

Research Paper

## Peer Pressure and Peer Influence in Children and Adolescence

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### ABSTRACT

Peers are the important component of life of every person, with them we grow, learn, imitate from each other. Many times adolescence are comfortable to share ideas and thought whether it is for good or bad which are uncomfortable to share with parents in their peer group. Generally, children imitate the behavior of their peers and follow the rules of group where they can be fitted in the group and also to feel the sense of belonging. In this process they learn many things like smoking cigarette, drinking alcohol, bunking classes, maintaining girlfriend or boyfriend, using mobile etc. so that they can show off as a mature adult. This is the stage where influences of parents and teachers are less and more influence by peers but it is also true that peers influence and peer pressures are not always desirable. This is the stage where parents and teachers need to be very careful because higher number of adolescence learn to watch Pornography and Sexual activities from mobile, showing disobedience towards teacher and parents, bullying others, eve-teasing, stealing, cheating, destructing, aggressing, doing risky things or breaking rules, passing on nasty comments, taunting etc. Some management techniques like talking to student, making plan for future, provide appropriate information they needed, sharing our own ideas and experience, teaching how to be assertive etc. will be helpful to them.

**Keywords:** *Peer pressure, Peer influence, Children, Adolescence.*

There is no denying the fact that young people are more influenced by their friends than their teachers or parents. They spend more time with their friends. It is quite natural for them to get influenced by the people they spend time with (Practice, 2015). Parents are the biggest influence on children during the first few years of their life because young children don't get many opportunities to interact with the world outside their family (Maccoby, 2000). When they begin to attend school, their friends begin to play a more important role in their life. Young children want to dress and behave like their friends. Friends exert an even bigger influence on teenagers. Teens tend to have a rebellious streak in them. They seek freedom and hate it when parents or teachers try to impose restrictions on them. They find the company of their friends more attractive because people of the same age groups have similar needs, interests and tastes. Parents and teachers often assume the role of advisors. They are well-meaning; unfortunately, teens hate advice. The huge generation gap between children and their parents do not help the situation either. Teenagers today have

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access to a lot of things that their parents didn't have when they were young. At this age, boys and girls experience an irresistible need to fit in with their group. This need encourages them to adopt the beliefs and behaviors of their friends. Since parents and teachers do not always agree with them, they find solace in the company of their friends.

In a world like this where we meet so many people every day, it's difficult to have an opinion of our own. The most important thing in this world for people is acceptance, most of the people in this world want to be rich and famous and if you ask them why, they will say "i'll be respected in the society." and being respected is a sort of acceptance which people want that. Teens nowadays want to emulate their peers. They are looking for ways to separate from their families and begin to define themselves as individuals. To that end, they turn to friends for guidance and direction. They tend to mimic their peers' behaviors and adopt the same attitudes. Conforming to social norms helps them redefine themselves while earning them acceptance and approval. Fitting in simply feels good as for parent's opinions are concerned, teens know it that their parents always mean good but following that kind of advice makes feel like the rest of the kids in the block they want to be different and get appreciated for that. That's where the actual problem comes in. Many teens start smoking and drinking with their peers just for their peer acceptance and to look sort of "cool" in front of everyone. Friends can also have a positive influence on a teen's life, especially if that friend has a commitment to succeeding. Two friends who spend frequent time together can push each other toward academic and sports-related goals, making both of them more successful. Getting influenced by people in general is like a double-edged sword. That will either make you or break you. For many parents, the truth is hard to admit: Adolescents begin to rely less and more heavily on their peers. Starting to let go is difficult.

### *Needs and requirements of peer influence:*

- 1. Learn through imitation:** Children and adolescents get to learn by imitating each other whatever good or bad, they see how to behave, how to talk, how to dress, work. Even they learn the way to express their feeling, emotions and aggression. If they got good company, they learn many good things in their lives from their friends and leads to great achievement in academics, sports, extracurricular activities which are very much required for a person in their survival. It is vice versa if they get bad companion and imitates bad behaviours and activities.
- 2. Sense of belonging:** Many times, adolescence feel comfort to share their experience to their close friends who are of their age group or having certain similar traits like classmates, studying in same school, belong to the same place, being neighbors etc. Many times, we can't deny the fact that children or adolescence do not share everything to their parents or teachers as they do not feel a sense of comfortless. There are many things in life which they feel comfort sharing their experience only to their peers and not to their parents and teachers. For instance, liking of some boyfriend or girlfriend, comments about a teacher, or making fun of someone, inappropriate jokes or pet jokes which they don't feel comfortable sharing with teachers and parents and can only be shared with their peers and that develops a sense of belongingness.
- 3. Become more assertive, try new activities.:** Young adolescents develops more confidence and belief in himself confining with their peers. If the group members encourage him for certain activities, for instance academic homework, sports, seminar, topic discussion and feel support whenever got insecure from their peer groups and feel happy. At times when they are in distress and feel insulted, they get

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emotional support from their peers and it becomes one of the coping mechanisms in their life.

- 4. Choosing the same clothes, hairstyle or jewellery as their friends:** Adolescents feel mature by wearing the same clothes, changing their hairstyle and wearing jewellery as their friends do. They feel a sense of updating themselves according to time and new generation. Wearing outdated clothes, traditional hairstyle, jewellery makes them feel a sense of old traditional people. They want to get change and do something different which was not the old tradition. By doing so they feel a sense of individuality and identity and also want to show that they are different now and also can perform more better than the older generation. This kind of activities is encouraged and accepted by their peer group.
- 5. Listening to the same music or watching the same TV shows as their friends:** Youngsters prefer to listen to the same music particularly western songs, pop, rock and roll, metallica and rap. By doing so they feel they are different and feel proud of themselves. They feel a sense of belongingness to each other and also indirectly convey the message to their parent and teachers that they are more stylish, fashionable and up to date with the current trends of society.
- 6. Changing the way they talk, or the words they use:** Youngsters are impressionable and copy language and style of talking which they hear in movies and role models in the form of movie stars. By doing so their command in language improves. They have common role models like film stars, actors and actresses which are acceptable by their group. They are so much influenced by their role models that they copy and start speaking among themselves and derive a sense of pride.
- 7. Working harder at school:** Peer influence are very necessary in the life of everyone. They imitate and learn among themselves. They also learn to contest in academics, sports, extra-curricular activities etc. By doing so they start competition and try to achieve more better than others do. This in turn improves their skills, knowledge, efficiency which are important in their future life.

### *Negative Impact of Peer pressure:*

Peer pressure or influence is when you do something you wouldn't otherwise do, because you want to feel accepted and valued by your friends. Peer pressure or influence is when you do something you wouldn't otherwise do, because you want to feel accepted and valued by your friends.

- 1. Mobile addiction:** Young adolescents used to have mobile of their own as fashion. Smart phones in particular is very impressive to them as it has multiple facilities, they keep on playing video games like PUB G, which has the potential to pose risk in their life. Whenever they get free time, they keep on watching movies, YouTube, adult pictures for hours on end. Binge watching is also a factor which leads to mobile addiction.
- 2. Smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol:** Youngsters in order to conform to group norms engage in health risk behavior such as smoking and drinking. They consider it a sign of a sign of maturity. They feel proud, mature independent and feel equal to adults.
- 3. Bunking classes/ truancy:** Bunking classes can be common amongst adolescents. They feel proud and happy as it accepted by their peer group. Usually, they bunk classes which are not interesting to them and prefer to go to theatre for watching movies. Slowly and gradually, this kind of activity turns into a habit and dramatically harms their career and future progress in the domain of academics.

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- 4. Peer and romantic relationship:** Young adolescence learn of indulging romantic relationship from their peers. They become so much curious of knowing what is romance and also feel happy of discussing about their boyfriend/girlfriend. They feel excited to share their experience in the group as this is the first experience of their life. They learn about how the opposite sex talk, dress, socializing etc. They also learn to maintain friendship with the opposite sex and learn about dating.
- 5. Pornography and Sexual activities:** Young adolescence at this stage start watching pornographic films and videos and develop curiosity about sexual activity. Even if one is not interested in pornography, they start indulging in such activities due to peer pressure and to oblige the group.
- 6. Disobedience towards teacher and parents:** At this stage they learn to disobey parents and teachers and more accepting of what their peer group suggest and decide. They are highly influenced by the opinions of the peers and less influenced by their elders in the form of parents and teachers. They are of the opinion that their elders are only there to give advice and suggestion and not more.
- 7. Bullying:** Bullying is a major concern amongst adolescent youth. They learn bullying behavior from their peers to gain acceptance within their peer group. Their fear and apprehension of being isolated from their peer group compels them to indulge in bullying behavior.
- 8. Eve-teasing:** They learn how to pass negative comments towards the opposite sex from their peers and derive pleasure from it. They indulge in hooting and pass derogatory comments in order to feel a sense of belongingness with their peer group.
- 9. Delinquency:** Delinquent behavior amongst adolescent youth is a growing concern which manifests in aberrant behavior such as stealing, cheating and destruction of public property. Often such behavior is learned from peer group members who provide encouragement which intern fuels a vicious cycle of destructive and socially unacceptable behavior.

### *Consequences:*

- 1. Lost of self-confidence:** If the peer group discourages to participate in any activities in school or college may be sports, cultural activities, public talk, discussion etc.
- 2. Academic are affected:** when the peer group are not interested of academics and in study then the adolescent also lost interest in academics so as to get adjusted in the group.
- 3. Dangerous habits:** Likewise, the peer group do adolescent easily imitate such unwanted behavior and adopted such behavior which may harm themselves or others.
- 4. Feel ashamed about themselves and about family:** Adolescents always compare themselves with others peers group who are from well-established background and if they are unable to afford the demand of the group then they feel ashamed and also feel shy of telling about the actual sinario of family to their peers.
- 5. Distances them from family:** It is common for teenagers to think that nobody understands them and that the whole world is against them (Anweshan, 2018).
- 6. Self harm and suicide ideation:** Sometimes the peer pressure on teenagers are so intense that they are simply not able to avoid them and that leads to self harm or may have suicidal ideas(Padma, 2014).

### *Factors of Peer influence:*

**1. Lack of time of parents to interact with their kids:**

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century both parents are so busy in work and earning. They don't have quality time to devote for children this makes teenagers to get influence more by peers are less by parents.

**2. Lack of guidance from teachers/parents:**

Parents/ teacher are not able to guide each and everything of teenagers. This may be because parents/ teachers are unable to guide every phase of teenagers as they are unable to understand the problems of teenagers. So many a times teenagers feels that their peer groups are right persons to guide and support whenever there is any issue/problems which leads to more influence by peers.

**3. Encourage bad behavior and bad companies:**

Parents unknowingly feel happy and proud when teenagers start friendship with many peers in a good sense but on contrary, they forgot to check how many of the peers are on right track or wrong track such as smoking, drinking alcohol, gambling etc. Such kind of an encouragement from parents may lead to influence by peers.

**4. Not listening what the teenagers want:**

Many times, it is happening that parents/teachers don't listen or give proper attention to their child. This leads to feel a confidence in children/ teenagers that parents/ teachers can't understand their problems and it would be the waste of time to them. This leads to feel more comfortable to share among their peer group and later on influence more by the peers.

**5. Age gap of parents and teenagers:**

The experience which the parents/ teachers got and whatever they learnt in their early life are quite different to what the teenagers face. So, whatever the guidance provided by parents/ teachers are not suitable for their children/ teenagers and this leads to influence more by peer group.

**6. Unable to fulfill the demands of teenagers:**

In a simple middle class family parents are unable to afford the lavilious lifestyle of the peers like costly smart phone, bikes, dresses, eating lunch/dinner in big restaurant etc. Whenever teenagers experience some of their peers are having all those stuffs which they like, that makes attractive and get influence more by their peers more than the parents.

**7. Emotional insecurity:**

Parents/teachers can't be all the time with teenagers and also not possible to secure them when and where needed. So, teenagers feel more secure towards their peers because peers can be all the time with them and support them.

**8. Negligence of teachers and parents:**

Sometimes willingly or unwillingly it is happening that parents/ teachers unable to care and console teenagers. This leads to more influence by their peers as they require some support being a human being.

**9. Feeling that parents or teacher can't understand their problems:**

After a prolong negligence, avoidance and care teenagers start feeling that their problem is impossible to understand by parents / teachers and possibly can be understand by their peers as they have the same traits and age group.

**10. Seeking to get liberty and free from all foundations:**

Many teenagers are not happy with does and don't of their parents/teachers. They want to get some new experience which is different than the routine activities in life. They want to get more liberty and to live freely likewise some of their peers do. So, this gives more incline towards peer influence than parents/teachers.

### **11. Curious to know some new experience of life:**

Teenagers feel very curious to know and want to experience to have boyfriend/girlfriend, go for dating, watching movie, smoking etc. If some of their friend share the experience of having boyfriend/girlfriend and what had happened in dating such kind of information's are very attractive to teenagers and that makes to incline more towards the peer influence.

### **12. Same age group and need of companion:**

It is the human nature and tendency that one cannot live alone. In order to feel secure and support they need someone who are in the same age and same traits, these factors make the teenagers to get influence more by peer groups.

### **13. Believe and acceptable easily what peers told:**

As the peers groups are in the same age, same education, same problem etc. whatever the information provided by their peers whether it is right or wrong it doesn't matter but the information are more acceptable and believable in teenagers. This leads to influence and incline more towards peer.

### **14. To pass time:**

Teenagers as they grown up, they require someone to be with them and it is possible only with their peers. This makes teenagers to pass time by sharing, chatting in mobile/phone whenever feel alone so that makes influence by peers.

### **15. Impress by their looks and style:**

Teenagers prefer new looks and dressing style which looks something different from the old and traditional style. This may be in terms of hair cutting, dressing, ways of talking, working, eating etc. These kind of feelings and impressions are incline more towards the peers.

### **Warning signs of peer pressure which parents require to know (Peer pressure and influence: teenagers, 2019):**

- Low moods, tearfulness or feelings of hopelessness
- Aggression or antisocial behaviour that's not usual for your child
- Sudden changes in behaviour, often for no obvious reason
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep or waking early
- Loss of appetite or over-eating
- Reluctance to go to school
- Withdrawal from activities your child used to like
- Statements about wanting to give up, or life not being worth living.

### ***Techniques which can be overcome from peer pressure:***

- 1. Build up self-esteem and confidence:** Children who have strong self-esteem are better at resisting negative peer pressure and influence. They should encourage and teach to say no if they feel that something unwanted things are going to happen. They should encourage to do something new which can lead their life a successful. Parents and teachers required to motivate teenagers to develop more confidence and self-esteem which they can take up their own decision.
- 2. Keep the lines of communication open:** Parents and teacher should not show teenagers that they are busy and do not have time to concern and discuss about their problems. Show curiosity to know about them more ask what is going on in schools, friends, study etc. every day. Try to talk to them and be frank and open so that they can open up their feelings and start sharing to you.

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3. **Give teenagers a way out:** Give time to teenagers and try to solve their issues and problems they face. Once parents and teacher start helping and trying to show some way out then definitely teenagers will build confidence and will start sharing their problems whenever they are on trap. They will start believing that their parents or teacher will solve their problems and start believing as a good friend on the earth.
4. **Encourage a wide social network:** If the teenagers are confining only in one group, then the scope of changing and thinking broadly will be limited and the support also will be limited but if teenagers have the chance to develop friendships from many sources, like from gym, club, sports, family friends then he will get lots of support from many sources when he goes to wrong direction.
5. **Peer pressure and peer influence:** Whenever you think teenagers friendship are more and over than what is require then give yourself a time to your family spend time with your kids ask what are the negative pressure from friends or anything unwanted things ask by friends etc. will definitely help to resolve and guide in right direction.
6. **Positive relationship:** Parents should maintain good relationship with teenagers and also stop criticizing all the time. If parents criticize then teenagers will not open up their feelings and will scare to share to parents. If parents maintain positive relationship, then teenagers will share their peer pressure freely and openly so as to seek help from parents.
7. **Judgment:** If the parents are judgmental then teenagers won't share their problems of peer pressure or may be more influence by peers. Always keep the opinion broad and non-judgmental. Suggest what is what properly, tell them clearly what is right and what is wrong to them. Make them realize and give an opportunity to choose of his own.
8. **Talk to students:** Teachers should talk to students just like a friend, should show them they are capable enough to resolve any issue. Should ask to open up whatever peer pressure are there and assure them that confidentiality will be maintain.
9. **Make a Plan:** Help the teenagers to get rid of peer pressure, tell them the ways to get out with little consequences. Parents or teacher should guide them to ring up whenever they are in problem which can lead them to get out of peer pressure without facing much problem.
10. **Apply your own positive pressure:** Teenagers basically they try to get please from parents or teacher. Parents should remember that if they keep on pleasing them then they won't progress much in life. So, better give them assignment encourage for study without wasting much time. Remind them about their career and about their goal in life.
11. **Provide information they need:** Please don't expect that teenagers knows every things, they need to know many things in life. Provide knowledge about drugs, alcohol, unprotected sex etc. which are very important to know for them. They may not like such conversation but still parents or teacher has to inform so as to get knowledge and able to take their own decision maturely.
12. **Set Limitations:** Parents require to make certain limitations for teenagers like when they go out from home. Teenagers should be taught when to come back home, instruct mom and dad are waiting for dinner, lunch etc. Parents will be worried if they come late so on because this kind of limitations will keep on maintaining the importance of parents and also feel secure that someone is there who care for me and love me.
13. **Show confidence:** It is important for parents or teacher to show confidence towards teenagers. Let them to play their own path. Encourage them, believe them and

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motivate them that they can do it. These believe will take responsibility for their choice and develop confidence.

- 14. Ask for help if necessary:** Suggest teenagers to seek help if someone bullying, don't simply wait to go away the situation because it may be worsened later. They should reach out to parents, teacher or counselor for help.
- 15. Choose friends carefully:** Parents should encourage teenagers to choose friends carefully as teenagers are inclined more towards bad companies than good companies. At this stage they are impressed towards new learning and test like smoking, drinking alcohol etc. They should be taught all these habits are bad and not good for health and better to leave those friends who has the habits of smoking and drinking.
- 16. It is okay to be alone:** It is the human nature that a person can't stay alone without friends but if the friends are pressurizing to smoke or drink or to do some risky behaviors then it is okay to be alone instead of making friends and spoiling the career and health.
- 17. Walking Away:** Teach teenagers to say "no" even though it is very hard to do so but it can be done once if you look inside yourself, our feelings, your belief about right and wrong. Inner strength and confidence will make you firm in your belief and your capabilities. These will help you to resist from doing unwanted activities.
- 18. Provide Opportunity to come at home:** Encouraging your child friends to come at home so that you can get a chance to check on whether negative peer pressure and influence is an issue for your child. Good communication and a positive relationship with your child might also encourage your child to talk to you if she's feeling negative influence from peers.
- 19. Assertive towards your child:** Talk to your child about the behavior you don't like rather than criticizing others because it is possible to change our own child rather than changing others child but talk and communicate in such a way that teenagers should accept it instead of getting negativism or vice versa.

## DISCUSSION

In a study of students studying at Ethiopia more than one sixth of the high school and university students smoke cigarette. Students who had peer pressure from their friends were more likely to smoke cigarette. Therefore, school-based intervention programs are needed to reduce the high prevalence of cigarette smoking among students in Ethiopia (Leshargie et al, 2019). Over time, in both cohorts, the percentage of never smokers decreased sharply and the percentage of regular smokers increased rapidly. Peer influence and peer selection influenced smoking behavior. However, peer selection influenced the youngest group, both processes influenced the middle age group and only peer influence influenced the oldest. Best friend and friends had a stronger impact on the younger while friends and same grade students had a stronger impact on the older. Prevention programs should regard these differences of interpersonal influences through adolescent development and specific strategies for different age groups should be considered (Vitoria, 2019). The influence of peers is widely held as a significant factor in child and adolescent development. As health care providers seek ways to improve the health of children and adolescents, peer pressure must be examined (Pittman, 2019). In a study of the combined influence of parental monitoring, community monitoring and exposure to substance-using peers on early-onset alcohol use in a sample of American Indian adolescents in three Pacific Northwest tribal communities. American Indian youth between ages 8 and 16 years at the time of consent. The effects of parental monitoring and community monitoring, mediated by friends' substance use, were examined in terms of youth alcohol use outcomes. Parental monitoring



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practices and contagion in peer substance use were proximal predictors of early-onset alcohol use and the mediating effect of friends' substance use was not significant. Community monitoring accounted for unique variance in affiliation with substance-using friends (Boyd-Ball, 2014).

In many studies it was found that Peer pressure and family environment certainly plays a very important role in determining the inclination, initiation and practices towards alcohol consumption. Parents toward future of children, parental satisfaction with academic performance, approval of career choice by father, use of any other substance by a family member, working status of the mother, bullying at school, peer pressure, use of internet, duration of internet use, use of social sites and involvement in sexual activity to be risk factors for depression among adolescents (Singh, Gupta & Grover, 2017; Kaur et al., 2015). In another study of Bishwalata and Raleng (2014) in Manipur it was found that Inhalant abuse of adolescents due to peers pressure or influence offers a distinct challenge to parents as well as the health care provider. They need to become more aware of the extent of the problem, the substances commonly abused and its health consequences. The authors also recommend that State Government should take up initiative and incorporate the problem and the adverse health effects of inhalants use in the school curriculum as early as the primary level. There is also a need to advocate for the replacement of dangerous and psychoactive substances in common products with less harmful alternative. Some students at the age of 11 years old are seen playing cards games, stickers, stamps, dice tricks in schools in Manipur. They usually gamble for fun and enjoyment during the lunch break or after school. Some students perhaps gamble with no prize or with no value. However, this will further lead to gambling. So, adolescents may start gambling at the very early age i.e., 11 years old or of grade 5 despite of not reaching legal age to gamble (Gonmei, 2016).

### CONCLUSION

Peers influence and peers pressures are natural process, it is require for every person to improve their skills, career, to impart knowledge, to develop confidence. Peers teach us many things in life which parents and teachers can't teach in family and schools. If teenagers mingle with those peers who are ambitious, well behaved, maintain discipline then they imitate those good qualities and become successful in life and progress more in career. Apart from that peers also teach many bad habits like smoking, bulling, eve teasing, drinking alcohol, bucking classes, gambling, dating etc. which are not good for a students and teenagers. These kinds of bad habits badly impact the career and a student starts at their early age as much as 11 years old according to study. So, parents and teachers require lots of exercises to be done for the safety and restrain from those bad companies or peers in order to safeguard the youth and to safe the future nation. There are also many techniques which parents and teachers can apply like giving appropriate time, provide information, build up rapport, teach assertive techniques, build up confidence etc. Just to add from all the studies of peers pressure it can be concluded that peers pressure has good and bad of its own but comparatively bad influences and bad pressure are more so teenagers has to be very careful what to take and what not from peers.

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