



A Comparative Study of Peer Pressure Among Younger and Older Adolescent Girls

Dr. C.Kalapriya,

Associate Professor, D.K. Government College for Women (A), Nellore

Abstract

The present study aims to explore the age differences between peer pressure and decision making among the college-going adolescent girls. The total sample size was 180 girls (16-17 years – 90, and 18-21 years – 90) which were obtained through stratified random sampling. A structured PP and decision-making questionnaire were used to measure the extent of peer influence. Descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test were used to analyse data. The results showed that the means of younger adolescents ($M = 5.93$, $SD = 2.00$) and older adolescents ($M = 5.95$, $SD = 1.90$) were almost the same. There was no statistically significant difference between the age groups ($t(178) = 0.07$, $p = .94$, Cohen's $d = 0.01$). The results indicate that peer pressure is not significantly affected by age in the present sample of adolescent girls. Peer influences seem to be a universal experience of late adolescence. The study emphasizes on the importance of life skills education, counselling and peer mentoring for all college females regardless of their age.

Keywords: Peer pressure, adolescence, college girls, age differences, decision-making, late adolescence

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical period of development characterized by a combination of biological, emotional, cognitive and social changes. Peer relationships become a primary influence on adolescents' attitudes, behaviours, and decision making during this time. Peer pressure is the effect of peers to adhere to the group norms, attitudes or behaviours and can be positive or negative. Negative peer influences can lead to risky behaviours, whereas positive peer influences can be associated with academic involvement, social competence, and emotional health (Berndt, 1999; Laursen & Veenstra, 2021).

Peer influence is more important among adolescent girls because they are more sensitive to their peers' acceptance and interpersonal relationships. A girl's readiness to enter college at the age of 16 to 21 presents a set of distinctive challenges as she strives to become an autonomous and independent decision maker, as she negotiates social identities, and as she enters this new environment. It has been suggested that younger

adolescents are more susceptible to peer pressure, because they have less life experience, while older adolescents have more maturity and independence of thought (Steinberg, 2005; Casey et al., 2008).

But the empirical results on age differences and peer pressure are mixed. The authors of Steinberg and Monahan (2007) showed that resistance to peer influence starts to rise primarily from age 14 to 18 years and then decreases only slightly after that. Brechwald and Prinstein (2011) highlighted that the peer influence processes are not limited to adolescence, but reached during this life stage, especially in the academic and behavioral spheres.

Recent studies have shed light on the increasing role of digital environments in peer pressure. Social media has been identified as an important environment for adolescents' peer relations, which goes beyond the school context (Nesi, 2020; Vannucci and Ohannessian, 2019). Albert et al. (2013) also demonstrated that peers make adolescents more sensitive to social rewards, influencing their decision-making.

Kumar and Arora (2022) noted that there is no difference between the influence of peers on college girls across age groups in Indian context because the social and cultural norms are the same and students go through similar learning experiences in the college. In a recent review of empirical research, Laursen and Veenstra (2021) found that peer influence is a phenomenon that extends across the entire period of adolescence and is associated with a number of developmental processes. But there is limited research comparing the younger with the older girls going to college in India. Based on these mixed results and this gap, the present study tries to determine if there is a significant difference between the influence of peers and decision making with respect to age for the adolescent girls in the college going category.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine age-wise distribution of peer pressure among college-going adolescent girls.
2. To compare peer pressure levels between girls aged 16–17 years and 18–21 years.
3. To determine whether age significantly influences peer pressure.

Hypothesis

$H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$ where μ_1 is the mean peer pressure score for girls who are 16-17 years of age and μ_2 is the mean peer pressure score for girls who are 18-21 years of age.

Methodology

Sample

The sample consisted of 180 adolescent girls aged 16–21 years, who were drawn by stratified random sampling procedure, with age groups as the strata. The participants were equally divided into two age groups: 16–17 years ($n = 90$) and 18–21 years ($n = 90$). The sample comprised students studying Intermediate and Degree courses

in two colleges of Nellore, Andhra Pradesh, one Government Junior College (Intermediate students) and one Government Degree College (undergraduate students). The data has been gathered in August 2026.

Tool

The participants' peer influence and decision-making ability were measured using a structured Peer Pressure and Decision-Making Questionnaire. The responses were scored to get the mean peer pressure score. The questionnaire is authored by the investigator and has 25 questions, which have a Yes / No response format. The "Yes" answers were each given a value of 1 and the "No" answers a value of 0, with a possible score range of 0 to 25, with higher scores representing higher levels of peer pressure.

Procedure

The study participants were asked to participate in the study after obtaining permission from the institutional authorities and informed consent from the participants. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. The collected data were tabulated and statistically analysed.

Statistical Analysis

Peer pressure scores from the two age groups were compared using descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) and Independent Sample t-test. A p value of < 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Results and Discussion

The age distribution of the sample showed that there were equal number of younger (16–17 years) and older adolescent girls (18–21 years) (Table 1). The mean score for younger age group for peer pressure was 5.93 (SD = 2.00), and the mean score for older age group was 5.95 (SD = 1.90; Table 2).

There was no statistically significant difference between the two age groups as indicated by the independent samples t-test with a t value of 0.07 (df = 178) and a p value of .94. The effect size was very small (Cohen's $d = 0.01$) and the difference in means (0.02 points) was not practically significant. So the null hypothesis is accepted. The finding indicates that age is not a significant factor in the peer pressure among adolescent girls in college-going.

The findings are in line with previous research that suggested the effects of peer influence decrease with age in late adolescence, but that peer influence is still present during this time period (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007; Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011; Laursen & Veenstra, 2021). The results also align with recent studies on the impact of shared academic settings and digital peer interactions on lowering age differences in susceptibility to peer pressure (Nesi, 2020; Vannucci & Ohannessian, 2019).

The similarity in scores may be due to the fact that both groups are educated in the same educational institution and share the same daily routines, classrooms, peer groups, etc. and the social context of peer interaction may

be more important than chronological age. Also, the age difference between the groups is small and both are middle to late adolescents, when the resistance to peer influence is decreasing (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007).

Table 1: Age-wise Distribution of the Sample (N = 180)

S.No.	Age (years)	Frequenc y (n)	Percentage (%)
1.	16-17	90	50
2.	18-21	90	50
Total		180	100

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and t-Test Results for Peer Pressure by Age Group

S.No.	Age	Mean	SD	t(178)	p
1	16-17	5.93	2.00	0.07	0.94
2	18-21	5.95	1.90		

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The study was conducted with female students in two government colleges in Nellore and results may not be applicable to boys, other parts of the country or to adolescents not attending formal education. Peer pressure was assessed using self-report, which can be influenced by social desirability. The two age groups were of similar age and the cross-sectional design is not able to detect developmental change over time in the same subjects. Future studies might involve males, younger adolescents, a comparison of urban/rural, longitudinal designs, and moderators including social media usage, parenting style and self-esteem.

Conclusion

The study concludes that age is not significantly related to peer pressure among the adolescent girls aged 16-21 who go to college. Peer influence is equally strong between younger and older adolescents, indicating that peer pressure is a universal developmental phenomenon in late-adolescent years. Therefore, all age college going girls should be targeted in interventions designed to improve decision-making and resilience to negative peer influence.

Implications of the Study

1. All adolescent girls need life skills and decision-making training in college curriculum.
2. Counselling services should be designed to take peer pressure as a universal issue of adolescence rather than an age specific issue.
3. Digital literacy initiatives are critical to empower adolescents to effectively deal with online peer pressure.

References

- Albert, D., Chein, J., & Steinberg, L. (2013). The teenage brain: Peer influences on adolescent decision making. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(2), 114–120.
- Berndt, T. J. (1999). Friends' influence on adolescents' adjustment. *Educational Psychologist*, 34(1), 15–28.
- Brechwald, W., & Prinstein, M. J. (2011). Beyond homophily: A decade of advances in understanding peer influence processes. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 21(1), 166–179.
- Casey, B. J., Jones, R. M., & Hare, T. A. (2008). The adolescent brain. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1124, 111–126.
- Kumar, R., & Arora, S. (2022). Peer influence among Indian college girls. *Indian Journal of Psychology and Education*, 12(2), 45–52.
- Laursen, B., & Veenstra, R. (2021). Toward understanding the functions of peer influence: A summary and synthesis of recent empirical research. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 31(4), 889–907.
- Nesi, J. (2020). The impact of social media on youth mental health: Challenges and opportunities. *North Carolina Medical Journal*, 81(2), 116–121.
- Steinberg, L. (2005). Cognitive and affective development in adolescence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 9(2), 69–74.
- Steinberg, L., & Monahan, K. C. (2007). Age differences in resistance to peer influence. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1531–1543.
- Sumter, S. R., Bokhorst, C. L., Steinberg, L., & Westenberg, P. M. (2009). The developmental pattern of resistance to peer influence in adolescence: Will the teenager ever be able to resist? *Journal of Adolescence*, 32(4), 1009–1021.
- Vannucci, A., & Ohannessian, C. M. (2019). Social media use subgroups differentially predict psychosocial well-being during early adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48(8), 1469–1493.