

Exploring the prevalence of peer pressure among college students

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Abstract: As students transition from school to college the idea of conforming to their peers and equals becomes very urgent. The need to feel socially accepted by their peers and to have a sense of belongingness with their circles drag adolescents to obey diverse pressures that are often appalling. With this understanding, the investigator in the present study attempted to understand the prevalence of peer pressure among college students and how it varies in accordance with few demographic variables. The sample for the study was 51 undergraduate and post-graduate students studying in Nar Bahadur Bhandari Government College Tadong Gangtok Sikkim selected through convenience sampling. A standardized tool was used for generating the responses. The study revealed some crucial findings that bear implications to the stakeholders in adopting specific intervention strategies.

Keywords: peer pressure, college students.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Peer groups can be understood as a small group of close friends, similar in age, and who share homogeneous activities (Castrogiovanni, 2002) as cited in (Bankole Adeyemi, 2019). Members within the group express their group loyalty by complying to group norms which in extreme situation can manifest themselves as peer pressures. Peer pressure can thus be understood as a transformation in an individual's attitude or behaviour pattern as a result of conforming to peer norms and dictates (Chen & Deng, 2022). College days mark a significant phase in an individual's life where adolescents constantly strive for self-development and this in many parts is fulfilled by conforming to peer norms, since peers provide mutual support, opportunity for self-expression, a sense of belongingness, share similar experiences which an adolescent can relate to (Adriaansz, 2002) as cited in (Yavuzer et al., 2014). Peer influences are viewed as essentially being mutual in a sense that peers share many similar traits over time and hence tend to be alike in many aspects (Mistry, 2019). Additionally, some authors maintain that peer influences can either be positive or negative (Sahu, 2022). Positive peer pressure can boost an individual's morale and confidence, conversely, negative peer pressure can dampen the spirit making an individual feel anxious (Chen & Deng, 2022). Peer influences are so strong that some researchers opine that a bright student in the company of dull students might often lose interest in academics and perform poorly, on the contrary, a group that is academically sound and performs well can positively influence a weak student to perform better (Bassey, 2020).

1.1 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE :

Kaur and Kaur (2016) compared the gender differences in peer influence among post-graduate students and concluded a significant gender difference as well as a significant difference in peer influence was reported between hostellers and day scholars. Murugasen and Lazmey (2019) reported below average level of peer pressure among youths in Madurai and no gender and locale difference peer pressure. Similarly, Sahu (2022) found no significant gender difference in peer pressure. Umashankari et al. (2020) reported male students had higher level of peer pressure as compared to female students. Amarin and Aboagye (2020) found females showing greater resistance to peer pressure as compared to male adolescents. Some studies reported freshers to demonstrate higher level of peer pressure as compared to students in the final year (Mistry, 2019).

2. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:

The phenomena of drug abuse, suicidal tendencies, teenage pregnancy are quite common among adolescents during college and university days which often occur due to peer pressure. With this understanding, the present study is significant in understanding the existence of peer pressure among college students and how it varies across few demographic variables. Additionally, the scantiness of studies in the Sikkimese context further justifies the need for the

present study. The investigator asserts that the study can be beneficial to stakeholders in providing appropriate guidance and counseling to adolescents.

2.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM: “Exploring the Prevalence of Peer Pressure among College Students”

2.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY- (i) To determine the level of peer pressure among college students (ii) To explore the demographic differences in peer pressure among college students.

2.3 NULL HYPOTHESIS- H_{01} There is no significant difference in the mean scores of college students in peer pressure based on gender, locale, family type, age and level of education.

3. METHODOLOGY- The study is quantitative, and a Descriptive Research Method is used. The sample comprised of 51 students selected through Convenience Sampling Technique. A standardised tool i.e., The Peer Pressure Questionnaire of Santor, D. A., Messervey, D., & Kusumakar, V. (2000) was used for data collection. Questionnaire was administered online through Google forms.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION- An independent samples *t* test was used for testing the null hypothesis and cross- tabulation analysis was done for finding out the level of peer pressure among respondents.

Objective 1: To determine the level of peer pressure among college students.

Table 1
Cross Tabulation Analysis of the Level of Peer Pressure among College Students

Demographic Variables		Levels				
		Extremely High	High	Moderate	Low	Very Low
Gender	Male	8(36.36)	5(22.73)	3(13.64)	4(18.18)	2(9.09)
	Female	1(3.45)	3(10.34)	14(48.28)	7(24.14)	4(13.79)
Locale	Rural	1(2.70)	9(24.32)	16(43.24)	9(24.32)	2(5.41)
	Urban	2(14.29)	4(28.57)	2(14.29)	3(21.43)	3(21.43)
Family Type	Nuclear	4(16.00)	9(36.00)	6(24.00)	3(12.00)	3(12.00)
	Joint	1(3.85)	6(23.08)	7(26.92)	7(26.92)	5(19.23)
Age	18-21	1(3.700)	4 (14.81)	9(33.33)	8(29.63)	5(18.52)
	Above21	6(25.00)	6(25.00)	7(29.17)	3(12.50)	2(8.33)
Education Level	UG	1(3.45)	4(13.79)	11(37.93)	8(27.59)	5(17.24)
	PG	6(27.27)	5(22.73)	7(31.82)	3(13.64)	1(4.55)

Note. Figures in the bracket indicate the percentage of the level of peer pressure.

On the perusal of the above table, it is clear that with regard to male students 8(36.36) showed an extremely high level of peer pressure, 5(22.73) high level, 3(13.64) moderate level of peer pressure, 4(18.18) low, and 2(9.09) a very low level of peer pressure. Similarly, in case of female students 1(3.45) showed an extremely high level of peer pressure, 3(10.34) high level, 14(48.28) moderate level of peer pressure, 7(24.14) low and 4(13.79) showed a very low level of peer pressure. The finding is in consonance with Umashankari et al. (2020), Amorin and Aboagye (2020) whose study also reported a similar finding.

In terms of locale 1(2.70) of rural area students showed an extremely high level of peer pressure, 9(24.32) high level, 16(43.24) moderate level of peer pressure, 9(24.32) low, and 2(5.41) a very low level of peer pressure. With regard to students from urban area, 2(14.29) reported an extremely high level of peer pressure, 4(28.57) high, 2(14.29) had a moderate level of peer pressure, 2(14.29) low and 3(21.43) reported a very low level of peer pressure.

In terms of family type, 4(16.00) from nuclear family showed an extremely high level of peer pressure, 9(36.00) had high level of peer pressure, 6(24.00) moderate level of peer pressure, 3(12.00) low, and 3(12.00) a very low level of peer pressure. Likewise for students belonging to joint families, 1(3.85) had an extremely high level of peer pressure, 6(23.08) reported high level of peer pressure, 7(26.92) moderate level, 7(26.92) low and 5(19.23) showed a very low level of peer pressure.



Regarding age, 1(3.700) of students in the age range 18-21 reported an extremely high level of peer pressure, 4 (14.81) high level, 9(33.33) moderate level, 8(29.63) low level of peer pressure and 5(18.52) reported a very low level of peer pressure. Going further, for students above 21 years of age, 6(25.00) showed an extremely high level of peer pressure, 6(25.00) showed high level, 7(29.17) possessed a moderate level of peer pressure, 3(12.50) low, and 2(8.33) reported a very low level of peer pressure.

Regarding level of education, 1(3.45) of UG students showed an extremely high level of peer pressure, 4(13.79) high level, 11(37.93) showed a moderate level of peer pressure, 8(27.59) low and, 5(17.24) showed a very low level of peer pressure. Regarding PG students, 6(27.27) reported an extremely high level of peer pressure, 5(22.73) showed high level, 7(31.82) showed moderate level of peer pressure 3(13.64) low and 1(4.55) showed a very low level of peer pressure.

Objective 2: To explore the demographic differences in peer pressure among college students.

Table 2

Mean Comparison of Peer Pressure across Selected Demographic Variables

Variable	Management	N	M	SD	Calculated t (49)	Table t	Result
Peer Pressure	Male	22	84.41	13.55	0.08	2.02	NS
	Female	29	77.34	14.14			
	Rural	37	82.35	14.00	0.11	2.02	NS
	Urban	14	75.21	13.88			
	Nuclear	25	79.72	14.46	0.74	2.02	NS
	Joint	26	81.04	14.18			
	18-21	27	80.48	14.41	0.96	2.02	NS
	Above 21	24	80.29	14.26			
	UG	29	79.72	14.84	0.84	2.02	NS
	PG	22	81.27	13.58			

Note. NS- Not Significant

Based on above table it is clear that, there is no significant difference in the peer pressure among students across all demographic variables i.e., gender with $t(49) = 0.08, p > 0.05$, on locale with $t(49) = 0.11, p > 0.05$, on family type with $t(49) = 0.74, p > 0.05$ on age with $t(49) = 0.96, p > 0.05$ and on education level with $t(49) = 0.84, p > 0.05$. The finding corroborates with the earlier studies of Umashankari et al. (2020), Amarin and Aboagye (2020), Sahu (2022) who compared the peer pressure of rural and urban area students are more relevant in the context of this finding. Likewise, the finding challenges the claims of Mistry (2019) who concluded freshers with low age to have higher level of peer pressure as compared to seniors.

5. CONCLUSION :

The findings collectively imply that the causes for a heightened level of peer pressure among students especially from urban area and for male students must be identified. Teachers can resort to strategies like counselling, developing close rapport with students so that students can open up on many critical issues. Students should be encouraged to develop a positive self-image, greater self-confidence, critical thinking skills which equip them with needed skills in avoiding excessive peer pressure. Educational institutions must create healthy, congenial and encouraging learning environment for adolescents who learn to resist peer pressure and take independent decisions.

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