

Study

Study on levels of peer pressure among adolescents

Ms. Umashankari.V^{1*}, Dr. Kiran Babu N C², Moutusi Daspurkayastha³

ABSTRACT

In the present study the researchers have attempted to assess the levels of Peer Pressure among adolescence between the genders along with other factors like age group, order of birth, stream of education, family income group, and parent's occupation. Among 123 students which include 67 boys and 56 girls who belong to the age group of 16 to 21 years residing in urban population. The questionnaire used to collect the data was 'Peer Pressure Scale' which was designed by Sandeep Singh & Sunil Saini (2010). The major findings of the study were Age and by levels of peer pressure revealed that pattern of peer pressure was same for all the age group of adolescents. Birth order and by levels of peer pressure was found to be high among Fourth Born compare to first born, second born and third born adolescents. Family income and by levels of peer pressure revealed that pattern of peer pressure was same for all the family income group of adolescents. Mother's education and by levels of peer pressure revealed that pattern of peer pressure was same for the entire mother's education group of adolescents. Mother's occupation and levels of peer pressure among adolescents revealed that working women adolescent's children had higher levels of peer pressure compared to their home maker adolescents children. Levels of peer pressure among gender revealed that males had higher levels of peer pressure compared to females. Finally, the implications of the study were found to be adolescents can be educated on the pros and cons of Peer Pressure and how it impacts their choices and decisions and eventually, their life. Also, adolescents can be taught coping skills which will ensure a better and healthy life style for them.

Keywords: *Peer Pressure, Adolescent and Gender*

Peer comes from the Latin word 'par' which means equal. Basically, when you are on par with someone, you are their peer. For example, if you are a 10th standard students, other 10th graders from the same or different school are your peers. So, your peers can be of the same age group who comes from similar educational backgrounds; share the same job responsibilities and more or less the same salary. Peers play a crucial role in a child's social and emotional development by shaping his/her normative beliefs and interpretation of information regarding risk activities. Their influence begins at an early age and increases through the teenage. It is natural, healthy and important for children to have

¹Professor, Department of Psychology, Indian Academy Degree College (Autonomous), Bangalore, India

²Asst. Professor, Department of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bangalore, India

³Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), Bangalore, India

**Responding Author*

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and rely on friends as they grow and mature. Peers can be positive and supportive. They can help each other develop new skills, or stimulate interest in books, music or extra-curricular activities. However, peers can also have a negative influence. They can encourage each other to skip classes, steal, cheat, use drugs or alcohol, or become involved in other risky behaviors. In behavioral health, a peer is usually referred to someone who shares the experience of living with a psychiatric disorder or addiction. In that narrow context, two people living with those conditions are peers. Adolescence is a transitional stage of physical and psychological development between childhood and adulthood, the cultural purpose of which involves preparation to assume adult roles. Adolescence starts from 11-12 years to 19-21 years old.

Biologically, adolescence is marked by the onset of puberty and the termination of physical growth spurts and puberty changes (sexual maturation) and characteristics including height, weight, muscle mass, as well as a time for major changes in brain growth and maturation. Cognitively, adolescence is characterized by improvement in abstract thinking, in knowledge and in logical reasoning. Socially, adolescence is a period of preparation for culturally adequate social adult roles such as being a worker or a romantic partner. It is such a dramatic 'changing' phase; and the greatest changes in the brain volumetric areas responsible for self-control, judgment, emotions, and organization, develop between puberty and adulthood. This explains the poor decision-making, recklessness, and emotional outbursts that characterize teenage behavior. So, adolescent brain development can be consciously controlled by adolescent themselves: those who learn and train to organize their thoughts, understand abstract concepts, and control their impulses. Even, Ryan (2000) cited gossip, teasing, and humor as the predominant ways of enforcing norms among adolescent girls. In another realm, boys who were high on anti-social behavior also used humor to encourage anti-social behavior by laughing when a friend joked about deviant or illegal activities.

Peer Pressure is a really common experience for young people. It is a part of everyday life, and one doesn't think about it while it is happening. Although most of us like to believe that it is just limited to certain categories of youth groups, it is a common part of adulthood, especially young adults. A simple definition of Peer Pressure is the encouragement or distress placed on one individual from another of the same social group with the expected result of conformity. So, it is basically the pressure which is felt from other age-mates to do something (in most cases, harmful) for self and others. According to Meulman (2000) found that the degree to which pre-adolescents as well as adolescents associate with parents and peers in their leisure time. The researchers found that boys from higher social classes strongly focused on peer groups whereas girls of the same age had a stronger preference for dyadic friendships. Since boys generally have more freedom of movement in peer groups than the girls do, they were more frequently found in public with their peer groups. Girls were more likely to hang out in their homes. Interestingly, the researchers found that teenage girls from lower social class encountered the most parental attention concerning peer contacts. Group norms were communicated differently among boys and girls. Although Peer Pressure does not necessarily have to be negative, the term 'pressure' implies that the process influences people to do things that may be resistant to, or might not otherwise chose to do. So usually the term 'Peer Pressure' is used when people are talking about behaviors that are not considered socially acceptable or desirable. Researchers like Hoffman, Monge, Chou, and Valente (2007) susceptibility to peer pressure may vary by gender and race. Peer group influence also varies by individual characteristics including genetics, which could influence exposure to substance-using friends (Cleveland, Wiebe, Rowe, 2005); and personal

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attributes such as competency skills (Epstein, 2007); or perceptions of personal harm due to smoking (Rodriguez, 2007). Other researchers Ellickson, Perlman & Klein (2003) found peer pressure on smoking may be moderated by strong social bonds to school and family. Nadine Lanctot & Marc Le Blanc (2002) theorized that deviance is composed of the same types of problems and behaviors for females as for males and that the gender gap was more of a difference in degree. In a study Brown et al., (1986) stated that no differences between adolescent boys and girls were observed on peer pressure assessing antisocial or neural activities. Some of the main causes of Peer Pressure are related to age-appropriate behavior. Adolescents develop a strong desire to fit in with their peers and be accepted by them. This desire makes adolescent peer pressure tough to resist. Also, poor self-esteem and low levels of self-confidence, and rising communication gap between parents and their children, are consistently identified as factors in peer pressure that lead to risky and destructive behaviors. One's need for acceptance by another individual or social group can cause a change in their state of harmony resulting in conformity. According to Erikson (1968), Hartup (1983), Steinberg & Silverberg (1987) peer groups influence adolescent socialization and identity by allowing young person's to explore individual interests and uncertainties while retaining a sense of belonging and continuity within a group of friends. Sadly, the need for acceptance can arguably overpower one's own morality or confidence, creating a shift in identity to match that required by his or her peers. Individuals often picture themselves in certain social groups; it is possible that they believe they should be a member of certain peer groups based on attractive features such as beauty, intelligence, coolness or strength. Individuals who suffer internal conflicts between meeting social needs and maintaining a sense of self may not recognize the impacts of social conformity.

Peer Pressure starts when kids start growing older and have a sense of the world, and an opinion to go with it. Some are smart enough to ward off trouble when it comes to the wrong kind of pressure, while others sadly get sucked into such circles, often because they find it very difficult to oppose it. Social influence of others is a continuing process that can be seen as a basis of individuals' socialization across the life span. Arguably, one of the most important periods and one marked by remarkable and rapid changes is adolescence. During this period, the concept of peer influence is related to a mutual influence process known as peer contagion through which peers become increasingly similar over time in different characteristics. According to Forgas & Williams (2001); Kameda, Takezawa, & Hastie (2005) group membership (e.g. family, school, peer) is a particularly powerful socializing experience and people often change their perceptions, opinions, and behaviour to be consistent with standards or expectations (norms) of the group. A young person can experience peer pressure in varying degrees. Sometimes their peers may proactively influence them to behave in certain ways and at other times they may be just following along. Both of these situations are based on seeking approval, but it is also possible for peer pressure to be a result of bullying. Similarly, Berkman (2000) social influence is the effect others have on individual and group attitudes and behaviours. So, social influences on adolescent smoking are exerted through social context, social networks, and group membership that operate mainly on social norms. This is when your child fears being teased or physically hurt for not conforming. Therefore, by the taking cue from the above studies the present researchers are interested to study the peer pressure among adolescents.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

1. To study the association between age and levels of peer pressure among adolescents.

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2. To study the association between birth order and levels of peer pressure among adolescents.
3. To study the association between family income and levels of peer pressure among adolescents.
4. To study the association between mothers education and levels of peer pressure among adolescents.
5. To study the significant difference between mothers occupation and levels of peer pressure among adolescents.
6. To study the significant difference between levels of peer pressure among gender.

Hypotheses

- H₀₁:** There is no association between age and levels of peer pressure among adolescents.
- H₀₂:** There is no association between birth order and levels of peer pressure among adolescents.
- H₀₃:** There is no association between family income and levels of peer pressure among adolescents.
- H₀₄:** There is no association between mother's education and levels of peer pressure among adolescents.
- H₀₅:** There is no significant difference between mother's occupation and levels of peer pressure among adolescents.
- H₀₆:** There is no significant difference between levels of peer pressure among gender.

Variables

The variables that will be measured in this study are:

1. Levels of peer Pressure
2. Demographic variables

Sample and Techniques

Non-probability Purposive sampling technique was incorporated in the study.

Sample Distribution

N- 123	Adolescents	
	Boys (N = 67)	Girls (N = 56)
Age	16 - 21 years	16 - 21 years
Geographic Location	Urban	Urban

Tools for the study

1. **Socio Demographic Performa** was specially designed profile for collecting information about socio-demographic details of the study sample prepared by the researcher. It has information such as age, sex, birth order, mother's education, family income, parent's occupation.
2. **Peer Pressure Scale** by Singh & Saini (2010) was selected to measure the level of peer pressure among students. This scale is standardized mainly on the undergraduate students and suitable for Indian conditions. Peer Pressure Scale is a self-report five-point Likert scale consisting of 25 items for measuring the peer pressure in adolescents aged 16 years to 21 years. The scale focuses on peer pressure related to drinking, gambling, violence, risky behavior, and gang activities. The scale is reliable and has good face validity and content validity.

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Analysis of the Data

Descriptive statistics, Chi-square and independent t test was incorporated using SPSS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Distribution of the selected sample by Age and by levels of peer pressure results of Chi-square tests.

Variable		Levels of Peer Pressure			Test Statistics	
		Low	Moderate	High		
Age	15 years	F	2	0	1	X ₂ =.248; p>.36
		%	3.6%	0%	5%	
	16 years	F	11	13	6	
		%	19.6%	27.7%	30%	
	17 years	F	15	13	8	
		%	26.8%	27.7%	40%	
	18 years	F	8	8	3	
		%	14.3%	17%	15%	
	19 years	F	5	7	2	
		%	8.9%	14.9%	10%	
	20 years	F	13	5	0	
		%	23.2%	10.6%	0%	
	21 years	F	2	0	0	
		%	3.6%	0%	0%	
22 years	F	0	1	0		
	%	0%	2.1%	0%		

Age and by levels of peer pressure: From the table 1 it was clear that a non-significant association was observed between age and levels of Peer Pressure (X₂=.248; p>.36), revealing that pattern of peer pressure was same for all the age group of adolescents studied.

Table 2 Distribution of the selected sample by Birth order and by levels of peer pressure results of Chi-square tests.

Variable		Levels of Peer Pressure			Test Statistics	
		Low	Moderate	High		
Birth Order	First Born	F	12	9	1	X ₂ =.239; P<.02
		%	21.4%	19.1%	5%	
	Second Born	F	19	12	10	
		%	33.9%	25.5%	50%	
	Third Born	F	2	9	5	
		%	3.6%	19.1%	25%	
	Fourth Born	F	23	17	4	
		%	41.1%	36.2%	20%	

Birth order and by levels of peer pressure: From the table 2 it was clear that to peer pressure was found to be more among Fourth Born adolescents, were 41.1% in terms of experiencing low peer pressure, 36.2% in terms of moderate peer pressure and 20% in terms of experiencing high levels of peer pressure. However there were variations in other order of born adolescents. Chi-square test revealed a significant association between birth order and

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levels of peer pressure among adolescents. ($X_2=.239$; $P<.02$). Therefore, the results were statistically significant rejecting the null hypothesis.

Table 3 Distribution of the selected sample by family income and by levels of peer pressure results of Chi-square tests.

Variable			Levels of Peer Pressure			Test Statistics
			Low	Moderate	High	
Family Income	1 - 2 Lakhs	F	3	7	3	$X_2=.265$; $P>.13$
		%	5.4%	14.9%	15%	
	2 - 5 Lakhs	F	8	11	2	
		%	14.3%	23.4%	10%	
	5 - 10 Lakhs	F	18	12	5	
		%	32.1%	25.5%	25%	
	10 - 15 Lakhs	F	5	3	1	
		%	8.9%	6.4%	5%	
	50 K - 1 Lakh	F	8	3	5	
		%	14.3%	6.4%	25%	
	Below - 50 k	F	3	3	4	
		%	5.4%	6.4%	20%	
	Above - 15 Lakhs	F	11	8	0	
		%	19.6%	17%	0%	

Family income and by levels of peer pressure: From the table 3 it was clear that a non-significant association was observed between family income and levels of Peer Pressure ($X_2=.265$; $p>.13$), revealing that pattern of peer pressure was same for all the family income group of adolescents studied.

Table 4 Distribution of the selected sample by mother's education and by levels of peer pressure results of Chi-square tests.

Variable			Levels of Peer Pressure			Test Statistics
			Low	Moderate	High	
Mother's Education	Arts	F	10	6	1	$X_2=.158$; $P>.41$
		%	17.9%	12.8%	5%	
	Commerce	F	1	3	0	
		%	1.8%	6.4%	0%	
	Science	F	42	36	19	
		%	75%	76.6%	95%	
	Other Streams	F	3	2	0	
		%	5.4%	4.3%	0%	

Mother's education and by levels of peer pressure: From the table 4 it was clear that a non-significant association was observed between mother's education and levels of Peer Pressure ($X_2=.158$; $p>.41$), revealing that pattern of peer pressure was same for the entire mother's education group of adolescents studied.

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Table 5 Independent t test of mother's occupation and levels of peer pressure among adolescents

Peer Pressure	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	t	p-value
Home maker	90	61.43	14.79	2.71	121	2.01	.04
Working Women	33	55.97	12.74				

Note: ** $p < 0.05$ Levels

From the table 5 an independent sample *t*-test was conducted to compare the differences mother's occupation and levels of peer pressure among adolescents. The results revealed that there was a significant difference in the scores of mother's occupation and levels of peer pressure among home maker ($M=61.43, SD, 14.79$) and working women ($M=55.97, SD, 12.74$) indicating that working women adolescents children had a higher levels of peer pressure compared to their home maker adolescents children counterpart. Statistically significant at ($t=2.01, p < 0.05$) levels. Therefore, rejecting the null hypothesis.

Table 6 Independent t test of between levels of peer pressure among gender

Peer Pressure	N	Mean	SD	SE	df	t	p-value
Males	67	62.33	14.52	2.57	121	2.01	.04
Females	56	57.14	13.91				

Note: ** $p < 0.05$ Levels

From the table 5 an independent sample *t*-test was conducted to compare the differences mother's occupation and levels of peer pressure among gender. The results revealed that there was a significant difference in the scores of males and females and levels of peer pressure among Males ($M=62.33, SD, 14.52$) and Females ($M=57.14, SD, 13.91$) indicating that males had a higher levels of peer pressure compared to females. Statistically significant at ($t=2.01, p < 0.05$) levels. Therefore, rejecting the null hypothesis. In as study Meulman (2000) found that boys from higher social classes strongly focused on peer groups whereas girls of the same age had a stronger preference for dyadic friendships. Since boys generally have more freedom of movement in peer groups than the girls do, they were more frequently found in public with their peer groups. Girls were more likely to hang out in their homes. There was also study contradicting to the above findings they are as follows. Brown et al., (1986) stated that no differences between adolescent boys and girls were observed on peer pressure assessing antisocial or neural activities.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Age and by levels of peer pressure revealed that pattern of peer pressure was same for all the age group of adolescents.
2. Birth order and by levels of peer pressure was found to be high among Fourth Born compare to first born, second born and third born adolescents.
3. Family income and by levels of peer pressure revealed that pattern of peer pressure was same for all the family income group of adolescents.
4. Mother's education and by levels of peer pressure revealed that pattern of peer pressure was same for the entire mother's education group of adolescents.
5. Mother's occupation and levels of peer pressure among adolescents revealed that working women adolescent's children had higher levels of peer pressure compared to their home maker adolescents children.
6. Levels of peer pressure among gender revealed that males had higher levels of peer pressure compared to females.

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Implications of the Study

1. The findings from this study has thrown a new light to the existing understanding of how Peer Pressure influences the adolescents with respect to age, gender, birth order, stream of education, family income and mother's occupation.
2. The adolescents can be educated on the pros and cons of Peer Pressure and how it impacts their choices and decisions and eventually, their life.
3. The adolescents can be taught coping skills which will ensure a better and healthy life style for them.
4. The results of the study can be used in finding helpful measures to avoid negative impact and to encourage positive influences.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. The study can be further extended by taking larger sample and cultural group into consideration.
2. The study can also be done on vernacular language speaking students.
3. The study can be further expanded by considering students from the rural backdrop.
4. The study can also include the population from learning disability spectrum.

CONCLUSIONS

The study can conclude by giving the importance of Peer Pressure in the present scenario and how it impacts their choices and decisions eventually, their life. Therefore, giving them a suitable counseling and guidance Programme, in order to help them from their peers and adjust to the social, school, and college environments. Finally, the guidance program works well only if all the stakeholders like schools, college, parents and teachers are included for educating the adolescents in order for a smooth transition to their adulthood stage of development.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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