In the Malaysian higher education context, research conducted at Universiti Putra Malaysia demonstrated that peer engagement has a significant positive correlation with academic achievement among undergraduate students practising online peer learning via social media (Mamat et al., 2025). Similarly, performance expectancy the belief that technology and peer interaction assist in achieving better academic results showed a strong positive relationship with academic achievement (Mamat et al., 2025). A study involving 3,542 respondents found that peer engagement emerged as the strongest predictor of academic achievement, followed by online engagement (Mamat et al., 2025).

Social media's role in peer influence has been examined extensively. Research indicates that peer pressure and social networking are contributing factors to excessive internet use, which can interfere with academic achievement (Hoo et al., 2024). Social media platforms influence students' educational decision-making through information availability, peer influence, and the pressure to adhere to societal standards set by peers (Agrawal & Jacob, 2024). Studies have found that social influence is a notable factor influencing online peer learning and academic achievement among Malaysian undergraduate students, suggesting that the convincing power of peer groups can influence others to participate in learning processes (Mamat et al., 2025). The current literature, though informative, is not exhaustive for several reasons. First, few studies have explored how psychological and self-leadership strategies can support the

transition to higher education within Malaysia's under-researched systems (Umar et al., 2024). Second, existing studies on internet addiction and peer influence among Malaysian university students have explored psychological, social, behavioural, and technological factors often in isolation, with a gap in exploring the integrated impact of these factors and their coexistence within the university context (Hoo et al., 2024).

Most critically, the literature does not contain thorough studies that combine the two modes of peer influence face-to-face and digital particularly in the Malaysian higher education context through the lens of Bandura's observational learning framework (Bandura, 1977; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). While observational learning theory provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding how peers influence behaviour through attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023), there is a lack of empirical research that integrates these four components to examine both offline and online peer influence simultaneously.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is designed to examine the complex relationships between peer dynamics and academic performance among higher education students in Malaysia. The conceptual framework for this study illustrates the hypothesis relationships among the key variables. The framework posits that positive peer pressure, negative peer pressure, and social media peer influence serves as the independent variables, and academic performance as the dependent variable.

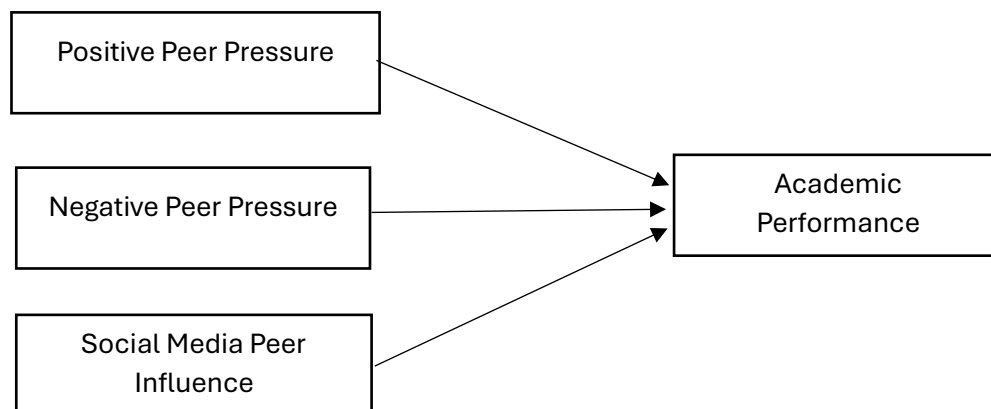


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Hypothesis

Based on the conceptual framework, the following hypothesis are proposed:

The H1: Positive peer pressure has a significant positive effect on academic performance among higher education students.

H2: Negative peer pressure has a significant negative effect on academic performance among higher education students.

H3: Social media peer influence has a significant effect on academic performance among higher education students.

Research Methodology

This study presents the research methodology adopted to examine the effects of positive and negative peer pressure, as well as social media peer influence, on the academic performance of higher education students. It aims to provide a systematic, detailed description of the research process, including the design, population, sampling, instruments, data collection, and analysis methods. The purpose is to ensure the transparency and replicability of the study while aligning the research methods with the study's objectives and hypotheses.

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the relationships between peer pressure and academic performance. Quantitative methods were chosen because they allow for objective measurement of variables and the testing of hypotheses using statistical techniques. The cross-sectional approach enables data collection at a single point in time, providing a snapshot of students' perceptions of peer influence and their academic behaviours. This design is appropriate for identifying patterns and assessing the immediate effects of peer pressure on academic outcomes.

Population

The population for this study comprises undergraduate students enrolled at higher education institutions in Malaysia. The sample population will consist of undergraduate students (full time) and are currently undertaking their studies at the time of data collection. The group of people is particularly applicable since students at the university level have a lot of academic stress and social pressures at a young age. The use of social media and peer interaction is widespread among this group of people, and it is important to know the effects of these elements on the academic performance of the group. The case of including students with diverse faculties such as Business Management, Health Sciences, Engineering and Computer Science will enable the research to include a wide range of experiences and social situations.

The inclusion criteria will include students who are currently pursuing undergraduate programs to make sure that the academic experiences of the participants are as recent and as possible. The post-graduate students and the non-enrolled are not included to ensure a stable demographic profile, as well as to reduce the confounding factors related to the level of academic performance and their responsibilities.

Sample Size

Determining an appropriate sample size is crucial for ensuring that the study results are representative and statistically valid. For this research, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table was used to estimate the minimum number of respondents required. This widely accepted table provides sample size recommendations based on population size, confidence level, and margin of error. According to the Krejcie and Morgan sample size table, for a population of approximately 14,000 undergraduate students, a sample size of 384

respondents is recommended to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. This sample size ensures adequate power for statistical testing and generalizability of the findings within the university context.

Sampling Techniques

This study employs stratified random sampling to ensure the sample is representative of the undergraduate student population at higher education in Shah Alam, Malaysia. Four major demographic characteristics such as gender, education level and age groups will be base in splitting the population into strata. The selection of these strata is done in order to represent important variation in the population that may have an impact on the variables of interest.

After grouping the population into these mutually exclusive and exhaustive strata, the proportional way will be applied to decide the number of participants that will be sampled out of each of these subgroups in comparison with the size of the subgroup in the overall population. This proportion guarantees that the bigger strata will have more respondents and the smaller strata will have fewer respondents and the sample will remain representative and balanced.

In the stratum, participants will be chosen by computerized random number generation, whereby using algorithms of the software will randomly and unbiasedly pick individuals. The process will ensure that each member of each subgroup has an equal probability of making it, minimize selection bias, and improve the reliability and validity of the research results. The researcher will get the sampling frame of this procedure through the registrar of the university who keeps proper records of the enrolled students on these demographic dimensions.

Questionnaire Development

The development of the questionnaire in this study was done in a series of systematic procedures that would make it effective in measuring the constructs of peer pressure, social media peer pressure and academic performance of undergraduate students. To begin with, a thorough literature review was implemented to detect the applicable theories, validated scales, and questionnaire items that had been applied earlier and in accordance with the objectives of the research. This was to make sure that the instrument was based on the existing academic frameworks and quantify the targeted variables well.

The questionnaire was created in accordance with the conceptual framework of the study after the literature review. It was subdivided into parts that entailed independent variables, positive peer pressure, negative peer pressure, and social media peer influence and the dependent variable, academic performance. Existing validated scaled were adapted and modified to suit the Malaysian higher education context. A total of 20 initial items were drafted in this study. All items in the questionnaire uses measured a 5-point Likert scale, which is widely recognized as an appropriate and psychometrically sound measurement approach for assessing attitudes, perceptions, and behavioural tendencies in social science research (Joshi et al., 2015; Taherdoost, 2019). The language used in the questions was well-thought to be clear, easy, and neutral to reduce bias and misunderstanding in the respondents.

Table 1: Item Questionnaire for Academic Performance

Construct	Original Item	Modification Item	Author
Positive Peer Pressure	1.Friends encourage regular class attendance and academic effort.	My friends encourage me to attend classes regularly.	Black et al. (2025)
	2.Peers motivate timely completion of assignments.	My peers motivate me to complete my assignments on time.	Juvonen & Gross (2014); DeLay et al. (2025)
	3.Support from friends enhances study habits and motivation.	I feel supported by my friends to study hard and do well.	Martinez & Wilson (2023); Black et al. (2025)
	4.Group study sessions improve understanding and academic outcomes.	Group study sessions with peers help me improve my understanding.	Abdul & Hashim (2023); DeLay et al. (2025)
	5.Peer group influences setting academic goals.	My social circle influences me to set academic goals.	Singh et al. (2011); Juvonen & Gross (2014).
Negative Peer Pressure	6. Friends sometimes encourage behaviours that distract from or avoid academic work.	My friends sometimes persuade me to skip classes or procrastinate.	Valenzuela (2024); Ahmad et al. (2024)
	7. Peers influence participation in non-academic, distracting activities.	Peers influence me to engage in activities that distract from studying.	Valenzuela (2024); Ahmad et al. (2024)
	8. Pressure to socialize takes time away from studying, lowering motivation.	I feel pressured by some friends to spend more time socializing than studying.	Ahmad et al. (2024); Li et al. (2025)
	9. Avoiding study because friends do not prioritize it lowers academic commitment.	Sometimes, I avoid studying because my friends do not prioritize it.	StartQuestion (2023); Poll-Maker (2007)
	10. Negative peer feedback lowers motivation for academic achievement.	Negative comments from peers lower my academic motivation	Valenzuela (2024); Li et al. (2025)

Social Media Peer Influence	11. Social media peers encourage sharing achievements and peer interactions.	Social media peers encourage me to share academic achievements.	Wang & Li (2024); Ashraf (2021)
	12. Social media interactions can cause distractions from study.	I often get distracted from studying due to social media interactions.	Hill (2024); Lawrence (2021)
	13. Social media influences how students manage their study time and tasks.	Social media influences how I manage my study time.	Ngo et al. (2023);
	14. Posts from peers on social media motivate academic improvement.	Posts from peers on social media motivate me to improve academically.	Abdullah & Hashim (2025);
	15. Peer discussions on social platforms affect academic decisions.	Peer discussions on social platforms affect my academic decisions.	Wang & Li (2024); Ngo et al. (2023)
Academic Performance	16. Good grades associated with study behaviours and peer support.	I consistently achieve good grades in my courses.	DeLay et al. (2025) ; Abdullah & Hashim (2025)
	17. Participation in academic activities fosters better learning outcomes.	I actively participate in academic activities and discussions.	DeLay et al. (2025); Roberts & Turner (2024)
	18. Effective time management leads to improved academic deadlines met.	I manage my study time effectively to meet deadlines.	Roberts & Turner (2024)
	19. Confidence and motivation impact.	I feel confident about my academic progress and performance.	DeLay et al. (2025); Hill (2024)
	20. Motivation to improve academic standing correlates with persistence and performance.	I am motivated to maintain or improve my academic standing.	DeLay et al. (2025); Ashraf (2021)

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondent characteristics and distributions of variables. Reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's Alpha to assess internal consistency. Correlation analysis examined the relationships between the independent variables and academic performance, while multiple regression analysis determined the predictive effects of peer pressure types on academic performance. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations will be used as descriptive statistics to summarize the demographics and important study variables of the

respondents. The research hypotheses will then be tested and relationships between variables will be established using inferential statistics.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were conducted to provide an overall understanding of how students responded to the key variables in this study: Positive Peer Pressure (PPP), Negative Peer Pressure (NPP), Social Media Peer Influence (SMPI), and Academic Performance (AP). The descriptive analysis summarizes the general level, distribution, and variability of each construct based on data collected from 389 respondents, which represents a large and reliable sample size for social science research.

This section presents the mean values, which indicate the average level of each variable, and the standard deviations, which show how much respondents' answers varied. Skewness and kurtosis values are also examined to assess whether the data are normally distributed, as regression analysis relies on this assumption. These descriptive trends provide the initial insight that, while traditional peer interactions (positive and negative) are present, social media exerts a stronger influence on students' academic decisions and behaviours. This pattern becomes clearer in the correlation and regression analyses that follow.

The descriptive statistics showed moderate to high levels across all variables, indicating consistent peer influence and academic performance among students. Means ranged between 19.97 and 20.29, with acceptable standard deviations.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Academic Performance	389	20.08	3.87	-1.052	0.107
Positive Peer Pressure	389	20.14	3.71	-1.264	0.154
Negative Peer Pressure	389	19.98	3.99	-1.029	-0.012
Social Media Peer Pressure		20.29	3.78	-1.285	0.279

The findings show that MSU students generally experience moderate to high levels of positive peer encouragement, negative social pressure, and influence from peers on social media. They also report relatively strong academic performance. The similarity in mean scores suggests that peer-related factors are consistently present in students' academic experiences.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of the relationships among the four main variables in the study, which are Academic Performance, Positive Peer Pressure, Negative Peer Pressure, and Social Media Peer Influence. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used because the variables were measured on continuous scales and the data met the assumptions for parametric analysis. The correlation matrix provides an overview of

how each independent variable is associated with the dependent variable, as well as how the independent variables relate to one another.

The results show that all correlations in the matrix are positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that increases in one variable are consistently associated with increases in another variable. The sample size used for the analysis was 389 respondents, which provides strong statistical power and increases the reliability of the findings.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variable	AP	PPP	NPP	SMPI
Academic Performance	1	.851**	.833**	.817**
Positive Peer Pressure	.851**	1	.838**	.855**
Negative Peer Pressure	.833**	.838**	1	.803**
Social Media Peer Influence	.817**	.855**	.803**	1

Overall, the correlation analysis indicates that all variables are strongly and positively related. Students who are influenced by their peers in positive ways, negative ways, or through social media tend to report higher levels of academic performance. The strong relationships among all variables also help explain why the regression model is likely to show meaningful predictive effects. The significant correlations support the relevance of these variables for understanding how peer influences contribute to the academic environment of university students.

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to examine how Positive Peer Pressure, Negative Peer Pressure, and Social Media Peer Influence predict Academic Performance among higher education students. The analysis helps determine not only whether these variables influence academic outcomes, but also which predictor has the strongest effect. The findings are presented in three parts, which are the model summary, the analysis of variance, and the coefficients table.

Table 3: Regression Analysis

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.886 ^a	.785	.783	1.79954

a. Predictors(Constant), SocialMediaPeerInfluence,NegativePeerPressure, PossitivePeerPressure

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4549.440	3	1516.49	468.29	<.001 ^b
	Residual	1246.760	385	3.238		
	Total	5796.201	388			

a. Dependent Variable: AcademicPerformance

b. Predictors (Constant), SocialMediaPeerInfluence, NegativePeerPressure, PossitivePeerPressure

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized B	Coefficients Std. error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.995	.522		1.90	.057
	PositivePeerPressure	.394	.054	.378	6	<.00
	NegativePeerPressure	.324	.044	.335	7.23	1<.0
	SocialMediaPeerInfluence	.231	.049	.225	4	01<.
					7.34	001<
					6	.001
					4.71	
					5	

a. Dependant Variable: AcademicPerformance

The results of the regression analysis highlight that peer influences, whether positive, negative, or social media based, significantly affect the academic performance of students. The model shows strong explanatory power and demonstrates that peer dynamics are an important component of students' academic lives. These findings reinforce the idea that peers shape academic motivation and behaviour in multiple ways, both inside and outside the classroom environment.

Summary of Research Findings

The results of this study showed that peer influence plays a major role in predicting academic performance among university students. All three predictors were found to be significant, and the regression model demonstrated strong explanatory power, accounting for 78.5 percent of the variance in academic performance. This indicates that peer-related behaviours, whether in supportive, challenging, or digital environments, are strongly connected to students' academic outcomes.

Positive Peer Pressure was identified as the strongest predictor of academic performance. This finding suggests that when students receive encouragement, motivation, or academic support from their peers, they are more likely to stay committed to their studies and achieve better results. This aligns with Social Learning Theory, which explains that individuals learn

behaviours by observing and modelling those around them. In this context, students who are surrounded by academically focused peers may adopt similar habits, which enhance their academic performance.

Negative Peer Pressure was also a significant predictor, although its positive effect was unexpected. One possible explanation is that some students respond to negative or distracting peer influences by distancing themselves from unproductive behaviours and becoming more determined to perform well academically. Another possibility is that students interpret negative peer pressure not as harmful, but as a form of competition or challenge that motivates them to improve. This finding suggests that the impact of peer pressure is complex and may vary depending on individual coping strategies and personal motivation.

Social Media Peer Influence was the third significant predictor. Students who actively engage with academic content, discussions, or peer interactions on social media tended to report higher levels of academic performance. Digital platforms often provide access to study materials, reminders, shared learning experiences, and peer support networks. These online interactions may complement traditional peer relationships, helping students maintain motivation and stay connected to academic goals.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that peer influence is a multidimensional construct with differential effects on academic performance. Positive peer pressure emerges as the most influential factor, reinforcing the importance of fostering supportive and academically oriented peer networks. The unexpected positive effect of negative peer pressure suggests that some students may harness adverse social experiences as motivation for academic improvement, highlighting the role of individual resilience and self-regulation. Finally, social media peer influence reflects the contemporary reality of digital learning environments, wherein online peer interactions can complement and enhance traditional academic support systems. These results contribute to the growing body of literature on peer dynamics in higher education and provide a foundation for evidence-based interventions aimed at optimizing peer influence for student success.

Limitations of the Study

Although the study produced meaningful insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. The research focused solely on students from one university, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other institutions. The use of self-reported data may introduce bias because students may overestimate or underestimate their academic performance or peer interactions. Although the sample size was large, the study used a cross-sectional design, meaning the data were collected at a single point in time. As a result, it is not possible to examine how peer influence and academic performance change over time. In addition, the study did not investigate other factors that may affect academic achievement, such as personality traits, learning styles, or emotional wellbeing.

Future Research

Future research could explore how peer influence evolves over a longer period by using a longitudinal design. Including students from multiple universities or different academic backgrounds may provide a broader understanding of how peer influence varies across

contexts. Researchers may also examine additional variables that influence academic performance, such as motivation, stress, time management skills, and mental health. Another area for future exploration is platform-specific peer influence, where studies focus on how different social media platforms contribute to academic behaviours in distinct ways. Qualitative research, such as interviews or focus groups, may provide deeper insight into how students interpret and experience peer pressure and social media influence in their daily academic lives.

Conclusion

In conclusion, peer pressure significantly affects academic performance among higher education students. Positive peer pressure has the strongest impact, while negative peer pressure and social media peer influence also play important roles. These findings emphasize the importance of supportive peer environments, responsible digital interactions, and institutional strategies that leverage positive influences to improve students' academic outcomes.

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