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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my Psychology teacher, Rubba ma'am, for her constant guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the completion of this project. Her insights helped me understand the psychological concepts involved in this study with greater clarity.

I am deeply thankful to all the respondents who took out time to fill my Google Form and share their honest perspectives. Their participation and cooperation were essential for making this research possible.

Lastly, I extend my sincere appreciation to my family and friends for their continuous motivation, patience, and support during the process of data collection and report writing. Their encouragement played a major role in helping me complete this project successfully.

Chapter 1- Introduction

The term "peer pressure" refers to the influence that peers can have on each other, including both negative and positive aspects. It involves the pressure induced by acquaintances to undertake activities/behaviours which are new and different from the undertaker's usual preferences. Family, friends, neighbours, influencers, celebrities etc all fall under the broader category of peers, they have a large influence on a person's personal life and moral codes of conduct and can change the person's lifestyle, habits, etc.

When we say peer pressure, almost all of us only think of adolescents and the adverse effects it has on this age group. While it may be true that adolescents face peer pressure more than other age groups and are more susceptible to becoming a victim due to the changes in their thoughts and morals, other age groups too experience this phenomenon at varying levels.

Types of peer pressure:

There are two main types of peer pressure: direct and indirect

Direct peer pressure

This involves explicit requests or encouragements to behave in a certain way, such as friends openly encouraging someone to drink at a social gathering.

Indirect peer pressure

It is subtler, often stemming from unspoken social norms or passive expectations, such as observing that most people in a group spend money in a particular way or embrace certain habits. These indirect cues can create pressure to conform without any explicit prompting, as individuals may worry about being judged or excluded if they behave differently.

Peer pressure across age groups:

Childhood:

Peer pressure begins as soon as a child steps out into the social community where they are burdened by expectations and exposed to prejudices, this instills a feeling of needing to 'fit in' and thus leads to the initial form of peer pressure. At this stage, children may be peer pressured into something as harmless as trying out a new game or as terrible as bullying. It is thus vital that parents teach them about peer pressure and its negative and positive impacts to ensure they make healthy decisions.

Teenage/Adolescent Years:

These years are years where peer pressure is most prominent due to the struggle of trying to establish one's identity. At this stage, adolescents are desperate to be accepted by their peers and

many would embark upon atrocious behaviours such as drinking, smoking, et cetera in order to be at “par” with their peers. They are often pressured into these activities by getting singled out, humiliated or exposed to such practices, often the peer pressure is subtle and builds over a period of time and finally wins over the victim. In schools, where social interactions are frequent and close-knit, peer pressure can play a major role in shaping students' academic performance, behavior, and personal development. Between school expectations, parental guidelines, the desire to fit in and the influences of their peers, it's easy to become overwhelmed and follow the group. It's important that teens develop their own identity and learn how to hold firm to their values to avoid peer pressure. However, it is important to remember that peer pressure does not always lead to adverse scenarios. Peer pressure can also promote good habits and behaviours. Peer pressure can encourage one to participate in extracurricular activities, develop leadership qualities, motivate one to work hard in order to achieve greater heights, etc.

Adulthood:

At adulthood, peer pressure is often driven by similar mechanisms but becomes more complex as individuals navigate a wider set of social roles and responsibilities. Adults may feel pressure to conform to the norms of different social groups they belong to, such as family, work colleagues, or friends. Peer pressure extends into financial and consumer decisions as well, affecting how adults approach spending, lifestyle choices, and even career paths. Career paths are one of the most major, obvious forms of peer pressure where individuals are pressured into taking the common, better-paying career. This is especially prevalent in India where many people are pressured into becoming doctors or engineers, they aren't given an opportunity or a chance to explore other fields of interest at all.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

1) How peer pressure and self-control interact in adults aged 18+

Dr. Kendra Seaman, an assistant professor of psychology at the School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences, UT Dallas, and her team examined how peer pressure and self-control interact in adults aged 18 to 80.

In their study, published in *Psychology and Aging* (Dec 7), 157 adults received randomly timed text-message surveys asking whether they had recently experienced a desire or urge, if it conflicted with personal goals (like saving money or healthy eating), and whether others were present performing the same behavior, the findings were as follows:

- Peer pressure persists into early adulthood- Younger adults are more likely to give in to desires when others are participating.
- Self-control strengthens with age. Middle-aged and older adults show greater ability to resist impulses, even in social settings.
- Resistance to conformity grows throughout adulthood, extending beyond the adolescent phase previously thought to be the peak of susceptibility.
- Older adults, however, face new everyday dilemmas (e.g., indulging in food or spending money) that test self-control differently from when they were adolescents.

Dr. Seaman emphasized that peer pressure isn't limited to risky teen behaviors — it influences everyday decisions like eating, spending, or checking social media. The results highlight that self-control continues to develop and evolve well into adulthood, and social conformity pressures, though reduced, remain a subtle factor throughout life.

2) Normative Conformity

Normative conformity, demonstrated by the Asch Conformity Experiments, is compliance motivated by the desire to be liked, accepted, and to avoid social punishment, such as ridicule, alienation, or scorn, such an individual may often privately maintain their original opinion/belief but publicly agree with the group to fit in whereas informational conformity refers to the conformity involving change in ideologies/ behaviour due to belief in accurate and adaptive nature of the information provided.

The Asch experiments, where participants were asked to identify the length of a line among a group of confederates giving obviously incorrect answers, showed that a significant portion of participants would ignore what they clearly saw with their own eyes just to avoid being the dissenter. This demonstrates the immense power of social norms. The pressure to adhere to group expectations, even trivial ones, often outweighs the desire to be factually correct. This is the

mechanism at play in most stereotypical instances of negative peer pressure, such as smoking or drinking to appear cool, it may also involve partaking in immoral behaviour to avoid being the next target.. The fear of standing out or being ostracized overrides personal preferences and moral standards, showcasing that social approval is a powerful motivator for behavioral adjustment

3) Social Learning Theory and Social Identity Theory.

- Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) posits that individuals learn behaviors, values, and attitudes through observing others, particularly those within their immediate social circles. This theory suggests that students are likely to mimic the behaviors of their peers, especially when they perceive these behaviors as rewarded or accepted within the group. For example, a student may begin skipping classes if they see that their friends are doing the same and receiving no negative consequences.
- Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) emphasizes the role of group membership in shaping individual identity. According to this theory, individuals derive a sense of self-esteem and belonging from their affiliation with specific groups, such as peer groups in schools. To maintain group membership and self-esteem, individuals often conform to group norms, even when those norms involve undesirable behaviors such as bullying or substance abuse.

These theories highlight that peer pressure is not merely about external influence but is deeply intertwined with personal identity and social learning processes.

4) MacArthur Juvenile Competence Study

The MacArthur Juvenile Competence Study aimed to examine how age affects decision-making abilities related to legal competence, including how easily individuals are influenced by others. The study collected data from 1,393 participants aged 11–24, drawn from four major regions in the U.S. (Los Angeles, Philadelphia, northern Florida, and Virginia). Participants were almost evenly split between detained youth from juvenile detention centers and adult jails, and low-income community youth with no criminal charges. Due to the recruitment style, participation rates could not be precisely calculated, and detained and community samples were analyzed separately.

Findings from the peer-pressure–academic-stress analysis showed that high peer pressure is strongly associated with higher academic stress. Students with high peer pressure scored significantly higher on academic stress (Mean = 15.54) than those with low peer pressure (Mean = 12.93). Gender differences were also evident: female students reported higher academic stress (Mean = 14.94) compared to males (Mean = 13.53). Interaction effects revealed that both males

and females experienced increased academic stress under high peer pressure, with females showing the highest increase.

Overall, the results suggest that peer pressure intensifies academic stress, especially when students feel expected to meet high performance standards set by peers. Prior studies support these findings, showing that peer influence can heighten anxiety and that female students often report more academic stress than males.

Chapter 3 - Research Methods

Aim:

To understand the presence, types, intensity, and effects of peer pressure across different age groups, and to analyse how individuals perceive, respond to, and cope with peer influence in their day-to-day lives.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the different forms of peer pressure experienced by individuals in their academic and social environments.
2. To observe how peer pressure impacts different ages.
3. To analyze how peer pressure influences decision-making and behaviour.
4. To examine individuals' ability to resist or cope with peer pressure, as well as strategies used.
5. To identify the major sources of peer pressure
6. To assess the overall impact of peer pressure on well-being, such as stress levels, self-esteem, and emotional responses.
7. To understand peer pressure through personal experiences by respondents.

About the survey:

The survey took place through Google Forms and collected the following data:

Demographic Data	- age, gender
Frequency	- of feeling peer pressure
Experience/confidence the	- if they ever feel pressured, confidence in ability to resist the pressure
Sources	- who provides the peer pressure
Impact on life/Behavioral outcomes	- affecting of life decisions, activities engaged in due to this, if they regretted giving in to peer pressure
Coping mechanism	- how people manage their peer pressure

This form was completely anonymous, the participation of the subjects was completely voluntary. Information about the experiment was disclosed to them beforehand to ensure they take an informed decision.

Method of Analysis:

Quantitative analysis-

The numerical inputs were recorded and automatically summarised into a pie chart and excel sheet, from where it was observed and analysed.

Questions asked:

Most questions were MCQ's, most of which you could only choose one answer, two of which you could choose multiple options. Two were scale questions and one was an optional, long answer question. There were a total of 14 questions.

1. Which age group are you a part of?
2. What is your gender?
3. Have you ever felt pressured by your peers?
4. How often do you face peer pressure?
5. How confident are you in your ability to resist peer pressure? (scale)
6. Does it affect your daily life/decision making?
7. Which of the following sources do you think contribute to peer pressure? (Select all that apply)
8. Which of the following activities have you engaged in due to peer pressure? (Select all that apply)
9. When in a social gathering, how likely are you to conform to group behavior? (scale)
10. Have you ever regretted giving in to peer pressure?
11. What impact do you think peer pressure has?
12. How do you cope with peer pressure?
13. Can you recall a specific incident where you experienced peer pressure? Please describe it. (long answer)

Chapter 4 - Analysis of Data

Sample size- 100 respondents.

(a) Demographics

- Age Group:
 - 13–17 years old - 73%
 - 45+ - 12%
 - 35-45 - 10%
 - 18-24 - 2%
 - Below 13- 2%
 - 25-34 - 1%
- Gender:
 - Female representation - 71%
 - Male representation - 26%
 - 3 people preferred not to say

(b) Experience and Frequency

- Experience
 - Sometimes - 59%
 - Yes- 32%
 - No- 9%
- Frequency
 - Sometimes- 76%
 - Most of the time - 14%
 - Never- 8%
 - Always - 2%

This suggests that the majority of people face peer pressure, whether it occurs once in a while or regularly, everyone has experience and has been a victim of this sort of manipulation.

(c) Confidence in Resisting

A scale of 1-5 was provided where 1 represented least confident while 5 represented most confident:

- 2 - 39%
- 3- 22%
- 1- 21%
- 4 and 5 together- 18%

This indicates that most people are not confident/ assertive when it comes to peer pressure (60%), i.e. they have a hard time resisting the power of peer pressure.

(d) Effect on Life and Decisions

- Most respondents reported that peer pressure impacts their daily life and decision making-
 - Sometimes- 54%
 - No- 33%
 - Yes- 13%

This indicates that peer pressure plays an important role in a person's habits, behaviour , lifestyle, etc, most people's lives and decisions have been impacted in one way or another by this behavioral changer.

(e) Sources of Peer Pressure

- Friends - 79%
- Family- 54%
- Social Media - 52%
- Celebrities - 14%
- Office colleagues- 3%.
- All- 1%

The most cited source is 'Friends' indicating that peer groups are the main influence for behavioral and habitual changes, peer groups are the basis of society and the need to 'fit in' often causes one to indulge in peer practices. Family and social media too are major sources of peer pressure suggesting that pressure from home and online trends is a large impact as well. This also highlights that peer pressure is both social and digital now — not just in real life.

(f) Activities Influenced by Peer Pressure:

- School Activities - 52%
- Appearance & Clothing - 48%
- Parties/ Drinking and smoking- 39%
- Hobbies - 31%
- Life choices (relationship, careers, upgrading lifestyle) -49%

Respondents often undertake in school activities, appearance, life choices, i.e. visible or social behaviors due to peer pressure, especially those linked to acceptance and image. This suggests humans' strong need to blend in societal expectations and their desperate need to prevent isolation, it stresses on their likeliness to conform to group behaviour.

(h) Emotional Standings

- Regret
 - Majority said Yes - 62%
 - No- 38%

This indicates that people often indulge in pressures at the moment due to desire to fit in and need to be accepted by others, however later they feel the emotional consequences even for “small” acts of conformity.

- Perceived Impact
 - Most chose “Both” (positive and negative)- 86%
 - Negative impact- 11%
 - Positive impact- 3%

Respondents see peer pressure in both lights, motivating in some contexts (e.g. studying harder, forming good habits) but harmful when it causes stress or wrong decisions (however majority suggests peer pressure has largely negative impacts).

(i) Coping Strategies:

- Setting personal boundaries- 71%
- Avoiding negative groups - 43%
- Practicing assertiveness - 41%
- Identifying signs of negative peer pressure- 34%

Shows respondents already use healthy, proactive coping methods, but could benefit from more structured support or confidence-building.

(k) Personal Experiences

- Many respondents spoke of participating in an activity due to peer pressure even when they didn't want to, they later learnt from this and didn't repeat it again. They used words such as “forced”, “didn’t want to”, “I knew it was wrong”, etc that suggests they knew it was morally incorrect, but their desire to fit in won and they indulged in the activity anyway, but later regretted this decision.
- Some spoke of major decisions which were influenced due to their family and friends such as career choices involving pursuing the ‘right career’, getting mocked due to their choices; buying property, etc (responses also involved positive impacts)
- Some spoke of partaking in drinking, parties, etc due to the pressures- while some regretted it, others were happy with their decision, suggesting that this peer pressure had a positive impact on them.

- Many spoke of school activities which they had undertaken due to peer pressure such as events, sports, study streams, cheating on tests, etc; some of these had negative impacts while others had positive impacts.

Overall, different people experienced peer pressure in different ways. Some believed it had a negative impact on their lives, others believed it to have a positive impact which helped them grow as a person.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion And Limitations

CONCLUSION

This research makes it clear that peer pressure isn't limited to any one stage of life — people of all ages experience it in different ways. Adolescents may feel it more intensely, especially in social and appearance-related situations, while adults may encounter it through career expectations, lifestyle choices, or social circles.

Across age groups, peer pressure shows a similar pattern: it can be motivating at times and promote good outcomes, but also creates stress, doubt, and many times regret. Many participate in peer pressure while being aware that they're being influenced and that such behaviours and habits may be morally incorrect, yet many still struggle with feeling confident enough to resist it and ensure that they do not get involved in bad things.

Most experience peer pressure from their inner social circle, including family and friends, and also from online platforms where trends and celebrities promote particular social expectations. These influence an individual's lifestyle, decisions, hobbies, activities, appearance and clothing, academic participations, social standings, etc, which get heavily swayed due to peer groups. While coping mechanisms have been developed and exist among individuals, a large number of people still find themselves as victims of peer pressure as they are unable to resist the need to be accepted in society.

Hence, peer pressure highlights the importance of open conversations and supportive environments, whether at home, in friend groups, at work, or within communities. Building skills like assertiveness, self-awareness, and decision-making can help individuals of any age navigate peer influence in a healthier way.

Ultimately, peer pressure is a part of human social life — but with awareness and confidence, people can learn to respond to it without compromising who they are.

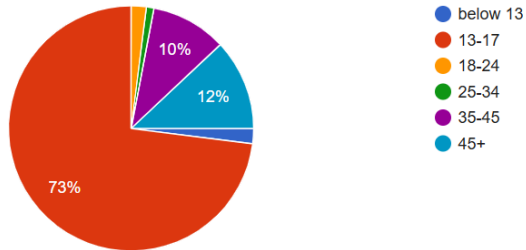
LIMITATIONS

- The survey was conducted online, this removes some of the authenticity which comes with face to face interviews.
- Majority of the respondents were of a particular age group (adolescents), this prevents strong comparisons between different age groups
- Majority of the respondents were female, this research thus runs at a risk of gender bias
- Inputs from the respondents may not have been accurate.
- The questions were brief and did not probe into the details, thus circumstances may vary.

Chapter 6 - Evidence

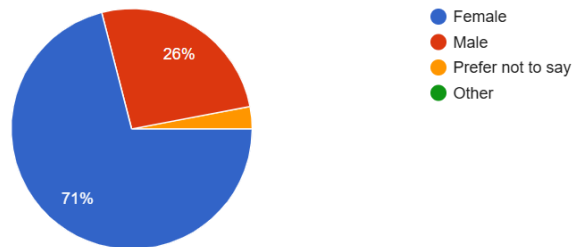
1. Which age group are you a part of?

100 responses



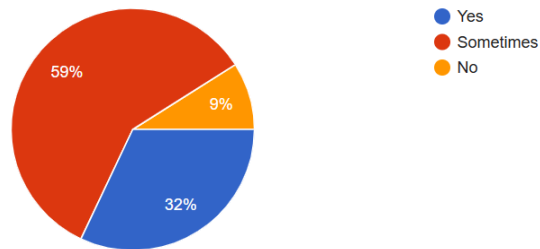
2. What is your gender?

100 responses



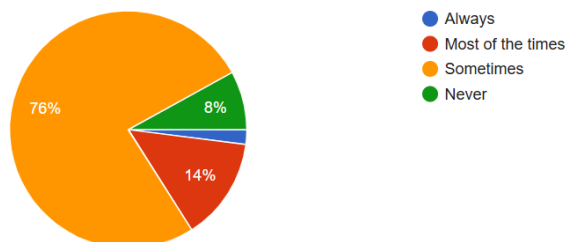
3. Have you ever felt pressured by your peers?

100 responses



4. How often do you face peer pressure?

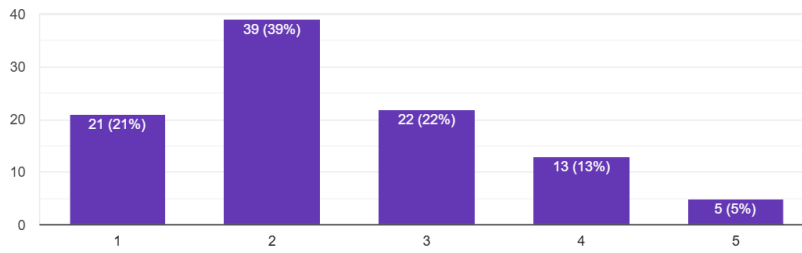
100 responses



5.How confident are you in your ability resist peer pressure?

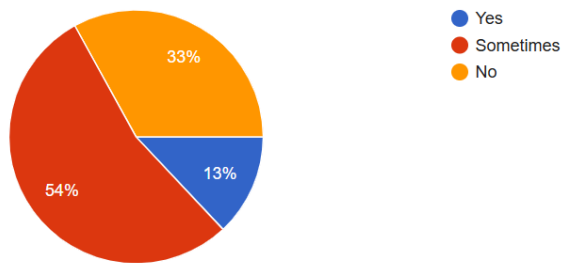
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100 responses



6.Does it affect your daily life/decision making?

100 responses

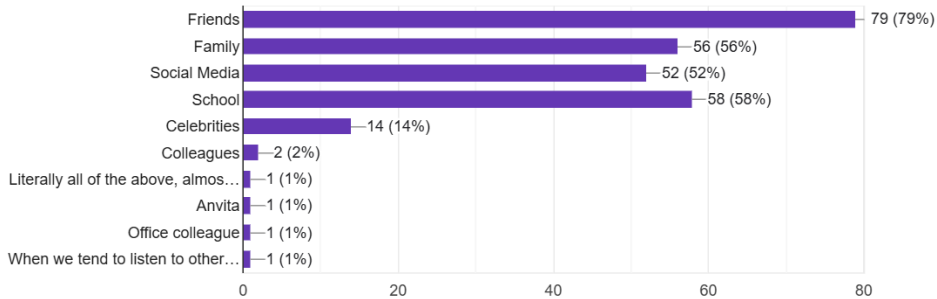


7. Which of the following sources do you think contribute to peer pressure?

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(Select all that apply)

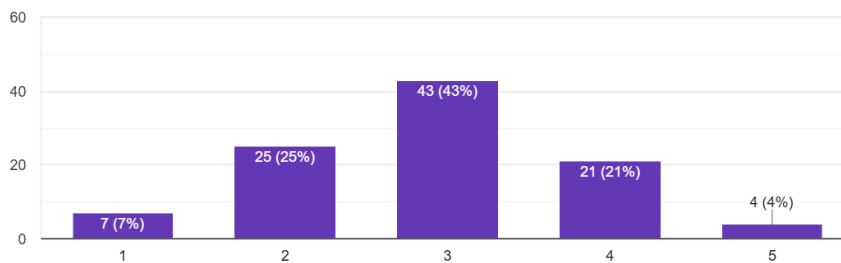
100 responses



9.When in a social gathering, how likely are you to conform to group behavior?

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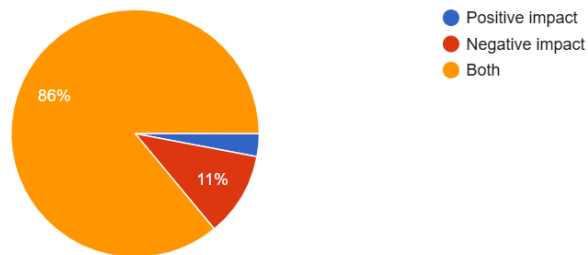
100 responses



11.What impact do you think peer pressure has?

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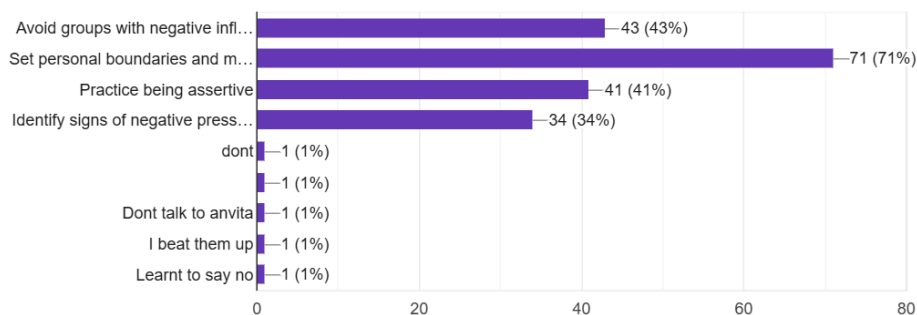
100 responses



12.How do you cope with peer pressure?

[Copy chart](#)

100 responses



13.Can you recall a specific incident where you experienced peer pressure? Please describe it.

45 responses

Choose unsuitable work stream that everyone wanted

When all my friends were drinking soda and I was not

Generally extroverts dominating the scenes which I couldn't despite having the same calibre.

people keep asking me what I'm going to do after school

There was a tournament outside of school. My friends begged me to come so I decided to go to it and we came second

I don't want to talk about it

My cousin once peer pressured me into vaping when I was in 8th, I've never done it since then.

Everyone around me doing jee or neet and giving me questioning looks when I said I wasn't doing either.

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