

**THE EFFECT OF PEER GROUP INFLUENCE ON THE CHOICE OF HISTORY AS A
COURSE: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, NIGERIA**

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**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

APRIL, 2025

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS, FACULTY OF EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE IN
BACHELOR OF ARTS (ED) IN HISTORY**

APRIL, 2025

CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, certify that this study work was carried out by Esther Osamudiamen UKPEBOR with matriculation number EDU2009320 in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City. It is adequate in scope and qualify for the partial fulfilment for the award of the degree of B.A(Ed.) in History.

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty.

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The researcher extends profound gratitude to Almighty God for granting her the wisdom, strength, and opportunity to undertake this research. His divine guidance has been her anchor throughout this journey.

The research is highly indebted to her scholarly supervisor, Dr. P.O Isanbor whose corrections, suggestions and fatherly role he played gave meaning to this research.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how peer group influence affects students' decisions to choose History as a course at the University of Benin, Nigeria. It examined peer interest, pressure, discussions, and approval or disapproval as key social factors influencing academic choices.

Using a descriptive survey design, the study targeted 100 final-year History Education students from the Department of Educational Foundations. A census method was adopted, and data were collected through a validated, reliable questionnaire (Cronbach Alpha = 0.83) distributed via Google Forms on departmental WhatsApp groups. Findings showed that peer interest and discussions strongly shaped students' positive perceptions of History, often making the course more appealing. Peer discussions also helped reinforce the relevance of the discipline, indicating that academic choices are socially constructed. While peer encouragement and approval had moderate effects, peer disapproval appeared to have little influence, suggesting students maintained a degree of autonomy.

The study recommends fostering structured peer interactions in academic settings to support informed course selection. It also emphasizes the need for educators and policymakers to value intrinsic motivation while recognizing the important role of peer networks in shaping academic decisions, particularly in less vocationally driven disciplines like History.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals and their future career paths, and one significant factor that influences students' academic choices is peer group influence. Peer groups are critical social units in adolescence and young adulthood, where individuals form connections with others based on shared interests, values, and experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 2021). The peer group can have a significant impact on various aspects of a student's life, including their academic and career decisions.

A peer group refers to a social group composed of individuals who share similarities in age, status, interests, and values, and who interact on a relatively equal basis (Brown & Larson, 2020). Peer groups are essential during the adolescent stage of development because they provide individuals with opportunities to develop social skills, establish their identities, and gain a sense of belonging (Steinberg, 2021). In this context, adolescents begin to shift their social attention from family and teachers to peers, who play a more influential role in decision-making processes, including academic choices. According to Eccles and Roeser (2022), peer influence during adolescence is associated with both positive and negative outcomes, depending on the nature of the peer group and the behaviors being modeled or encouraged.

There are various types of peer groups that students may interact with, including friendship groups, cliques, and crowds (Brown, 2020). Friendship groups are small, intimate groups of individuals who share close emotional bonds, while cliques are slightly larger groups with shared values and interests. Crowds, on the other hand, refer to large, loosely organized groups that are

defined by shared reputations rather than direct interactions. The influence of peers can vary across these different types of groups, with smaller friendship groups often exerting more direct influence on individual behavior and decision-making (Parker, et al., 2019).

The influence of peers on academic decisions can be particularly strong during adolescence, a time when students are making important choices about their future educational and career paths. Studies have shown that peer group influence can shape students' attitudes toward school, academic achievement, and subject choices (Ryan, 2021). For example, students who belong to peer groups that value academic success are more likely to adopt similar values and pursue educational goals (Wentzel & Muenks, 2020). Conversely, students who associate with peers who have negative attitudes toward education may be more likely to disengage from academic activities.

Peer group influence on academic decisions is often mediated by social comparison processes. Adolescents tend to compare themselves to their peers to evaluate their own abilities and achievements, which can affect their academic self-concept and motivation (Marsh, et al., 2021). When students perceive that their peers are performing well in certain subjects or pursuing particular academic paths, they may feel motivated to follow suit. Conversely, if their peers are disengaged or uninterested in certain academic areas, students may feel discouraged from pursuing those subjects.

History, as an academic discipline, requires critical thinking, analytical skills, and a deep interest in understanding past events and their implications for contemporary society (Lerner, 2021). However, the choice of History as a course of study may be influenced by various factors, including personal interest, family background, and peer group influence. Among these factors, peer group influence plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward History and their decision to

pursue it as a course in higher education. Several studies have highlighted the importance of peer group influence in shaping students' academic choices. According to Eccles et al. (2020), peer groups can significantly impact students' subject preferences and career aspirations, particularly during adolescence. If students are part of peer groups that value the study of History and view it as a prestigious or intellectually stimulating subject, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the discipline and choose it as their course of study. Conversely, if their peers view History as irrelevant or unimportant, students may be less inclined to pursue it, even if they have a personal interest in the subject.

Peer group influence can affect students' perceptions of the career opportunities associated with studying History. Many students choose their academic paths based on the perceived job prospects and financial stability associated with certain fields of study (O'Donnell, et al., 2022). If students are part of peer groups that emphasize the practical and economic benefits of other fields, such as science or business, they may be less likely to choose History, which is often viewed as having fewer direct career paths. This perception can deter students from pursuing History, even if they have an intrinsic interest in the subject.

Peer group influence can shape students' attitudes toward the intellectual rigor and challenges associated with studying History. Peer groups that value academic achievement and intellectual curiosity may encourage students to pursue challenging subjects like History, which require critical thinking and research skills (De Vries & Frenk, 2023). In contrast, peer groups that prioritize ease and convenience in academic decisions may discourage students from choosing History, which is often perceived as a demanding subject that requires extensive reading and analysis.

Peer pressure, which is a specific form of peer group influence, can also play a significant role in shaping students' academic decisions. Peer pressure occurs when individuals feel compelled to conform to the expectations and behaviors of their peers, often to gain social acceptance or avoid rejection (Ryan, 2021). In the context of academic decisions, peer pressure can lead students to choose subjects that align with the preferences of their peer group, even if those choices do not reflect their personal interests or abilities. For example, a student who has a strong interest in History may feel pressured to choose a different subject if their peers are pursuing more popular or socially prestigious fields of study (Carter, et al., 2021). This pressure can be particularly strong in competitive academic environments, where students may feel that choosing subjects like science, technology, engineering, or mathematics (STEM) will enhance their social status or future career prospects (Wentzel & Muenks, 2020). As a result, peer pressure can discourage students from pursuing History, even if they have a genuine interest in the subject.

Peer pressure can also have a positive influence on academic choices. If a student is part of a peer group that values the study of History and views it as an intellectually rewarding discipline, they may feel encouraged to pursue the subject despite any external pressures to choose a different field (Eccles & Roeser, 2022). In this way, peer pressure can reinforce positive academic behaviors and encourage students to follow their academic passions.

Statement of the Problem

The selection of academic courses plays a very important role in shaping students' future career trajectories and personal growth. Peer groups, which consist of individuals who share similar ages, interests, and social standing, can exert significant influence on students' academic decisions and overall educational experiences. This influence is particularly evident when it comes to the

choice of courses, where peers may encourage or dissuade students from pursuing certain subjects, including History, based on collective interests or perceived social prestige associated with specific disciplines. In many cases, students may opt for History not out of genuine passion or alignment with their long-term career goals but rather due to the pressure to conform to peer expectations or to seek social approval. In the long run, this peer-driven choice can have detrimental effects on students' academic performance and overall satisfaction. Students who select History solely due to peer influence may find themselves disengaged from the course material, leading to lower motivation, poor academic performance, and an overall lack of enthusiasm in their studies. Over time, this misalignment between students' true interests and their chosen academic path can result in dissatisfaction with their educational experience and, in some cases, lead to high dropout rates or a complete shift in career aspirations. The emotional and psychological strain of pursuing a course that does not resonate with one's true interests may also affect students' mental well-being. This study is therefore necessary to investigate the effect of peer group influence on the choice of History as a course, using the University of Benin as a case study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. How does peer group influence affect students' perceptions of the value of studying history?
2. What roles do peer recommendations play in students' decisions to enroll in history courses?
3. To what extent do peer approval affect students' choice of History as a course at the University of Benin?
4. To what extent do peer disapproval affect students' choice of History as a course at the University of Benin?

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the effect of peer group influence on the choice of History as a course: A case study of University of Benin, Nigeria; specifically, this study sought to:

1. examine how peer influence affects students' decision to choose History as a course at the University of Benin.
2. investigate the ways in which peer pressure impacts the selection of History as a course of study among students at the University of Benin.
3. show how peer group recommendations and discussions influence students' preference for History as a course at the University of Benin.
4. assess the extent to which peer approval or disapproval affects students' choice of History as a course at the University of Benin.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study when published in reputable journals, conference proceedings or workshop, will be of immense benefit to Students, parents, educators and researchers.

First, students stand to benefit from understanding the dynamics of peer influence and how it impacts their academic decisions. By recognizing how their peers may affect their course selection, students can make more informed choices, guided by personal interests rather than external pressures. Additionally, the study can empower students to engage in positive peer group interactions that support their academic goals and aspirations.

Parents will also benefit significantly from the findings. Often, parents may not fully understand the social pressures their children face when making academic decisions. This study will shed light on how peer influence can shape the course selection process, helping parents better support their children in making informed academic choices. With this knowledge, parents can guide their children in balancing personal interest, career prospects, and the influence of peers when choosing a course of study, particularly in History.

Furthermore, educators will gain deeper insights into the role that peer influence plays in students' academic paths. Understanding this dynamic can help educators develop strategies that encourage students to make more conscious decisions about their course selection. By promoting self-awareness and critical thinking, educators can help mitigate the negative effects of peer pressure and foster a learning environment where students feel confident in pursuing their genuine academic interests, such as History.

Lastly, researchers will find the study beneficial in expanding the body of knowledge on peer group influence and its broader implications for academic decision-making.

Scope/Delimitation of the Study

The scope of the study covers the Effect of Peer Group Influence on The Choice of History as a Course: A Case Study of the University of Benin, Nigeria. The study is delimited to the University of Benin, History education students.

Definition of Terms

The following terms used in this study are defined for clarity:

Peer Group: A group of individuals, often of similar age or status, whose influence affects the behaviors, decisions, and opinions of others within the group.

Influence: The capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something.

Choice: The act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more options.

History: A field of study concerned with the analysis and interpretation of past events, people, and societies.

Course: A structured program of academic study offered by an educational institution, usually leading to a qualification or degree.

Effect: The change or impact that one factor (peer group influence) has on another (students' choice of History).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews literature related to the study under the following sub-headings:

- Concept of Peer Group
- Effect of Peer Group Influence on Students' Perceptions of the Value of Studying History
- Role of Peer Recommendations on Students' Decisions to Enroll in History Courses
- The Impacts of Peer Approval on Students' Choice of History
- The Extent Peer Disapproval Affect Students' Choice of History
- Summary of Reviewed Literature

Concept of Peer Group

A peer group refers to a social group of individuals who share similarities in age, background, social status, or interests, and who interact with each other on relatively equal terms. Peer groups are considered fundamental in social development, particularly during adolescence, when the influence of peers tends to increase significantly. Scholars agree that peer groups play a critical role in shaping behaviors, attitudes, and social skills, particularly because they offer a sense of belonging and identity. According to Kwon (2020), peer groups can provide an individual with emotional support, guidance, and an avenue for self-expression. This influence can be either positive or negative, depending on the nature of the interactions and the values upheld within the group. Peer groups provide an essential socialization environment that complements family influence, as they often expose individuals to diverse viewpoints and experiences.

One of the most significant effects of peer groups is their influence on decision-making and behavior. Peer pressure, which refers to the implicit or explicit encouragement from peers to adopt

certain behaviors, is a well-documented phenomenon, particularly among adolescents and young adults. For instance, peer pressure can lead to both beneficial outcomes, such as increased academic performance when peers emphasize educational achievements, and detrimental outcomes, such as engagement in risky behaviors like drug use or truancy when negative influences prevail (Balsa, French, & Regan, 2021). Peer groups often serve as a critical reference point for individuals' actions and decisions, and this influence can persist into adulthood. This reinforces the importance of understanding peer group dynamics, particularly for parents, educators, and policymakers seeking to guide young people towards positive developmental outcomes.

The composition of peer groups varies widely, depending on factors such as age, interests, and social context. In early childhood, peer groups tend to be less structured and more fluid, with children typically forming bonds based on proximity or simple shared activities. As individuals grow older, peer groups become more defined, often forming around shared interests such as sports, academic pursuits, or hobbies. By adolescence, peer groups often develop complex social structures, with hierarchies and roles that may influence group behavior. In some cases, membership in a particular peer group can confer social status or prestige, while exclusion from a peer group may lead to feelings of isolation or low self-esteem (Ryan, 2019). The ability to navigate these social dynamics is a critical aspect of social development, as it helps individuals learn important interpersonal skills such as negotiation, cooperation, and conflict resolution.

A peer group's influence on academic achievement has been a major area of research in educational psychology. Studies indicate that peers can significantly influence students' academic motivations, attitudes, and achievements, either positively or negatively. According to a study by Kiefer, Alley, and Ellerbrock (2020), students who are part of academically oriented peer groups are

more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes towards school and achieve higher academic success. Conversely, students who belong to peer groups that devalue academic achievement may show a decline in school engagement and performance. This peer influence on academic outcomes highlights the necessity for educators to foster environments that encourage positive peer interactions, where academic excellence is valued.

The development of social and emotional skills is another key area where peer groups exert considerable influence. Interactions within peer groups help individuals develop empathy, communication skills, and conflict resolution abilities. Peer groups often provide opportunities for individuals to experience social comparison, which can shape self-concept and self-esteem. As noted by Walker and McNaughton (2021), through interactions with peers, adolescents are able to gain feedback on their behaviors and identities, which in turn helps them navigate the challenges of adolescence and build emotional resilience. In this sense, peer groups play a vital role in helping individuals learn to manage their emotions and establish a sense of personal identity.

While peer groups can provide critical socialization benefits, they can also present challenges. Peer rejection, for example, can have significant negative effects on an individual's psychological and emotional well-being. According to Poteat and Rivers (2021), peer rejection during adolescence has been linked to increased risks of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Adolescents who are rejected by their peer groups may experience feelings of loneliness and social isolation, which can contribute to a range of mental health issues. Moreover, individuals who feel ostracized by their peers may be more vulnerable to negative peer influences or may seek acceptance in unhealthy social groups, further exacerbating their emotional distress.

The role of technology in peer group interactions has become increasingly significant in recent years. The advent of social media platforms and online communication tools has expanded the ways in which individuals interact with their peer groups. According to a study by Moreno, Ong, and Tsai (2020), social media platforms offer both opportunities and risks for peer group interactions. While these platforms can facilitate social connections and provide a sense of community, they can also lead to negative experiences such as cyberbullying, social comparison, and reduced face-to-face communication skills. The study highlights the need for more research on the implications of digital peer group interactions for adolescents' social development, as the digital age continues to reshape traditional peer group dynamics.

The Concept of Peer Group

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more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes towards school and achieve higher academic success. Conversely, students who belong to peer groups that devalue academic achievement may show a decline in school engagement and performance. This peer influence on academic outcomes highlights the necessity for educators to foster environments that encourage positive peer interactions, where academic excellence is valued.

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Effect of Peer Group Influence on Students' Perceptions of the Value of Studying History

The role of peer recommendations in students' decisions to enroll in history courses has gained increasing attention in recent years, as educational institutions focus on understanding the factors that influence course selection. Peer recommendations, in the context of education, refer to the influence exerted by students' friends, classmates, or social groups in guiding decisions about course enrollment. Research suggests that peer influence plays a significant role in shaping students' academic choices, including their willingness to take courses that may not be traditionally perceived as essential or popular, such as history (Smith & Jackson, 2022). The decision-making process of students, particularly in elective courses like history, is often complex and influenced by multiple factors, including perceived relevance, interest in the subject matter, future career prospects, and the advice or encouragement from peers. This essay explores how peer recommendations contribute to students' decisions to enroll in history courses, supported by empirical studies and verifiable academic sources.

Peer influence in academic decision-making is a well-documented phenomenon. According to a study by Nguyen and Nguyen (2021), social interactions among students significantly affect course enrollment decisions. In their research, they found that students are more likely to enroll in elective courses when their peers provide positive feedback or express enthusiasm for a particular subject. This influence is particularly pronounced in subjects like history, where students may perceive the course as less directly related to career prospects compared to more technical or vocational courses. Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) argue that students who hear positive testimonials from their peers about engaging lectures, passionate instructors, or interesting content are more likely to consider enrolling in history courses. The role of peers in shaping perceptions of a subject's difficulty or enjoyment level can directly impact enrollment trends.

Peer recommendations often serve as a means of mitigating uncertainty. In academic environments, students may be uncertain about which courses to take, especially when it comes to subjects like history, which might not have a direct link to their career aspirations. This uncertainty is heightened by the fact that students are often balancing a range of factors, including workload, interest, and academic performance expectations. According to a study by O'Connell and Thomas (2020), peer recommendations provide a form of validation and reassurance, helping students feel more confident in their decisions. The study highlights that when students receive positive feedback from trusted peers, they are more likely to perceive history courses as worthwhile and relevant, even if these courses do not align with their initial academic or career goals. The researchers found that 68% of students in their survey reported being influenced by their peers when making decisions about enrolling in elective courses, including history.

In addition to mitigating uncertainty, peer recommendations also contribute to a sense of community and shared academic experience, which can enhance students' motivation to enroll in history courses. According to the social learning theory, individuals learn behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making processes through observation and interaction with others (Bandura, 1977). Applying this theory to the academic context, students are likely to be influenced by their peers' course choices and enrollment patterns. A study by Laskowski et al. (2021) found that students are more likely to enroll in courses that are popular among their peer group, even if they had not initially considered those courses. The researchers also noted that peer recommendations often create a sense of camaraderie and collective learning, making courses like history more attractive to students who may otherwise perceive them as challenging or irrelevant.

Additionally, peer recommendations have the power to shape students' perceptions of the value of history as a discipline. History courses often face the challenge of being perceived as less practical or applicable to modern careers compared to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects. However, peers who have taken history courses and share their positive experiences can help shift these perceptions. According to a study by Clark and Myers (2023), students who receive peer recommendations that emphasize the skills gained from history courses, such as critical thinking, research abilities, and the capacity to understand historical contexts are more likely to see the subject as valuable for their overall academic and professional development. Clark and Myers (2023) suggest that peer recommendations are particularly effective in promoting history courses when they highlight transferable skills that can be applied to a wide range of careers, including law, education, and public policy.

Furthermore, the mode of communication through which peer recommendations are delivered plays a crucial role in influencing enrollment decisions. With the rise of social media and online communication platforms, students are increasingly relying on digital peer networks to seek advice about course selections. A study by Kim and Lee (2020) explored the impact of social media peer recommendations on students' course choices. The researchers found that students who actively engaged with academic discussions on social media platforms, such as Facebook groups or WhatsApp chats, were more likely to be influenced by their peers' recommendations. Kim and Lee (2020) also noted that social media allows for a wider dissemination of peer feedback, making it easier for students to access diverse perspectives on history courses. This accessibility increases the likelihood that students will encounter positive peer reviews of history courses, potentially leading to higher enrollment rates.

While peer recommendations can have a positive impact on enrollment in history courses, they can also perpetuate biases and stereotypes about the subject. In some cases, negative peer recommendations can discourage students from enrolling in history courses, especially if peers share experiences of finding the subject boring or irrelevant. According to a study by Evans and Morgan (2019), students are more likely to avoid courses that have been negatively reviewed by their peers, even if those reviews are based on subjective experiences. This phenomenon highlights the potential downside of peer recommendations, as students may make decisions based on limited or skewed information. Evans and Morgan (2019) suggest that educational institutions should encourage more balanced discussions about history courses, providing students with a more comprehensive understanding of the subject's value.

To counteract the potential negative effects of peer recommendations, educational institutions can play a proactive role in promoting history courses through peer-driven initiatives. Peer mentoring programs, where upper-year students share their experiences and insights with younger students, can be an effective way to generate positive peer recommendations. According to a study by Sanders et al. (2022), peer mentoring programs have been shown to increase enrollment in humanities courses, including history, by providing students with relatable role models who can offer personalized advice. The study found that students who participated in peer mentoring were more likely to enroll in history courses, as they were able to hear firsthand accounts of the benefits and opportunities associated with studying history. Sanders et al. (2022) argue that peer mentoring creates a supportive environment where students feel encouraged to explore subjects outside their comfort zone, including history.

Role of Peer Recommendations on Students' Decisions to Enroll in History Courses

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Peer recommendations often serve as a means of mitigating uncertainty. In academic environments, students may be uncertain about which courses to take, especially when it comes to subjects like history, which might not have a direct link to their career aspirations. This uncertainty is heightened by the fact that students are often balancing a range of factors, including workload, interest, and academic performance expectations. According to a study by O'Connell and Thomas (2020), peer recommendations provide a form of validation and reassurance, helping students feel more confident in their decisions. The study highlights that when students receive positive feedback from trusted peers, they are more likely to perceive history courses as worthwhile and relevant, even if these courses do not align with their initial academic or career goals. The researchers found

that 68% of students in their survey reported being influenced by their peers when making decisions about enrolling in elective courses, including history.

In addition to mitigating uncertainty, peer recommendations also contribute to a sense of community and shared academic experience, which can enhance students' motivation to enroll in history courses. According to the social learning theory, individuals learn behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making processes through observation and interaction with others (Bandura, 1977). Applying this theory to the academic context, students are likely to be influenced by their peers' course choices and enrollment patterns. A study by Laskowski et al. (2021) found that students are more likely to enroll in courses that are popular among their peer group, even if they had not initially considered those courses. The researchers also noted that peer recommendations often create a sense of camaraderie and collective learning, making courses like history more attractive to students who may otherwise perceive them as challenging or irrelevant.

Additionally, peer recommendations have the power to shape students' perceptions of the value of history as a discipline. History courses often face the challenge of being perceived as less practical or applicable to modern careers compared to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects. However, peers who have taken history courses and share their positive experiences can help shift these perceptions. According to a study by Clark and Myers (2023), students who receive peer recommendations that emphasize the skills gained from history courses, such as critical thinking, research abilities, and the capacity to understand historical contexts, are more likely to see the subject as valuable for their overall academic and professional development. Clark and Myers (2023) suggest that peer recommendations are particularly effective

in promoting history courses when they highlight transferable skills that can be applied to a wide range of careers, including law, education, and public policy.

The mode of communication through which peer recommendations are delivered plays a crucial role in influencing enrollment decisions. With the rise of social media and online communication platforms, students are increasingly relying on digital peer networks to seek advice about course selections. A study by Kim and Lee (2020) explored the impact of social media peer recommendations on students' course choices. The researchers found that students who actively engaged with academic discussions on social media platforms, such as Facebook groups or WhatsApp chats, were more likely to be influenced by their peers' recommendations. Kim and Lee (2020) also noted that social media allows for a wider dissemination of peer feedback, making it easier for students to access diverse perspectives on history courses. This accessibility increases the likelihood that students will encounter positive peer reviews of history courses, potentially leading to higher enrollment rates.

While peer recommendations can have a positive impact on enrollment in history courses, they can also perpetuate biases and stereotypes about the subject. In some cases, negative peer recommendations can discourage students from enrolling in history courses, especially if peers share experiences of finding the subject boring or irrelevant. According to a study by Evans and Morgan (2019), students are more likely to avoid courses that have been negatively reviewed by their peers, even if those reviews are based on subjective experiences. This phenomenon highlights the potential downside of peer recommendations, as students may make decisions based on limited or skewed information. Evans and Morgan (2019) suggest that educational institutions should

encourage more balanced discussions about history courses, providing students with a more comprehensive understanding of the subject's value.

To counteract the potential negative effects of peer recommendations, educational institutions can play a proactive role in promoting history courses through peer-driven initiatives. Peer mentoring programs, where upper-year students share their experiences and insights with younger students, can be an effective way to generate positive peer recommendations. According to a study by Sanders et al. (2022), peer mentoring programs have been shown to increase enrollment in humanities courses, including history, by providing students with relatable role models who can offer personalized advice. The study found that students who participated in peer mentoring were more likely to enroll in history courses, as they were able to hear firsthand accounts of the benefits and opportunities associated with studying history. Sanders et al. (2022) argue that peer mentoring creates a supportive environment where students feel encouraged to explore subjects outside their comfort zone, including history.

The Impact of Peer Approval on Students' Choice of History

Peer approval plays a significant role in shaping students' academic decisions, including their subject choices. History, as a discipline, has often been subjected to societal perceptions and peer influences that either encourage or discourage students from pursuing it. Peer approval refers to the social endorsement or rejection by one's peers that can significantly influence an individual's choices and behaviors, particularly during adolescence, when the need for acceptance and validation is heightened. In the academic context, peer approval affects the choice of subjects like History, which may be perceived as less lucrative or less popular among peers compared to STEM subjects or business-related courses. This paper explores the impact of peer approval on students'

choice of History, drawing from empirical studies and authoritative sources published between 2019 and 2024, to understand the dynamics of this influence.

During adolescence, students are heavily influenced by their social environment, which includes their peers. Research has shown that peer groups play a critical role in shaping students' preferences and decisions regarding academic subjects (Alaka & Eniola, 2020). For instance, if History is perceived as a subject that is unpopular among a student's peer group, the student may be less likely to choose it, even if they have a personal interest in the subject. Conversely, if a peer group values History and regards it as a subject that enhances one's knowledge and critical thinking, the likelihood of a student choosing History increases. As such, the social dynamics within peer groups can significantly influence the educational paths students take. One study by Jameson (2021) examined the relationship between peer approval and subject selection among high school students in the United Kingdom. The study found that students were more likely to select History as a subject when it was considered intellectually prestigious by their peers. On the other hand, when History was viewed as boring or irrelevant by peers, students tended to avoid it, even if they had an intrinsic interest in historical events and contexts. This highlights the power of peer approval in shaping students' educational choices, as many students conform to the expectations of their social circles to avoid rejection or alienation.

Peer pressure, which is often a byproduct of the desire for peer approval, also plays a pivotal role in students' academic decision-making processes. When students feel pressured to conform to the choices of their peers, they may abandon personal preferences in favor of what is popular or accepted by the majority. According to a study by Okon and Edu (2023), peer pressure is particularly influential in shaping students' decisions regarding subjects that are perceived as

difficult or unpopular. In their study conducted in secondary schools across Nigeria, they found that students often refrained from choosing History due to the negative perception of the subject among their peers. History was often regarded as outdated or less useful compared to subjects like mathematics, economics, or science. Consequently, students who might have been interested in History were swayed by the collective opinion of their peers and opted for more socially acceptable subjects. The study by Okon and Edu (2023) revealed that students who chose History often faced ridicule or teasing from their peers, further reinforcing the social pressure to conform to more popular subject choices. This indicates that peer approval, or the lack thereof, can create an environment in which students feel compelled to choose subjects based on their social acceptability rather than personal interest or aptitude.

The concept of academic identity refers to how students perceive themselves in relation to their academic pursuits. Peer approval can significantly influence a student's academic identity by shaping their perceptions of what is valuable or worthy in the academic realm. According to Roberts and Thorne (2022), students' academic identities are often developed in response to the social validation they receive from their peers. If peers validate a student's choice of History as a subject that is intellectually stimulating and beneficial, the student is more likely to develop a positive academic identity in relation to History. Conversely, if peers devalue the subject, the student may internalize this negative perception and avoid choosing History, even if it aligns with their academic interests. Roberts and Thorne's (2022) research, conducted in a U.S. high school setting, showed that students who received positive reinforcement from their peers regarding their choice of History were more confident in their decision and more likely to pursue further studies in the field. This suggests that peer approval not only influences initial subject choices but also

contributes to long-term academic engagement in the chosen discipline. The study underscores the importance of peer validation in cultivating a student's academic identity, particularly in subjects like History that are often subject to fluctuating social perceptions.

Social perceptions of academic subjects are not static; they evolve based on cultural, economic, and educational trends. History, in particular, has often been seen as a subject that is less relevant in modern times, as the focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields continues to grow (Manning & Rivera, 2021). This shift in focus has contributed to the marginalization of History as a subject in many educational systems, particularly in developing countries where economic growth is tied to advancements in technology and innovation. As a result, students are less likely to receive positive peer approval for choosing History, as it is perceived as less likely to lead to lucrative career opportunities. Manning and Rivera (2021) explored the relationship between social perceptions of academic subjects and peer influence in a study conducted in several U.S. high schools. Their findings revealed that History was often perceived as an “easy” subject that did not require as much intellectual effort as subjects like physics or chemistry. Consequently, students who chose History were often seen as less ambitious or academically inclined by their peers. This negative perception further contributed to the decline in History enrollment, as students sought peer approval by selecting subjects that were considered more challenging and prestigious.

Gender also plays a role in how peer approval affects students' choices of History. In many cultures, academic subjects are often gendered, with some subjects being perceived as more appropriate for boys and others for girls. History has traditionally been seen as a male-dominated subject, particularly in regions where the study of political and military history is emphasized

(Ezema & Chukwuma, 2021). As a result, female students may be less likely to choose History if their peer group reinforces traditional gender norms. Ezema and Chukwuma's (2021) research in Nigerian secondary schools revealed that male students were more likely to receive peer approval for choosing History, while female students faced greater social pressure to select subjects perceived as more feminine, such as literature or the arts. This gender dynamic underscores the complexity of peer approval in academic decision-making, as students must navigate not only social perceptions of subjects but also gender expectations within their peer groups.

The Impact of Peer Disapproval Affect Students' Choice of History

Peer disapproval, a significant social influence, plays a crucial role in shaping students' choices when selecting academic subjects, including history. Peer disapproval refers to the negative feedback, resistance, or lack of encouragement that students receive from their social group regarding a particular academic interest or career path. This phenomenon has been documented in various educational studies, showing that peer influence, either positive or negative, can have a considerable impact on students' educational choices, motivations, and long-term career aspirations. The extent to which peer disapproval affects students' choice of history as a subject is multifaceted, involving complex social, psychological, and cultural factors. Peer groups often serve as powerful reference points, and when there is a lack of support or overt disapproval from these groups, students may feel disinclined to pursue subjects like history, which may be perceived as less prestigious or relevant in comparison to fields like science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). A study conducted by Iannelli and Smyth (2020) discusses how peer influence significantly shapes subject choice in secondary schools, particularly for subjects that may not be considered "high status" by students' peers. History, traditionally regarded as a subject

steeped in the past, is often sidelined in favor of subjects that are viewed as offering clearer pathways to high-paying jobs in fields such as technology, medicine, and engineering. Iannelli and Smyth (2020) demonstrate that students are highly attuned to the perceived opinions of their peers, and when these opinions suggest that certain subjects, including history, are “boring,” “irrelevant,” or “impractical,” they are likely to shy away from choosing those subjects. This disapproval may manifest in subtle ways, such as through comments, body language, or avoidance of discussions about certain subjects. When students internalize these cues, it leads to decreased motivation and confidence in pursuing the subject. Iannelli and Smyth (2020) further argue that peer groups provide a "social currency" whereby students are either rewarded or penalized based on the alignment of their academic choices with group norms.

Social identity theory offers a framework for understanding how peer disapproval can affect students' subject choices, including history. According to social identity theory, individuals derive their sense of self from their membership in social groups, and this identity is influenced by the attitudes, behaviors, and preferences of those groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2019). If a student's peer group places little value on history or actively disapproves of the subject, the student is likely to perceive this disapproval as a threat to their social identity. To avoid social rejection, students may opt for subjects that are more in line with their peers' preferences, even if those subjects do not align with their personal interests or strengths. In the context of history, peer disapproval may stem from the perception that history lacks tangible career prospects or practical applications, especially when compared to more "marketable" subjects like business or STEM fields. Research by Archer et al. (2021) explores how students, particularly those from marginalized or lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are more susceptible to peer influence when making academic choices. In their study,

Archer and colleagues found that students often eschewed subjects like history because they were concerned about how their peers would perceive them. This was especially true for male students, who felt that choosing history could lead to them being labeled as “nerdy” or “uncool,” thereby isolating them from their peer group. The study found that peer disapproval, particularly in schools with a strong emphasis on STEM, acted as a deterrent for students considering humanities subjects, further widening the gap between student interest and subject choice.

Cultural factors also play a significant role in shaping the extent to which peer disapproval affects students' choice of history. In many societies, history is not given the same cultural value as other subjects, especially those that are perceived to contribute directly to economic development. In Nigeria, for instance, there has been a longstanding cultural emphasis on subjects that are viewed as gateways to lucrative careers, such as medicine, engineering, and law. A study by Olutayo and Adefila (2023) highlights how cultural norms and peer influence in Nigerian schools have led to a significant decline in students choosing history as a subject. The researchers found that students were often discouraged by their peers from taking history because it was viewed as a "soft" subject, with little potential for future career success. This cultural devaluation of history is exacerbated by peer disapproval, as students internalize the negative attitudes of their peers and opt for subjects that are seen as more prestigious or relevant.

Gender plays an important role in determining how peer disapproval affects students' choice of history. Studies have shown that boys and girls experience peer pressure differently, and this can influence their subject choices in distinct ways. According to research by Murphy and Beggs (2021), boys are more likely to experience negative peer pressure when choosing subjects that are perceived as “soft” or less masculine, such as history. In contrast, girls may experience peer disapproval if

they choose subjects that are perceived as overly intellectual or academic, especially in peer groups that prioritize social popularity over academic achievement. Murphy and Beggs (2021) argue that this dynamic leads to a gendered pattern in subject choice, where boys are less likely to choose humanities subjects like history due to fear of social rejection, while girls may be discouraged from choosing history if it is seen as conflicting with the social expectations of their peer group.

The long-term effects of peer disapproval on subject choice, particularly in relation to history, can be profound. Research has shown that students who are discouraged from pursuing subjects they are genuinely interested in may experience decreased academic engagement, lower self-esteem, and reduced overall academic achievement. A longitudinal study by Christodoulou and Papageorgiou (2023) found that students who avoided subjects like history due to peer disapproval were more likely to report feelings of regret and dissatisfaction with their academic choices later in life. The study found that these students often struggled to find motivation in the subjects they had chosen under peer pressure, leading to lower academic performance and reduced career satisfaction. Christodoulou and Papageorgiou (2023) emphasize the importance of addressing peer disapproval in educational settings to ensure that students are able to pursue subjects that align with their interests and strengths, rather than succumbing to the pressures of social conformity.

Summary of Reviewed Literature

The reviewed literature on the effect of peer group influence on students' choice of history as a course highlights the significant role of social interactions in academic decision-making. Peer groups shape students' perceptions of different subjects through shared opinions, attitudes, and approval. Studies reveal that peer recommendations can positively encourage enrollment in history courses when the subject is seen favorably within the group. Conversely, peer disapproval,

particularly in cases where history is perceived as less prestigious or irrelevant compared to other fields, can deter students from choosing it. The literature also examines the influence of social identity and cultural attitudes in this process, with students often seeking validation from their peers in making academic choices. Additionally, the rise of digital communication has intensified peer influence, as online platforms further facilitate the spread of peer opinions and recommendations. However, while peer influence is powerful, educators and institutions can mitigate its negative effects by promoting the value of history and fostering environments that support academic diversity. By addressing these factors, students can be encouraged to pursue history based on genuine interest rather than peer pressure.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the method employed in carrying out the study. This is arranged under the following sub-headings:

- Design of the Study
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Technique
- Research Instrument
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Design of the Study

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This design was employed for the study because the study sought to describe an already existing phenomenon - The Effect of Peer Group Influence on the Choice of History as a Course.

Population of the Study

The population of this study, comprised of one hundred (100) History Education Students (400 level) in the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The entire population of one hundred (100) 400 level History Education students was used as the sample of the study. This is due to its manageable size. Hence, census.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire titled: the Effect of Peer Group Influence on the Choice of History as a Course (EPGICHCCSUBN). It was designed to elicit responses that can provide answers to the research questions. The questionnaire is made up of two sections (section A and section B). The section A consists of information about the respondent such as sex while section B was designed to enable the researcher gather information relating to the research questions raised for the study.

Validity of the Instrument

The questionnaire was be given to the researcher's supervisor and two other experts in the Department of Educational Foundations for scrutiny, corrections, and suggestions. The corrections and suggestions made by them were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument. This was done to ensure that the instrument measure what it was supposed to measure.

Reliability of the Instrument

In other to determine the reliability of the instrument, it was administered to 20 History Education students of similar characteristics as those in the study. The results of their responses were correlated and a Cronbach coefficient of .83 was obtained. This shows that the instrument is reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents through Google link Questionnaire model, which is sent to students' WhatsApp Groups of the Department of Educational Foundations.

Method of Data Analysis

Completed copies of the questionnaire retrieved from the respondents Google Link collation, and were analyzed using simple percentage.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the result obtained from the analysis of data for answering the research questions formulated for the study through structured questionnaire. The data are presented in tables and are arranged according to research questions. The method of data analysis was simple percentage.

Presentation of Items

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender	Number	Percentage (%)
Male	48	48.0
Female	52	52.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

In Table One, which presents the gender distribution of the respondents, it is shown that 48 respondents, representing for 48% of the total sample population, were male, while 52 respondents, representing 52% of the entire population surveyed, were female. This indicates a slightly higher representation of female participants compared to their male counterparts in the study.

Research Question 1: How does Peer Group Influence affect Students' Perceptions of the Value of Studying History?

Table 2: How Peer Group affect students' Perceptions of the Value of Studying History.

S/N	ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1.	My friends like history and so do I	20 (20%)	39 (39%)	35 (35%)	6 (6%)
2.	History is valuable because my peers often discuss its relevance.	21 (21%)	59 (59%)	17 (17%)	3 (3%)
3.	I value studying history because my close friends encourage it.	12 (12%)	38 (38%)	41 (41%)	9 (9%)
4.	My perception of history's importance has been shaped by my friends.	14 (14%)	36 (36%)	39 (39%)	11 (11%)
5.	I think highly of studying history because my peers view it positively.	12 (12%)	40 (40%)	38 (38%)	10 (10)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data presented in Table 2 aims to examines how students' perceptions of the value of studying history are influenced by their peer groups. The table consists of five key items that reflect various dimensions of peer influence, such as shared interest in history, peer discussions, encouragement from friends, and the shaping of individual perceptions. In Item 1, which states "My friends like history and so do I," 20 respondents representing 20% of the sample strongly agreed with this statement, indicating a direct influence of peer interest on their own perception. Additionally, 39 respondents, constituting 39%, agreed with the statement, suggesting that a significant proportion of students align their interests in history with those of their friends. However, 35 respondents, which accounts for 35%, disagreed, showing that not all students are influenced in the same way by their peers. Only 6 respondents, or 6%, strongly disagreed. This distribution indicates that while peer interest plays a role in shaping individual attitudes towards history, the

influence varies across the student population, with more than half (59%) affirming a positive alignment with their friends' interests.

For Item 2, which reads "History is valuable because my peers often discuss its relevance," 21 respondents representing 21% strongly agreed, while a significant majority of 59 respondents, accounting for 59%, agreed. This suggests that peer discussions play a substantial role in validating the importance of history among students. Conversely, 17 respondents (17%) disagreed, and only 3 respondents (3%) strongly disagreed, indicating that only a small minority are unaffected by peer conversations about history. Overall, 80% of the respondents affirmed that peer discourse contributes positively to their perception of history's relevance, underscoring the social dimension of academic value formation.

In Item 3, which states "I value studying history because my close friends encourage it," a smaller group of 12 respondents, representing 12%, strongly agreed, while 38 respondents (38%) agreed, summing up to 50% of the respondents acknowledging encouragement from close friends as a contributing factor to their interest in history. On the other hand, 41 respondents, which represents 41%, disagreed with the statement, and 9 respondents (9%) strongly disagreed. This implies a more divided perspective, where half of the students are positively influenced by their peers, but a significant proportion remain unaffected, suggesting that encouragement from friends is not a universally strong determinant in the valuation of historical studies.

Turning to Item 4, which asserts "My perception of history's importance has been shaped by my friends," 14 respondents, making up 14%, strongly agreed, and 36 respondents, or 36%, agreed. This shows that 50% of the sample recognize their friends as shaping agents in their perception of history. However, 39 respondents (39%) disagreed and 11 respondents (11%) strongly disagreed,

together forming 50% of the sample that resists attributing their views to peer influence. This equal division underscores the complexity of peer impact, highlighting that for many students, the development of academic attitudes, especially towards subjects like history, may also stem from personal, familial, or institutional influences rather than peer dynamics alone.

Finally, in Item 5, which reads "I think highly of studying history because my peers view it positively," 12 respondents (12%) strongly agreed, and 40 respondents (40%) agreed, indicating that 52% of students are inclined to adopt a favorable view of history when their peers do so as well. Meanwhile, 38 respondents (38%) disagreed and 10 respondents (10%) strongly disagreed, indicating that 48% of the respondents are either unaffected or potentially indifferent to peer perceptions. This nearly even split suggests that while peer views can bolster positive academic attitudes, they do not uniformly determine students' valuation of history as a discipline.

To answer research question, the findings reveals that peer group influence does indeed play a role in shaping students' perceptions of the value of studying history, although the strength and direction of this influence are not uniform across all respondents. In four out of five items, more than half of the students expressed agreement (either strong or moderate) that their peers affect their perception of history, whether through shared interest, discourse, encouragement, or social validation. This suggests a generally positive correlation between peer influence and the value attached to historical studies.

Research Question 2: To what extent do peer disapproval affect students' choice of History as a course at the University of Benin?

Table 3: The Extent Peer Disapproval Affect Students' Choice of History as a Course at the University of Benin.

S/N	ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
6.	I chose to study history because my friends recommended it.	13 (13%)	25 (25%)	50 (50%)	12 (12%)
7.	Peer suggestions strongly influenced my decision to enroll in history courses.	8 (8%)	31 (31%)	42 (42%)	19 (19%)
8.	My friends encouraged me to take History, which influenced my choice.	5 (5%)	34 (34%)	44 (44%)	17 (17%)
9.	I chose history after hearing positive recommendations from my friends.	8 (8%)	35 (35%)	42 (42%)	15 (15%)
10.	My decision to take history was influenced by my peers' suggestions.	10 (10%)	33 (33%)	48 (48%)	9 (9%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data presented in Table 3 provides insight into the role that peer disapproval or, more broadly, peer influence plays in students' decision-making processes regarding the selection of History as a course of study at the University of Benin. In Item 6, which states "I chose to study history because my friends recommended it," 13 respondents, representing 13% of the sample, strongly agreed with the statement, while 25 respondents (25%) agreed. This indicates that a total of 38% of the respondents were positively influenced by peer recommendations in their course selection. However, a greater number of respondents—50 in total, representing 50%—disagreed,

and 12 respondents (12%) strongly disagreed. This implies that the majority (62%) did not find peer recommendations decisive in their decision to pursue history, pointing to a limited influence of peer approval in shaping course choices. This suggests that while some students may have been influenced positively by their friends' opinions, most did not consider peer input a significant factor in their academic decision-making.

In Item 7, which reads "Peer suggestions strongly influenced my decision to enroll in history courses," only 8 respondents, representing 8%, strongly agreed, while 31 respondents (31%) agreed. Together, this shows that 39% of the students acknowledged the influence of peer suggestions in their decision. On the other hand, 42 respondents (42%) disagreed with the statement, and 19 respondents (19%) strongly disagreed, totaling 61% who indicated that peer suggestions were not a strong determinant in their decision to study history. This reinforces the observation that although peer influence exists, a larger portion of the student body makes decisions independently of such external encouragement or pressure.

Moving to Item 8, which states "My friends encouraged me to take History, which influenced my choice," only 5 respondents, amounting to 5% of the total, strongly agreed, and 34 respondents (34%) agreed. This amounts to a cumulative 39% who reported some degree of influence stemming from peer encouragement. In contrast, 44 respondents, accounting for 44%, disagreed with the statement, while 17 respondents (17%) strongly disagreed. The fact that 61% of the respondents did not consider peer encouragement as an influence suggests that students' course selection processes are largely autonomous, and peer approval or encouragement does not hold substantial sway over their academic preferences in most cases.

In Item 9, which asserts "I chose history after hearing positive recommendations from my friends," 8 respondents, representing 8%, strongly agreed, while 35 respondents (35%) agreed. This means that a total of 43% of respondents acknowledged that peer recommendations had some bearing on their choice. However, 42 respondents (42%) disagreed with the statement, and another 15 respondents (15%) strongly disagreed. Thus, 57% of the students rejected the idea that peer endorsement led them to choose history, further confirming the trend observed across previous items that peer suggestions or disapproval are not predominant influencers in the course decision-making of the majority.

Lastly, Item 10, which reads "My decision to take history was influenced by my peers' suggestions," was strongly agreed to by 10 respondents, representing 10%, while 33 respondents (33%) agreed, summing up to 43% who accepted the influence of peer suggestions in their decision. Meanwhile, 48 respondents (48%) disagreed, and 9 respondents (9%) strongly disagreed, totaling 57% who did not perceive peer opinions as an important factor in their course selection process.

Across all five items, the proportion of respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed consistently exceeded those who affirmed peer influence, suggesting that personal interests, intrinsic motivation, academic aspirations, or family influence may have played a greater role than peer endorsement or disapproval. Although a minority of students acknowledged that peer encouragement or recommendations influenced their choice, the majority consistently reported independence from such social factors, implying a relatively low extent of peer influence. Therefore, peer disapproval, whether overt or subtle, does not appear to be a critical determinant in the decision-making process for students who opt to study history at the University of Benin.

Research Question 3: To what extent do peer approval affect students' choice of History as a course at the University of Benin?

Table 4: The Extent Peer Approval affect Students' Choice of History as a Course at the University of Benin

S/N	ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
11.	I felt more confident choosing history because my friends supported my decision.	14 (14%)	43 (43%)	31 (31%)	12 (12%)
12.	Peer approval made me feel better about selecting history as my course.	14 (14%)	39 (39%)	31 (31%)	16 (16%)
13.	I am studying history because my friends approved of my choice.	7 (7%)	27 (27%)	44 (44%)	22 (22%)
14.	The encouragement I got from my friends helped me choose history as my course.	13 (13%)	33 (33%)	40 (40%)	14 (14%)
15.	I chose history after getting positive feedback from my peers.	10 (10%)	35 (35%)	40 (40%)	15 (15%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 presents an analysis of the extent to which peer approval contributes to the decision-making processes of students in selecting History as their course of study at the University of Benin. The table comprises five carefully structured statements aimed at assessing the degree of influence that peer encouragement and positive validation from friends exerted on students' choices. For Item 11, which reads "I felt more confident choosing history because my friends supported my decision," 14 respondents, accounting for 14% of the total sample, strongly agreed, while 43 respondents,

representing 43%, agreed. This implies that 57% of the participants derived a sense of affirmation and confidence from their peers' support when opting for history, indicating a moderately significant level of peer approval as a motivating factor. On the other hand, 31 respondents (31%) disagreed with the statement, and 12 (12%) strongly disagreed, together constituting 43% who did not find peer support instrumental in their decision. This split demonstrates that while a notable portion of students considered peer support reassuring, a significant number still chose the course independently, irrespective of such support.

In Item 12, which states "Peer approval made me feel better about selecting history as my course," an identical pattern is observed as 14 respondents (14%) strongly agreed, and 39 respondents (39%) agreed, making a total of 53% who acknowledged the emotional or psychological boost that peer approval provided in validating their course choice. Meanwhile, 31 respondents (31%) disagreed, and 16 (16%) strongly disagreed, summing up to 47% who were unaffected by peer endorsement. This close distribution of opinions further emphasizes a balanced but slightly positive tilt towards peer approval being a relevant, though not overriding, factor in the course selection process.

In Item 13, which reads "I am studying history because my friends approved of my choice," only 7 respondents (7%) strongly agreed and 27 respondents (27%) agreed, resulting in a combined 34% who directly attributed their choice to peer approval. However, 44 respondents, representing 44%, disagreed with this assertion, and 22 respondents (22%) strongly disagreed. With 66% of the total respondents refuting the influence of peer approval on their decision, this particular item shows a clear tendency toward self-determined choice, underscoring the fact that, for the majority, peer validation was not a prerequisite for pursuing history. This finding weakens the general

assumption that peer support always translates into action, suggesting instead that students might value approval but not necessarily depend on it to make crucial academic choices.

With Item 14, "The encouragement I got from my friends helped me choose history as my course," 13 respondents (13%) strongly agreed and 33 (33%) agreed, totaling 46% who felt that friendly encouragement guided their choice. In contrast, 40 respondents (40%) disagreed, and 14 (14%) strongly disagreed, making a cumulative 54% who did not consider peer encouragement a pivotal influence in their academic path. The results reveal a near even divide but with a slight dominance of disagreement, again suggesting that while some students respond positively to peer reinforcement, the general trend remains that most made independent decisions, not necessarily swayed by peer sentiment.

Lastly, Item 15, "I chose history after getting positive feedback from my peers," was strongly agreed to by 10 respondents (10%) and agreed to by 35 respondents (35%), making 45% of the students who acknowledged that their peers' positive feedback influenced their choice of history. Meanwhile, 40 respondents (40%) disagreed, and 15 (15%) strongly disagreed, totaling 55% who dismissed peer feedback as a decisive factor. This again reflects a consistent pattern where slightly fewer than half of the participants considered peer approval a relevant factor in their decision-making, while the majority upheld their independence in academic choices. In answering Research Question 3, it is evident that peer approval influences some students' choice of history as a course at the University of Benin to a moderate extent, primarily in terms of emotional support and confidence reinforcement. However, the decision to study history, for the majority, remains an individual choice made largely independent of peer validation.

Research Question 4: What Roles do Peer Recommendations Play in Students' Decisions to Enroll in History Courses?

Table 5: Roles Peer Recommendations play in Students' Decisions to Enroll in History Courses

S/N	ITEMS	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
16.	I hesitated to choose history because my friends disapproved of it.	7 (7%)	29 (29%)	49 (49%)	15 (15%)
17.	My friends' disapproval made me question studying History.	6 (6%)	32 (32%)	42 (42%)	20 (20%)
18.	I would have considered history more if my peers hadn't discouraged me.	12 (12%)	30 (30%)	39 (39%)	19 (19%)
19.	Peer disapproval made me less likely to choose history as a course.	10 (10%)	36 (36%)	40 (40%)	14 (14%)
20.	My decision to study history was affected by my friends' negative opinions.	12 (12%)	25 (25%)	51 (51%)	12 (12%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 5 addresses peer influence by specifically interrogating the roles that peer recommendations, especially negative ones, play in shaping students' decisions to enroll in History courses at the University of Benin. In Item 16, which posits, "I hesitated to choose history because my friends disapproved of it," 7% of respondents strongly agreed, and 29% agreed, amounting to 36% who admitted that their initial hesitation toward choosing History stemmed from peer disapproval. On the other hand, 49% of the students disagreed, and 15% strongly disagreed, forming a combined 64% who claimed that their decision-making was not hindered by their friends' disapproval. This response pattern indicates that while a minority experienced hesitation due to peer influence, a significant majority maintained autonomy in their academic deliberations.

Item 17 follows a similar trajectory. The statement, "My friends' disapproval made me question studying History," garnered 6% strong agreement and 32% agreement, totaling 38% of the respondents who acknowledged that peer disapproval led them to doubt their interest in the course. Conversely, 42% disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed, making up a larger proportion of 62% who did not question their decision due to peers' opposing views. This suggests that although peer influence could plant seeds of doubt in a number of students, it rarely led to decisive changes in choice for the majority.

For Item 18, which states, "I would have considered history more if my peers hadn't discouraged me," the responses slightly tilted toward recognizing peer impact. Here, 12% strongly agreed and 30% agreed, giving a total of 42% who believed that peer discouragement potentially denied them the opportunity to explore History more seriously. However, 39% disagreed and 19% strongly disagreed, combining for a narrow majority of 58% who refuted the assertion. This marginal difference reveals that although peer discouragement is not the dominant force, it still plays a notable role in shaping attitudes toward History among a substantial portion of students.

Item 19 continues this exploration with the statement, "Peer disapproval made me less likely to choose history as a course." Here, 10% of respondents strongly agreed and 36% agreed, summing to 46% who acknowledged being dissuaded by peer opinions. The remaining 40% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed, totalling 54% who claimed that peer disapproval had little or no bearing on their academic decisions. Once again, the margin between influenced and uninfluenced students remains narrow, showing that peer disapproval is not overwhelmingly decisive but still influential for nearly half the population surveyed.

Finally, Item 20, which reads, "My decision to study history was affected by my friends' negative opinions," received a 12% strong agreement and 25% agreement, equating to 37% of students who felt that their friends' critical views affected their course choice. A higher 51% disagreed and 12% strongly disagreed, resulting in a clear 63% who resisted negative peer input. This response consolidates the view that while peer recommendations, particularly unfavorable ones, might influence initial perceptions and emotional reactions, they are unlikely to serve as the principal factor in a student's final academic decision. In answering Research Question 4, it is clear that peer recommendations—particularly disapproving ones—do play a role in shaping students' consideration of History as a course, but the extent of this influence is moderate at best. A significant number of students acknowledge feeling hesitant or less inclined to consider the discipline due to negative peer opinions, but the final enrollment decisions appear largely autonomous.

Discussion of Findings

The findings reveal a complex relationship between peer influence and students' academic choices, with peer interest, discussions, encouragement, and approval playing varying roles in shaping students' perceptions of history as a discipline. The analysis provides insight into the way social interactions among students affect their decisions, offering a nuanced perspective on the influence of peers in academic decision-making. In terms of peer interest, the study found that students who shared similar interests with their peers were more likely to view history positively. This finding aligns with earlier research on the social influence of peer groups, which highlights how shared interests and values within a social network can shape individual preferences (Feldman & Newcomb, 2019). The strong alignment between students' interests in history and those of their

friends underscores the social nature of academic choices, where peer influence serves as a form of social validation. However, not all students were equally influenced by their peers, suggesting that individual factors such as personal interests, family values, or prior exposure to the subject also played a role in shaping their academic preferences (Kuo & Chuang, 2021).

Peer discussions about the relevance and value of history also emerged as an important factor in shaping students' perceptions of the subject. The majority of students reported that conversations with their peers contributed positively to their view of history, suggesting that social interactions in academic settings can serve as a key factor in validating the importance of a subject (Wilson & Pearson, 2020). Peer discussions provide a platform for students to exchange ideas, and the resulting consensus may reinforce the perceived value of history as a course of study. This phenomenon is consistent with the work of Ghosh (2018), who found that peer discussions in academic settings significantly influenced students' attitudes toward their chosen subjects. These findings suggest that, while peer influence is not always decisive, it plays a crucial role in shaping the academic attitudes and decisions of students, particularly in the context of subjects like history, which may not be as immediately engaging or relevant to some students.

The study also examined the role of peer encouragement in students' decision to pursue history. It found that while some students were motivated by encouragement from close friends, the influence was not as strong as expected. A considerable proportion of respondents reported that their decision to study history was largely independent of peer encouragement, highlighting the diversity in students' motivations (Duncan & Jones, 2020). This aligns with research on academic decision-making, which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation and personal goals in shaping students' educational choices (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The mixed responses to peer

encouragement suggest that while some students may find support from their peers reassuring, others prioritize their own interests and aspirations over peer influence. When considering peer approval and disapproval, the study found that peer validation played a moderate role in students' decision-making processes. A significant portion of students reported feeling more confident in their decision to study history when their peers supported their choice, indicating that peer approval can provide emotional reassurance and reinforce students' sense of self-efficacy (Bingham & Shultz, 2021). However, the study also revealed that a majority of students did not regard peer approval as a crucial factor in their decision-making, suggesting that the influence of peer validation is not absolute. This finding supports the work of Choi and Lee (2021), who observed that while peer approval can provide social affirmation, it is not always a decisive factor in students' academic choices. In contrast, the influence of peer disapproval was found to be less pronounced, with many students rejecting the idea that negative peer opinions played a significant role in their decision to pursue history.

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on peer influence in academic decision-making. Similar studies have examined the role of peer groups in shaping students' choice of academic disciplines, with mixed results. For example, in a study by Tuan and Alon (2020), peer influence was found to significantly affect students' decisions to pursue specific fields of study, particularly in subjects perceived as less popular or challenging. Similarly, Feldman and Newcomb (2019) reported that peer influence played a key role in shaping students' perceptions of academic subjects, particularly when those subjects were not inherently attractive or motivating. However, like the current study, these findings also revealed that peer influence varies across

individuals and contexts, with some students being more susceptible to peer suggestions and others making decisions independently.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study examined the Effect of Peer Group Influence on the Choice of History as a Course: A Case Study of University of Benin, Nigeria. Four research questions were raised to guide this study. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised of one hundred (100) History Education Students (400 level) in the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State. The instrument used for data collection is a self-structured questionnaire. This instrument was validated by the project supervisor. The data gathered was analysed using simple percentage. The findings from the study is as follows:

1. The study showed that students who shared similar interests with their peers were more likely to view history positively, indicating the importance of peer influence in shaping academic perceptions. This finding aligns with prior research on the social influence of peer groups, which underscores how shared interests within a social network can shape individual preferences.

2. The study revealed that peer discussions about the relevance and value of history played a significant role in shaping students' perceptions of the subject. A majority of students reported that conversations with their peers positively impacted their view of history, reinforcing the idea that social interactions in academic settings contribute to validating the importance of a subject.
3. The study demonstrated that peer encouragement had a moderate influence on students' decision to pursue history. While some students were motivated by the support of close friends, a considerable number of respondents indicated that their choice to study history was primarily driven by personal interests and goals, rather than peer influence.
4. The study highlighted that peer approval played a moderate role in students' decision-making processes, with many students feeling more confident in their decision to study history when supported by their peers.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that peer group influence plays a notable but variable role in students' academic decisions, particularly their choice to study history at the University of Benin. Peer influence is not a monolithic or overwhelming force; instead, it is a factor that interacts with other personal, familial, and academic considerations. While shared interests, peer discussions, and positive peer validation can contribute to shaping students' perceptions of history, the majority of students make their academic decisions with a degree of autonomy, guided by intrinsic motivations and personal goals. Furthermore, peer disapproval, while influential to some extent, does not appear to be a significant determinant in students' decisions to pursue history as a course of study. The study shows the importance of considering the diverse

factors that influence students' academic choices, highlighting the complex interplay between social influences and personal motivations. These findings contribute to the broader literature on peer influence in academic decision-making and provide insights for educators and academic institutions in understanding how social dynamics within peer groups can shape students' attitudes and choices regarding their studies.

Recommendation

Having carefully analysed the study and obtained definite results, the following recommendations are made:

1. Students should engage in more peer discussions about the value of academic subjects, as these interactions positively influence their perceptions and academic choices.
2. Schools should foster environments where students with shared academic interests can collaborate, enhancing peer influence in shaping positive attitudes toward less popular subjects like history.
3. Educators should encourage students to balance peer influence with intrinsic motivation, ensuring that personal interests and goals remain central to academic decision-making.
4. Parents should support their children's academic choices while respecting their individuality, as peer approval may not always be the primary factor influencing students' decisions.

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APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

BENIN CITY

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE EFFECT OF PEER GROUP INFLUENCE ON THE CHOICE
OF HISTORY AS A COURSE: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, NIGERIA**

Dear Respondent,

I am Ukpebor Esther Osamudiamen, an undergraduate in the above-named institution. I am carrying out a research on **“The Effect of Peer Group Influence on the Choice of History as a Course.”**

This questionnaire is designed for academic purposes. It is structured to find out your perception on the Effect of Peer Group Influence on the Choice of History as a Course. Please respond sincerely to the questions by ticking [] where applicable. Your responses will be treated with a high level of confidentiality. Thank you

Yours faithfully,

Ukpebor Esther Osamudiamen

(Researcher)

SECTION A: Demographic Information

Instructions: Please tick () where applicable.

Gender: Female (), Male ()

SECTION B: DATA ON QUESTIONNAIRE

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Key: Strongly Agree (SA)= 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D)=2; Strongly Disagree (SD)=1.

S/N	How does peer group influence affect students' perceptions of the value of studying history?	SA	A	D	SD
1.	My friends like history and so do I				
2.	History is valuable because my peers often discuss its relevance.				
3.	I value studying history because my close friends encourage it.				
4.	My perception of history's importance has been shaped by my friends.				
5.	I think highly of studying history because my peers view it positively.				
S/N	What roles do peer recommendations play in students' decisions to enroll in history courses?	SA	A	D	SD
6.	I chose to study history because my friends recommended it.				
7.	Peer suggestions strongly influenced my decision to enroll in history courses.				
8.	My friends encouraged me to take history, which influenced my choice.				

9.	I chose history after hearing positive recommendations from my friends.				
10.	My decision to take history was influenced by my peers' suggestions.				
S/N Q3	To what extent do peer approval affect students' choice of History as a course at the University of Benin?	SA	A	D	SD
11.	I felt more confident choosing history because my friends supported my decision.				
12.	Peer approval made me feel better about selecting history as my course.				
13.	I am studying history because my friends approved of my choice.				
14.	The encouragement I got from my friends helped me choose history as my course.				
15.	I chose history after getting positive feedback from my peers.				
S/N Q4	To what extent do peer disapproval affect students' choice of History as a course at the University of Benin?	SA	A	D	SD
16.	I hesitated to choose history because my friends disapproved of it.				
17.	My friends' disapproval made me question studying history.				
18.	I would have considered history more if my peers hadn't discouraged me.				
19.	Peer disapproval made me less likely to choose history as a course.				
20.	My decision to study history was affected by my friends' negative opinions.				

