

Effect of Peers on Academic and Personal Behavior of Students at Undergraduate Level

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to analyze the effect of peer on academic and personal behavior at undergraduate level. The main aim of the study was to find out difference in opinion of male and female students regarding effect of peers'. The study is descriptive in nature. The sample of 500 students (male and female) was selected through the procedure of convenient sampling technique. The data was statistically analyzed by applying t-test, and frequency, percentage, standard deviation and mean scores were also calculated. Results indicated that students were feeling effect of peer pressure positively and negatively both. There is also a significance difference between male and female in influencing their peers in relation to academic performance and it was also noted that effect of peers is almost same in all ages (19-20, 20-21, and 21-22). It is suggested that educators should know that peer group is a significant factor in the learning of teenager and should be used to stimulate learning. Intervention should be given to teenagers engaged in risk taking behavior due to peer pressure.

Key Words: Effect, Peer, Academic, Personal, Undergraduate

Introduction

Peers play an important role in a youngster's life and they become the main source of recreation (You, 2011). Young adolescents comfortably adapt behavior patterns of their peers (Owens, 2002). Peers play an immense role in mental growth of adolescents and positive relationship with peers encourages the self-awareness among teenagers by motivating them to think about themselves (Allen, 2005). Peer is one of the strong associating experience because of this people changes their opinion and mindset to be compatible with the standards or expectations of the peer group (Kameda et al. 2005).

Boyer (2006) and Steinberg (2008) said that association with peers becomes gradually complicated and hierarchical during adolescence (Brown, 2004). Students mostly spent their

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time with their selective peer in schools, in sports, in recreation activities and they feel the desire of connection to share or exchange information, news or ideas with others and the concept of friendship among children sometimes concentrate on collaborative practices, whereas the concept of friendship among teenagers is mainly concentrated on mutual sharing of ideas and emotions (Acar and Kılınc, 2017).

Teenagers usually interact with peers who share parallel attitude and way of thinking which includes academic aspiration, bureaucratic viewpoint, fashion style or recreational activities. Adolescents acquire attitudes or become involved in behaviors that they view to be accepted by their popular peers (Prinstein, 2011). In this period of adolescence, peer association become significant and plays a critical role in adolescents' growth of intimacy, interpersonal skills and self-identity (Klarin, 2006). Peers can affect everything a teenager adopts to wear; they also assist one another to acquire abilities in communication and in decision making (Temitope and Christy, 20=15). Peers may influence number of people to behave in a way that they might not regularly do and young people are more affected by their peers because it is their time for endeavoring with their self-identity and proficiencies (Stuart, 2001). Peer pressure is a particular case of social impact, which normally brings consistency in way of acting or thinking (Lashbrook, 2000). Looking at the modern society there are diverse mechanisms of mutual influence process, and one of the mechanism most frequently mentioned is the influence of young peers. Many times peer pressure was used to impart group standards and also used to promote group loyalty (Vander Zanden, 2000). Peer pressure is crucial among adolescents whose parents are permissive, inconsistent in discipline, and implausible to manage their behavior (Allen, 2008). Peer pressure affects adolescents' misbehavior and teenagers may be encouraged to engage in adverse social pressure because they are too keen to be recognized by their peers (Bern, 2010).

Peer groups play a key role in personality maturation. During adolescence effective engagement with peers remarkably increases and the quality of peer relationships become vulnerable and trusting. More influential to the teen, it affects both decision making abilities and choices being made by them (Santrok, 2008). Peer groups have more powerful impact than that of parents because adolescents in seek of recognition join's a specific peer group, recognize the behaviors and attitudes of group and they cannot imagine themselves out of that group (Hirschi, 2009). Peer groups can influence some people positively, such as they volunteer for charity and motivate each other in academics and peers can help each other in social development and they may also hinder it (Brown, 2004).

Everyone experiences peer pressure during a period of their life. Peer pressure is an important factor and can be describe as the impact of peer group in stimulating an individual to modify his/her behaviors, standards or habits particularly when family relationships is emotionally inadequate or weak. Pupils care so much about their peer’s love and respect, for this reason they try to please each other (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014). Effect of peers can be demonstrated by decisions and actions executed by an individual as a result of influence from other peer behavior or characteristics. Black (2002) states that adolescence is the phase of life known for the development of personal identity, as teens strive to shape their personalities, they move away from their families and peer group becomes very essential; despite this association with peers, “parents still play a significant role in personality formation”. Despite the fact that parental support is important for some adolescents than for others, peer support also influence many adolescents (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005). Parents should be precisely educated on matters of discipline because it is vulnerable to be too permissive or too authoritative (Hake, 2006).

Peer pressure influence the high level of commitment, acculturation and academic adjustment of students at school (You, 2011; Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014). Adolescents with similar interest motivate their peers in academics and they also cherish doing the same thing tends to attract each other (De Guzman, 2007). Peers who are passionate about learning most probably associate with those students who acquire knowledge and they usually study simultaneously, share course material and information (Mead., Hilton, & Curtis, 2001). Peer associations are not completely positive and negative, consequences occur when friends negatively influence each other, such as a person begins to smoke, drink or do “drugs in order to recognize in a peer group (Bugental, 2000).” Students who associate with their fellow peers, who not at all motivates each other to learn, affects their academic performance negatively (Reyna, & Farley, 2006). Peer pressure can bring positive changes in teen’s life, young adults support their peers to work hard at school and other positive outcomes of peer pressure are doing well in school, joining after school programs, eating healthy food, working out and much more. “When adolescents spend a considerable amount of time with deviant peers who used drugs and alcohol, they were more likely to be involved in disruptive behavior (Acar and Kılınç, 2017)”.

Objectives

The study aims to

1. Investigate the effect of peers on students’ academic and personal behavior.

2. Find out the difference in the opinion of male and female students regarding effect of peers on their academic and personal behavior.

Research Questions

1. What is the effect of peers on students' academic and personal behavior?
2. Is there any difference in the opinion of male and female students regarding effect of peers on their academic and personal behavior?

Significance of the study

Effect of Peers is a part of human behavior and it is the force to follow one's peer views and behavior, so this study is significant because it aims to provide adolescents with information of the peer pressure among students. This study might be helpful in developing awareness about peers that affect behavior of students. Results of this study will also help raising awareness and understanding of the peer pressure. Findings may also provide knowledge for the students who have been the victims of "peer pressure either in positive or negative way and will provide information on the impact of peer pressure on them and their families. More broadly, this study will also provide a baseline for further research on peer pressure."

Population and Sampling

Population of the present study was university students enrolled at undergraduate level in both public and private sector universities. Convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample. Before providing them questionnaire, all respondents were informed about the purpose of research and inform them about the nature of research study.

Scale

The following questionnaires were used for the data collection purpose.

- Steinberg and Monahan's resistance to peer influence scale (2009)
- Self-developed Peer Pressure Questionnaire based on extensive review of literature.

Steinberg and Monahan's Resistance to Peer Influence Scale (2009)

"The Resistance to Peer Influence measure presents respondents with a series of 10 pairs of statements and asks them to choose the statement that is the best descriptor (sample item: "Some people go along with friends just to keep their friends happy" BUT "Other

people refuse to go along with what their friends want to do, even though they know it will make their friends unhappy").

Table 1: Demographic information of respondents regarding age, gender and academic percentage (N=500)

Variables	Percent (%)	Mean	SD
Age(years)		1.79	.81
19-20	46		
20-21	29		
21-22	25		
Gender		1.50	.50
Male	50		
Female	50		
Academic Performance		2.17	.79
40-60%	24		
60-80%	35		
80-100%	41		

Table 1 shows the sample is characterized as age, gender and academic percentage. Under age, sample is categorized in three age groups. The age of 46 percent students fall in 19-20 years. The age of 29 percent students fall in 20-21 years. The age of 25 percent students fall in 21-22 years. The mean of age is 1.79 and the standard deviation of age is 0.81. Under gender category, data is collected from male and female. The 50% students are male and the 50% students are females. The mean of gender is 1.50 and standard deviation of gender is 0.50. Under academic percentage category 24 percent students score 40-60%. The 35 percent student score 60-80%. The 41 percent students score 80-100%. The mean of academic percentage is 2.17 and standard deviation of academic percentage is 0.790

Table 2: Responses of students regarding tasks and risks with peers (N=500)

Levels of peer pressure	SA(%)	A(%)	N(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean	SD
Taking risk with friends	21	35	28	12	4	3.56	1.06
Done physically risky task	11	29	30	21	9	3.11	1.12
Part of bullying with friends	12	28	27	22	11	3.09	1.18
Pressurized by friends for smoking	19	36	18	16	11	3.35	1.26
Stolen something with friends	9	24	28	22	17	2.85	1.21
Smashed someone property	9	23	25	26	17	2.81	1.22
Done something at urging of friends	9	30	30	29	9	3.06	1.12

“Note; SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree”

Table shows that 56% students are strongly agree and agree that they take more risk when they are with friends and 28% are neutral in taking risk with friends, 40% students are strongly agree and agree that they have done something that was physically risky because their friends were urging them and 30% are neutral in doing physically risky task, 40% strongly agree and agree that they have been part of bullying incident and 27% are neutral that they have been a part of bullying incident, 55% strongly agree and agree that they have been pressurized by friends for smoking and 18% are neutral that they have been pressurized for smoking, 33% strongly agree and agree that they have stolen something and 28% are neutral that they have stolen something with friends, 32% strongly agree and agree that they smashed someone property while out with friends and 25% are neutral that they have smashed someone property, 39% strongly agree and agree that “they have done something that made them feel bad just because their friends were urging them to do it 30% students are neutral that they have done something that made them feel bad just because their friends were urging them to do it.”

Table 3: “Responses of students related to the impact of peers in their academic performance (N=500)”

Levels of peer pressure	SA(%)	A(%)	N(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	M	SD
Did not give extra performance in classroom activities because of peers	11	28	34	20	7	3.17	1.08
Skipped classes because of peers	24	27	23	18	8	3.39	1.26
Abandon class assignments and go to enjoy with friends	14	24	25	24	13	3.92	1.24
Spend time with peers who distract from studies	16	25	28	21	10	3.17	1.21
Done something wrong to stay on friend’s good side	12	28	29	21	10	3.11	1.16

“Note; SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree”

The Table given above indicates that 39% strongly agree and agree that they would not give extra performance in classroom so their peers didn’t consider them person with odd personality 34% students are neutral that they didn’t give extra performance in classroom, 51% students strongly agree and agree that if their classmates skipped classes they would do it too and 23% students are neutral that they skipped classes because of their classmates, 38% students strongly agree and agree that they abandon class assignments and go to enjoy with

friends and 25% students are neutral that they also abandon class assignments , 41% students strongly agree and agree that they spend time with peers who distract them from studies and “28% are neutral that they spend time with peers who distract them from studies , 40% students strongly agree and agree they have done something that is wrong just to stay on friends good side and 29% are neutral that they have done something that is wrong just to stay on friends good side”

Table 4: “Responses of students regarding influence of peer pressure in their misbehavior (N=500)”

Levels of peer pressure	SA(%)	A(%)	N(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	M	SD
Helped a friend to cheat at college	15	33	28	17	7	3.32	1.14
Helped a friend to cover up a lie	17	36	26	16	5	3.44	1.11
Lied to their parents	18	33	27	17	5	3.42	1.11

“Note; SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree”

Table shows that 48% students strongly agree and agree that they helped a friend cheat at college and 28% are neutral that they helped a friend cheat at college, “53% students strongly agree and agree that they helped a friend cover up a lie to their parents and 26% are neutral they helped a friend cover up a lie, 51% students strongly agree and agree they lied to their parents at the urging of friends and 27% are neutral they lied to their parents at the urging of friends.”

Table 5: “Responses of students related to peer’s impact on their academic success or failure (N=500)”

Levels of peer pressure	SA(%)	A(%)	N(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	M	SD
Peers are responsible for their success	10	31	33	20	6	3.17	1.05
Peers push to be the best academically	11	38	31	15	5	3.35	1.01
Peer opinion about academic success or failure	11	34	31	19	5	3.26	1.04
Give honest opinion	24	41	19	12	4	3.70	1.07

“Note; SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree”

Table shows that 41% students strongly agree and agree that their peers are responsible for their success and 33% are neutral that their peers are responsible for their success, 49% students strongly agree and agree that their peers push them to be the best academically 31% are neutral that their peers push them to be the best academically, 45%

students strongly agree and agree that their peer’s opinion about academic success or failure is important and 31% are neutral that their peer’s opinion about academic success or failure is important, 65% students strongly agree and agree that they give honest opinion in front of friends and 19% are neutral that they give honest opinion in front of friends even if they might make fun of them.

Table 6: “Responses of students regarding motivating their peers in academics (N=500)”

Levels of peer pressure	SA(%)	A(%)	N(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	M	SD
Peer group comprise of members who previously scored good grades	17	34	31	12	6	3.42	1.09
Peers who motivates to study	17	34	27	14	8	3.39	1.15
Choose some subjects because friends are taking that subject	15	30	25	21	9	3.22	1.20
Competition among classmates that bring academic pressure	14	22	34	21	9	3.13	1.15
Feel peer pressure in daily studying	10	31	29	23	7	3.15	1.09
Do well in exams but friends feel I could do better	17	32	29	16	6	3.36	1.13

“Note; SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree”

Table shows that 51% students strongly agree and agree that their peer group comprise of members who had previously scored good grades and 31% are neutral that their peer group comprise of members who had previously scored good grades , 51% students strongly agree and agree that they have peers who motivates them to study and 27% are neutral that they have peers who motivates them to study, 45% students strongly agree and agree that they choose some subjects because their friends are taking that subject and 25% are neutral that they choose some subjects because their friends are taking that subject, 36% students agree that they have competition among classmates that brings a lot of academic pressure and 34% are neutral that they have competition among classmates that brings a lot of academic pressure, 41% students strongly agree and agree that they feel a lot of pressure in daily studying and 29% are neutral that they feel a lot of pressure in daily studying, 49% students strongly agree and agree that they could do better in exams but their friends think they could do better and 29% are neutral that they could do better in exams but their friends think they could do better

Table 7: “Responses of students regarding keep their peers happy (N=500)”

Levels of peer pressure	SA(%)	A(%)	N(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	M	SD
Pressure from friends	23	39	28	7	3	3.78	0.90
Gone along with friends to keep them happy	22	36	25	13	4	3.59	1.08
Reject friends to get in with a different crowd	15	36	26	18	5	3.37	1.09
Said something to friends to avoid conflict	18	35	27	15	5	3.44	1.09

“Note; SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree”

Table shows that 62% students strongly agree and agree that they feel pressure from friends and 28% are neutral that they feel pressure from friends , 58% students strongly agree and agree that they have gone along with friends to keep them happy and 25% students are neutral that they have gone along with friends to keep them happy, 51% students strongly agree and agree that they reject their friends because they wanted to get in with a different crowd and 26% students are neutral that they reject their friends because they wanted to get in with a different crowd, 53% students strongly agree and agree that they have said things they don't really believe in front of friends just to avoid the conflict and 27% students are neutral that they have said things they don't really believe in front of friends just to avoid the conflict.

Table 8: “Responses of students regarding indicators of peer pressure to change their personality (N=500)”

Levels of peer pressure	SA(%)	A(%)	N(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	M	SD
Changed getup and appearance	26	36	18	16	11	3.63	1.15
Bought something because of friends	17	33	25	17	8	3.34	1.17
Act in a same way when alone as I do with friends	19	34	28	15	4	3.48	1.08
Pretty hard to change mind	9	24	34	29	4	3.06	1.02
Own personal interest out of friend's group	18	29	31	17	5	3.38	1.10

“Note; SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree”

Table shows that 62% students strongly agree and agree that they changed their getup appearance to go along with friends and 18% are neutral that they changed their getup appearance to go along with friends, 50% students strongly agree and agree that they have gone and actually bought something because their friends have it and 25% are neutral that they bought something because of friends, 53% students strongly agree and agree that they act the same way when they are alone as they do when they are with friends and 28% are neutral that they act the same way when they are alone as they do when they are with friends, 33% students strongly agree and agree that it is pretty hard to change their mind and 34% are neutral that it is pretty hard to change their mind , 47% students strongly agree and agree that they have own personal interest or activities out of friends group and 31% students are neutral that they have own personal interest or activities out of friends group

Table 9: “Comparison of male and female opinion regarding peer pressure”

	Male		Female		Independent samples t-test		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Peer Pressure related to adolescent’s risk taking behavior	3.30	0.63	2.94	0.79	5.581	498	<.001
Impact of peers related to academic performance	3.36	.77	2.98	.75	5.483	498	<.001
Peer influences student’s misbehavior	3.47	.82	3.31	.90	2.020	498	.044
Impact of peers on student’s academic success or failures	3.41	.66	3.33	.72	1.287	498	.199
Motivation of peers related to academics	3.26	.64	3.32	.70	-1.111	498	.267
Student’s responses regarding keep their peers happy	3.63	.61	3.46	.70	2.841	498	.005
Indicators of peer pressure regarding changing their personality	3.42	.83	3.40	.74	.203	498	.839

Note: p<0.05

“Table shows that an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare peer pressure for male and female students. If the p value greater than .05, it means there is no significant difference between males and females.” Results of independent samples t-test shows there is no statistically significant difference between males and females in three factors i.e. peer’s impact on their academic success or failure for male (M=3.41, SD=0.66)

and for female (M=3.33, SD=0.72); $t(498)=1.287, p=0.199$, motivating their peers in academics for male (M=3.26, SD=0.64) and for female (M=3.32, SD=0.70); $t(498)=-1.111, p=0.267$ and pressure of peers in changing their personality for male (M=3.42, SD=0.83) and for female (M=3.40, SD=0.74); $t(498)=0.203, p=0.839$. “It shows that peer pressure on both males and females are almost same, both of them feels peer pressure same.” “Results of independent samples t-test shows there is a statistically significant difference between males and females because there p value is less than .05 in four factors i.e. in influencing their peers to conduct misbehavior for male (M=3.47, SD=0.28); $t(498)=2.020, p=0.044$, in doing task such as taking risk with friends for male (M=3.30, SD=0.63) and for female (M=2.94, SD=0.79); $t(498)=5.581, p<0.001$, to keep their peers happy for male (M=3.63, SD=0.61) and for female (M=3.46, SD=0.70); $t(498)=2.841, p=0.005$ and impact of peers in relation to their academic performance for male (M=3.36, SD=0.77) and for female (M=2.98, SD=0.75); $t(498)=5.483, p<0.001$ ”

Discussion and Conclusions

The present study was conducted to analyze the effect of peer pressure among undergraduate students. The main results of the current study are discussed in the context of prior studies. Influence of negative peers is the primary cause for the prevalence of adolescent misbehavior. Current study shows that “there is a statistical difference between male and female” in influencing their peers to conduct misbehavior e.g. helping their friend cheat at college, helping a friend to cover up a lie or lied to his/her parents at the urging of friends which coincide with prior studies concluding that most of the time peer influence the young adult to create disturbance in class room, to disrespect teacher, to become part of bullying incident with friends, help a friend to cheat at college (Stuart, 2001; Wickert, 2002). The previous findings support that there is a relationship between peers’ misbehavior. Peers have potential to promote and protect misbehavior of each other. (Gerend, 2009). Social interaction plays an important role and most of the behavioral problems are linked with how young people interact with each other (Barber 1997).

The current study also found the significant difference between male and female in showing risk taking behavior, and it is supported by Neven Ricijaš (2013) which asserts that gender is a significant predictor of enhanced vulnerability to peers’ effect. Similarly, prior studies also reported that male students are more engaged in risk taking and they face failure in their studies (Bullis, Walker & Stieber, 1998; Mlowosa, 2014). Gardner & Steinberg

(2005) also found in their experimental study that adolescents usually make risky decisions when they are with their peers than alone and youngsters are more susceptible to risk taking behavior than adults.

“There is also a significance difference between male and female in influencing their peers in relation to academic performance” and it is supported by previous study that females do better in exams (Aryana, 2010). Weiten and Lloyd, (2004) stated that adolescents with high rate of compliance with unconventional peer conduct tends to have lower academic performance than those with reduced level of compliance, male academic performance were more heavily affected by peer pressure than female and these results support the findings of this study.

The current study revealed that majority of the students agreed that they change their physical appearance to get along with friends and it is in line with the prior research by American Psychological Association (2002) that during adolescence physical appearance is a significant element and for teenagers’ personality is therefore become essential when they try to create a distinctive style or try to “fit in” with peer group. ‘There is no significant difference between male and female regarding peer pressure’ to change their personality which contradicts prior studies which indicated that girls significantly believe that wearing fashionable clothes make them “someone out of the group” due to this reason they dress nicely, if they do not, teenage girls feel that they will be rejected by their friends (Lamsaouri, 2005). Young adults have the ability to influence their peers into buying a particular product, and women are more affected than men (Kinderman, 2016; Asmak, 2006).

Findings of this study indicated that students feel peer pressure and they can do anything to keep their peers happy, the results are supported by Toramanand & Aycicek (2019), who says that peers make every effort to acknowledge the moral principles of the group they are belonging with and strive to meet their standard because rejection by peers may lead the person to the feeling of shame, sadness or grief and it may adversely affect the daily and future life of young person.

It was also concluded that students identify peers who motivate them to study and same results were presented previously conducted studies that engaging with peers who have decent qualities and good characteristics motivate the individual towards better academic performance (Ryan, 2000; You, 2011).

“The main objective of study was to analyze effect of peer among students at undergraduate level. Peers play an important role in the lives of adolescents. Peer pressure is a form of stress on adolescents which they felt from their friends, to act, behave, and think like their peers.” An adolescent wants to be accepted from their peers therefore they participated in all that activities, which their friends asked to do whether they want to do or not. Peer pressure can have both positive and negative influence on adolescent’s life. “Male students took peer pressure more than females in a negative way and they are more likely to associate with larger peer groups while females are more likely to form close friendships and it is also noted the level of peer pressure is almost same in all ages.” The selection of peers is a wise decision. “There are ways and things to remember when you are making a choice. Positive peer pressure nurture the abilities of the students and negative peer pressure destroy the personality such as use drugs, smashing someone property etc. Though present study also concluded that peers impact the academic performance of students”.

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