

A Critical Analysis of Adolescent's Relationship with their Peers in the City of Mumbai

Kasaralkar Sarita^{1*} and Jogi Ila²

¹M.M.P. Shah Women's College of Arts & Commerce, Mumbai, India

²Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Karad, Dist. Satara, Maharashtra, India

ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a period of life ranging from puberty to adulthood (roughly ages 12–20), characterized by marked physiological changes, development of sexual feelings, efforts toward the construction of identity, and a progression from concrete to abstract thought. Adolescence is a time when peers play an increasingly important role in the lives of youth. Teens begin to develop friendships that are more intimate, exclusive, and more constant than in earlier years. The objective of this study is to understand the relationship of adolescent girls with their peers. The study was conducted on 50 adolescent girls, falling under the age group of 18-20 years in the city of Mumbai. The outcome of the study reflected a negative, not so healthy relationship among the adolescents and their peers.

Keywords: Adolescents, peers, relationship, analysis, peer-pressure, development

Adolescence is viewed as a transitional stage, during which youths begin to view themselves as distinct individuals but still lack a clearly defined role in society. The focus on the development of supportive relationships in adolescence makes this stage particularly important in the investigation of the relationship between adolescents and their peers. In many ways, friendships are an essential component for development of adolescents.

They provide safe venues where youth can explore their identities, where they can feel accepted and where they can develop a sense of belongingness. Friendships also allow youth to practice and foster social skills necessary for future success. The influence of peers is strongest in early adolescence; it normally peaks at early adolescence and declines during middle and late adolescence, as relationships with parents are renegotiated. Attachment to peers in early adolescence does not forecast trouble unless the attachment is so strong that the young person is willing to give up obeying household rules, doing schoolwork, and developing his or her own talents in order to win peer approval and popularity (Fulgini *et al.*, 2001).

Peer networks are essential to the adolescent's development of social skills. The reciprocal equality that

| Access this article online | |
|---|---|
| Publisher | Website: http://www.ndpublisher.in |
|  | DOI: 10.5958/2230-7311.2016.00033.7 |

Address for correspondence

Shah Women's College of Arts & Commerce, Mumbai, India

E-mail: sarita_chune@yahoo.co.in

characterizes teenage relationships also helps develop positive responses to the various crisis these young people face (Epstein, 1983; Hawkins and Berndt, 1985). Teenagers learn from their friends and age-mates the kinds of behavior that will be socially rewarded and the roles that best suit them.

Kelly and Hansen (1990) came up with six important positive functions of the peer group:

- ❑ *Control aggressive impulses:* Through interaction with peers children and adolescents learn how to resolve differences in ways other than direct aggression. Observing how peers deal with conflict can be helpful in learning assertive rather than aggressive or bullying behavior.
- ❑ *Obtain emotional and social support and become more independent:* Friends and peer groups provide support for adolescents as they take on new responsibilities. The support adolescents get from their peers helps them to become less dependent on their family for support.
- ❑ *Improve social skills, develop reasoning abilities and learn to express feelings in more mature ways:* Through conversation and debate with peers, adolescents learn to express ideas and feelings of care and love as well as anger and pessimistic feelings.
- ❑ *Develop an understanding of sexuality and gender-role behavior:* Sexual attitudes and gender-role behaviors are shaped primarily through peer interactions. Adolescents learn behaviors and attitudes that they associate with being young men and women.
- ❑ *Strengthen moral judgment and values:* Adults generally tell their children what is right and what is wrong. Within the peer group adolescents are left to make decisions on their own. The adolescent has to evaluate the values of peers and decide what is right for him or her. This process of evaluation can help the adolescent to develop moral-reasoning abilities.
- ❑ *Improve self-esteem:* Being liked by a large number of peers helps adolescents feel good about themselves. Being called up on the

telephone or being asked out on a date tells adolescents that they are liked by their peers thereby enhancing feelings of positive self-esteem.

A peer group is both, social group and a primary group of people. Peer group may be defined as a group of people who, through homophily, share similarities such as age, background, and social status. The members of this group are likely to influence a person's beliefs and behavior. Peer groups contain hierarchies and distinct patterns of behavior. During adolescence, the importance of peer groups increases enormously as teenagers seek support from their peers in order to cope with physical, emotional, and social changes of adolescence. They are most likely to seek this support from their friends who are going through the same experience. Adolescents tend to spend more time with their peers and have less adult supervision. Adolescents' communication shifts during this time as well. They prefer to talk about school and their careers with their parents, and they enjoy talking about sex and other interpersonal relationships with their peers. Adolescents join peer groups who accept them, even if the group is involved in negative activities. Peer groups are less likely to accept those who are different from them.

Peer groups are essential to social as well as general development. High quality friendships may enhance children's development regardless of the characteristics of those friends. As children begin interact with various people and create friendships with them, it later helps them when they enter into adolescence. This prepares the framework for adolescents and peer groups.

Adolescents also associate with friends of the opposite sex much more than in childhood and tend to identify with larger groups of peers. It is also common for adolescents to use friends as coping devices in various situations.

Peers also become an important influence on behavior during adolescence, and peer pressure has been called a hallmark of adolescent experience. Peer conformity in young people is most pronounced with respect to style, taste, appearance, ideology, and values. Peer pressure is commonly associated with episodes of adolescent

risk taking (such as delinquency, drug abuse, sexual behaviors, and rash driving) because these activities commonly occur in the company of peers. Affiliation with friends who engage in risk behaviors has been shown to be a strong predictor of an adolescent's own behavior. Peer pressure can also have positive effects when youth are pressured by their peers toward positive behavior, such as volunteering for charity or excelling in academics. The importance of peers declines upon entering adulthood.

Peer pressure is the influence that a peer group exerts on the adolescents which encourages them to change their attitudes, values, or behaviors to conform the group norms. Peer pressure is when members or friends of the same age group try to influence or talk you in to doing things that you do not do. Many people give in to peer pressure because they want to be accepted by their friends. Groups establish norms and standards of behavior that apply to all group members. Groups may pressurize members to conform to these norms. Such peer pressure is often characterized as an irresistible, harmful force. The stereotypes are that teenagers exert enormous pressure on each other to behave antisocially. In actuality, peer influence is more complex than our stereotype of the negative influences from friends. First, peer influence can be both positive and negative. While we tend to think that peer influence leads teens to engage in unhealthy and unsafe behaviors, it can actually motivate youth to study harder in school, volunteer for community and social services, and participate in sports and other productive endeavors. In fact, most teens report that their peers pressure them not to engage in drug use and sexual activity.

Statement of Problem

"To study the relationship between adolescent girls and their peers during late adolescence (18-20 yrs)".

Objectives of the study

- To understand personal, social and economic characteristics of adolescent girl respondents in the city of Mumbai.
- To study the peer-adolescent relationship.

Methodology

This research paper is an initiative to analyze adolescent-peer relationship through a sample study of 50 adolescent girls (18-20 years) residing in the city of Mumbai. Purposive Sampling Method was used for the selection of the sample. To assess the adolescents' equation with their peers, a comprehensive questionnaire was developed and its findings were evaluated through mean, mode, median, standard deviation and T-test methods.

The questionnaire comprised of multiple choice questions that were assessed on a three point scale (Agree, Disagree, No Response). Efforts were made to ensure that all the parameters of observing adolescent-peer relationship were incorporated in the questionnaire. For this purpose, the questionnaire was divided into two segments, the first part dealing with positive and the latter with negative attributes of adolescent-peer relationships.

Results

Over the centuries, researchers have well established the fact that Adolescence is a time of rapid changes and multiple challenges. Peer relationships appear as an important source of influence on the self-esteem and life satisfaction of adolescents, as power of influence on social-emotional adjustment of peers increases dramatically during adolescence.

Table 1: Personal, Socio-Economic Characteristics of Adolescent Girl Respondents

| Sl. No. | Characteristics | Respondents' Reporting, N=50 |
|-----------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | Type of Family | |
| | 1. Joint | 42 |
| | 2. Nuclear | 52 |
| | 3. Single Parent | 6 |
| 2. | Size of Family | |
| | 1. up to 4 | 50 |
| | 2. 5-8 | 30 |
| | 3. More than 8 | 20 |

3. Family Monthly Income

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| 1. 5000-15000 | 32 |
| 2. 15000-50000 | 38 |
| 3. More than 50000 | 30 |

The study showed that 52% of respondents came from nuclear families while 42% resided in joint families. Hence, it can be ascertained that most of the respondents had up to four members in their respective families. The study of economic characteristics provided us with the information that the adolescent girls in the study belonged to a mix of lower middle, middle and higher middle income families. 32% were from lower middle class families, 38% belonged to middle class families whereas 30% were from higher middle class families.

Table 2: Positive Relationship of Adolescent Girl Respondents with their Peers

| Characteristics | Respondents Response , N =50 (Positive) | | |
|--|--|--------------|-----------------|
| | Agree (%) | Disagree (%) | No Response (%) |
| 1. I have lots of friends | 26 | 72 | 2 |
| 2. I am there when my friends need me. | 6 | 90 | 4 |
| 3. I like my friends. | 0 | 98 | 2 |
| 4. I encourage my friends to be the best they can be. | 2 | 98 | 0 |
| 5. I share all my secrets with my friends. | 30 | 70 | 0 |
| 6. I like hanging out with my friends. | 10 | 82 | 8 |
| 7. I would stand up for my friends if other children were causing trouble to them. | 0 | 94 | 6 |
| 8. I am always praised and appreciated by my friends for my achievements. | 0 | 98 | 2 |
| 9. I like indulging in group activities with my friends. | 2 | 96 | 2 |

An in depth study of the questionnaire highlights the fact that 72% of adolescents conceded to the notion that they did not have many friends. A massive 98% of them

disagreed to the idea that they liked their friends and almost 90% of them said that they won't support their friends during any crisis. It was surprising to note that only 70% of adolescents trusted their friends with their secrets and 98% of them said that they never encouraged their friends for attaining something big and great in their respective lives. Almost 82% of the respondents said that they did not like to hang out with their friends and 98% revealed that their peers never praised them. The adolescent respondents also disagreed to the notion that they liked to carry out group activities with their friends.

Table 3: Negative Relationship of Adolescents with their Peers

| Characteristics | Respondents Response, N = 50 (Negative) | | |
|---|---|----------|-------------|
| | Agree | Disagree | No Response |
| 1. I don't like my friends | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| 2. My friends always dominate over me | 82 | 4 | 14 |
| 3. I bring changes in my life style to fit in with my friends | 68 | 26 | 6 |
| 4. My friends force me to do things I am uncomfortable with. | 90 | 8 | 2 |
| 5. My friends make fun of me. | 72 | 26 | 2 |
| 6. My friends ignore me. | 98 | 2 | 0 |
| 7. My friends do not support me during crisis. | 94 | 6 | 0 |
| 8. I have an inferiority complex among my friends | 76 | 4 | 24 |
| 9. My friends don't care about me. | 100 | 0 | 0 |

A careful analysis of the questionnaire brought to our notice that all the adolescents agreed with the notion that they disliked their friends. 82% of them accepted the fact that their peers tend to dominate over them and 68% of them said that they would make changes in their lifestyle to conform to peer acceptance and recognition. 72% of respondents said that they were a victim of their friends' jokes and were ridiculed by them. While 90% of them said that their friends forced them into doing stuff

that they didn't approve of, 98% said that their friends also ignored them and 94% believed that they won't stand up with them during crisis. 76% of adolescent girls agreed to the fact that they suffer from an Inferiority Complex among their friends and all of them felt left out by their friends since they believed that their friends did not care about them.

Conclusion

The study of the responses of adolescent girls depicted an almost negative, ineffective relationship between the respondents and their friends. A stability was spotted while assessing the positive attributes of adolescent-peer relationship, since all the positive questions brought out negative responses. A similar trend was spotted in the analysis of negative characteristics of adolescent-peer relationships. All the negative questions displayed a positive response from the adolescents, re-affirming the notion that the adolescent girls were highly skeptical and not at all optimistic in their approach towards their friends.

References

- Epstein, J.L. 1983. Longitudinal Effects of Family-School-Person Interactions on student outcomes. In Kerckhoff, A. (Ed.), *Research in Sociology of Education and socialization*, 4: 19-128.
- Fulgini, A., Eccles, J.S., Barber, B. and Clements, P. 2001. Early Adolescent Peer Orientation and Adjustment during high school. *Developmental Psychology*, 37(1): 28-36.
- Hawkins, J.A. and Berndt, T.J. 1985. Adjustment following the transition to Junior High School. In Adams, R.G., School Transitions: Positive and Negative Associations for social, emotional and academic development. Symposium presented at the Biennial Meeting of the society for research in Child Development, Toronto, Canada.
- Kelly, J.A. and Hansen, D.J. 1987. Social Interactions and Adjustment. *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, Pergamon, New York.
- Papalia, E.D., Olds, W.S. and Feldman, D.R. 2004. *Human Development* (9th Ed). New Delhi, Tata McGraw Hill.

