

## **Peer Pressure in College Students: A Comparative Study**

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**Abstract:** The main purpose of this study is to find out the Peer pressure levels among college going students. Peer pressure is persuading or encouraging another person to engage in certain types of behaviour. It is a mutual influence process through which peers become increasingly similar over time and share similar characteristics (Dishon & Dodge, 2005). This is evidently seen at large among college students as there is a higher need of social acceptance in them. This study is to compare the peer pressure levels among different college year students. A sample of 200 students was collected by Multistage Stratified Random Sampling technique from the colleges in Gandhinagar and in Ahmedabad. Around 50 students from each college year that is 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> were randomly selected to fill the questionnaire of the standardized instrument of PEER PRESSURE SCALE developed by Sandeep Singh and Sunil Saini (2010). The results of this study are interpreted using the t-test two sample variance method of statistics. The results conclude that 2<sup>nd</sup> year college students experience the highest Peer Pressure and 4<sup>th</sup> year college students experience the least Peer Pressure.

**Keywords:** Peer pressure, College year, Student

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Social influence refers to the way in which individuals change their ideas and actions to meet the demands of a social group, perceived authority, social role or a minority within a group wielding influence over the majority. We humans are social beings and hence our socialization takes place across the life span. However, one of the most important periods of an individual's life will be adolescence, when one remarkably comes under the contact of many people and rapid changes takes place due to the influence of their interaction. During this time, the peer relationships take on increasing importance and play a critical role in a person's life, his social skills, his development, and even his self-concept (Klarin, 2006). The concept of peer influence is related to a mutual influence process through which peers become increasingly similar over time and share similar characteristics (Dishon & Dodge, 2005). Peer influence and Peer pressure are two different concepts. Peer pressure is persuading or encouraging another person to engage in certain types of behaviour. It can be direct or indirect (Sim and Koh, 2003). Berndt and Ladd (1989) define susceptibility to peer pressure as the influence that peer groups exert by rewarding those who conform to expected norms and/or punishing those who violate them. Peer pressure is basically just one form of Peer influence.

A major part of adolescents' life is the transition from high school to college. In colleges, the behaviour of the individuals changes significantly upon interaction with the many different people that they encounter in college. Their social interaction also increases drastically, especially with the peers, while attending parties and college functions together. They are majorly influenced by their batch mates and it plays a major role in the behavioural changes of the students and more so when there is a fear of conformity and social acceptance by their fellow peers. Nobody wants to be left out of any group in colleges and hence there is a higher chance of the Peer pressure and its effects on college going students. Researchers have found peer pressure to be linked with a host of undesirable outcomes for adolescents, including greater alcohol consumption, cigarette use, petty theft, drug use, delinquency, depressive symptoms, risky sexual behaviour etc (Allen, 2006; Crockett, 2006; Sullivan, 2006). However, in college going students there is a higher need of social acceptance and hence peers pressurize each other to do certain things and in a way influence each other. They sometimes come up with unrealistic expectations; they are still adapting to the new environment and there is a need for some connection to be established and make new friends and hence the students come under peer pressure and end up doing certain things that many a times they don't even want to. This doesn't only happen to the newcomers in college but even the ones who have completed their 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> year in college or even the ones who are about to graduate. Students from different years in college also experience different levels of Peer Pressure. It has to be considered

that the freshmen who have newly joined college have a lot more difficulty in adjusting as the environment completely changes from the high school experience. They still are a little less connected to the whole college environment and are looking for new experiences and groups to settle in. The first year students are not very stable in a particular group generally and are looking for people who have similar mindsets and attitudes with whom they can connect to in the college for the next few years that they are going to be in. In comparison to this, those students who are in second and third year have more or less already established their own college groups, and found out people that they hang out with most of the times. The whole shift from high school to college is not new to them and hence they are more familiar with the college traditions and it may be a factor that can affect the levels of peer pressure that they experience. These students have higher needs to be more stable and recognized by their fellow friends and hence the tendency to succumb to the peer pressure is generally more than the freshmen. They have a mindset to get all the college experiences in the lives before they move on to the last year of college and then later fall apart, focusing more on their career life. Considering this, the fourth year students generally and more focused on their academics and even when they have a familiar group since the last couple of years, they now care more about their studies and life after college and hence the tendency to succumb to peer pressure is less than those who are in the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year of college. On basis of this, the hypotheses for this study have been established and the research will be conducted to find out the different levels of peer pressure that is experienced by students in different college years.

There is a need to understand the effects of peer pressure on the college students and how are they influenced by them and what are the needs of the students to be pressurised by the peers.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Fishbein in 1996 proposed that adult peer pressure is challenging especially when an individual is trying to fit in a certain group. It is found that adults often make up a mental checklist about their decisions and think whether they will be accepted by the fellow peers and thus begin to work on areas that will give them acceptance by their peers.

Sangeetha V and Chetan S V (2015) in their paper titled 'Happiness and peer pressure among adolescents' found that there was a significant negative relationship between happiness and peer pressure among adolescents. Also, Middle and late adolescents did not differ significantly in happiness and peer pressure, and there were no significant gender differences among adolescents in happiness and peer pressure.

B. Bradford Brown in the year 1982, in his paper titled 'The extent and effects of peer pressure among high school students: A retrospective analysis' assessed how much pressure peers exerted in numerous areas of high school. One-third of both genders identified peer pressure as one of the hardest things they face as teenagers. Perceptions of peer pressure were significantly associated with dating attitudes, sexual activity, use of drugs and alcohol etc.

Brian Borsari and Kate B. Carey in 2001 in the paper 'Peer influences on college drinking: A review of the research' found ample evidence that demonstrated the interpersonal processes influenced student drinking; peer environment and pressure contributed highly to high-risk alcohol use by ways of modelling and perceived social norms. Peers, through their own behaviour suggest what behaviours are accepted and admired in a social context, whereas modelling and social norms are two different influences that have been linked to drinking behaviour.

Lashbrook and Jeffrey T. in 2000 conducted a research exploring the emotional dimension of adolescent peer pressure and it was found that negative emotions play a role in peer influence, particularly the feelings of inadequacy and isolation, thus shame related feelings may be instrumental in motivating individuals to conform.

Gary E. Brown, Paul A. Dixon and J. Danny Hudson in their paper titled 'Effect of peer pressure on imitation of humour response in college students' in the year 1982, conducted research examining the effects of increasing number of laughing or no laughing peer models in college students. The students who observed laughing models laughed more than the students who observed no laughing models when reading magazine cartoons alone.

Tanis Bryan, Ruth Pearl and Patrick Fallon in the year 1989 assessed the responses of junior high school students with learning disabilities and normally achieving classmates to peer pressure to conform in prosocial and antisocial activities. It was found that students with learning disabilities indicated more willingness than their classmates to conform to peer pressure to engage in antisocial actions.

Dawn M. Gondoli, Alexandra F. Corning, Elizabeth H. Blodgett, Salafia Michaela, M. Bucchianeri and Ellen E. Fitzsimmons in the year 2011 published a report which examined the longitudinal connections among young adolescent hetero social involvement, peer pressure for thinness, and body dissatisfaction. Self-report questionnaire data was collected in the span of 3 years from girls in 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> standard. Results indicated that the relation between hetero social involvement and body dissatisfaction was mediated by perceived peer pressure for thinness. Hetero social involvement was associated with greater peer pressure for thinness. In turn, peer pressure for thinness was associated with greater body dissatisfaction.

Aditi Acharya and Dr. Guptain 2014 conducted a research to study the influence of peer pressure on brand switching among Indian college students. And a positive relationship was found between the peers using a brand or favoring a brand and the consumer switching to that brand. . The survey responses additionally unconcealed that sharing whole of brand name of name opinions were correlative with brand switch, thereby reinforcing the strength of peer pressure.

A research was conducted by Dr. B. J. Casey in 2008, where teenagers volunteers played a video game either alone or with friends watching. It was found out that the risk taking factor in the video games increased drastically when the teens were playing in front of their friends than when they were playing alone. This concluded that teens find it more difficult to control impulsive and risky behaviors when they are with their friends or in situations that are emotionally charged. This may indicate the effect of peer pressure among teenage behaviors.

### **III. RESEARCH GAP**

Many researches have been conducted regarding the effects of peer pressure on students. Peer pressure have often been associated with the negative outcomes such as alcohol consumption, drug abuse, sexual relationships etc and the researchers conducted have explored the effects of peer pressure on any of these outcomes.

However the different levels of peer pressure on the different years of college students have not yet been explored, especially in the region of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar, Gujarat. This research will determine in which year the peer pressure is experienced the most in colleges. The research conducted will also give a comparison between the male and female college students and the influence of peer pressure among them.

### **IV. OBJECTIVE**

To determine which college year students experience the highest peer pressure.

### **V. VARIABLES**

#### **Independent variable:**

- Age–a) 17-20yrsb)21-24yrs
- Gender–Female / Male
- College year – 1<sup>st</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 4<sup>th</sup> year

#### **Dependent variable:**

- Peer pressure

### **VI. HYPOTHESIS**

H1. First year college students experience more peer pressure as compared to second year students.

H<sub>0</sub>. First year college students do not experience more peer pressure as compared to second year students.

H2. Fourth year students experience more peer pressure as compared to third year students.

H<sub>0</sub>. Fourth year students do not experience more peer pressure as compared to third year students.

### **VII. METHODOLOGY**

#### **Test Instrument:**

The test used for this research paper is the PEER PRESSURE SCALE developed by Sandeep Singh and Sunil Saini in the year 2010. This scale is mainly designed to measure the levels of Peer Pressure, suitable in the Indian conditions. This is a uni-dimensional scale which gives estimate of peer pressure among adolescents. The test includes 25 items which have to be marked in the scale of 5 pointers.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Can't say
- Agree
- Strongly agree

The positive scoring was done from 1 to 5 where 1 represents the option 'Strongly Agree' and 5 represents the option 'Strongly Disagree'. Whereas Q2, Q7 and Q23 have negative scoring and they were scored from 5 to 1 where 'Strongly Disagree' is scored as 1 and 'Strongly Agree' is scored as 5.

#### **Sampling size:**

A data of 200 students were collected from the colleges of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. Around 50 samples for each college year i.e. 1 to 4 were collected. The questionnaire took about 10-15 minutes to fill.

Demographics		
College year	1st year	51
	2nd year	51
	3rd year	49
	4th year	49
Gender	Male	79
	Female	121

#### Sampling Techniques:

The technique used for the collection of this data is the Multistage Stratified Random Sampling as the samples were first divided into small groups called 'strata' and then a random population was approached to fill the form.

#### Test Description:

The test applied in this study is the t-test. It is a statistical test which is applied to determine if there is a significant difference between the averages of two groups which may be related in certain features. The t-test paired with two samples performs a test to ascertain if the Null Hypothesis can be accepted or rejected.  $P(T < -t)$  two-tail is the probability that a value of the t-statistics would be observed that is larger in absolute value than t.

### VIII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This particular research is only based in the region of Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar and hence the results interpreted from the data collected cannot be implied to any other regions in the country. The peer pressure scale used is only applicable to a certain age group so the scale cannot be generalized to a larger population. The sample size was only 200 which proves a restriction to generalize the results. Peer pressure in college students is a very broad topic and the research only focuses on finding the highest peer pressure in the different college years.

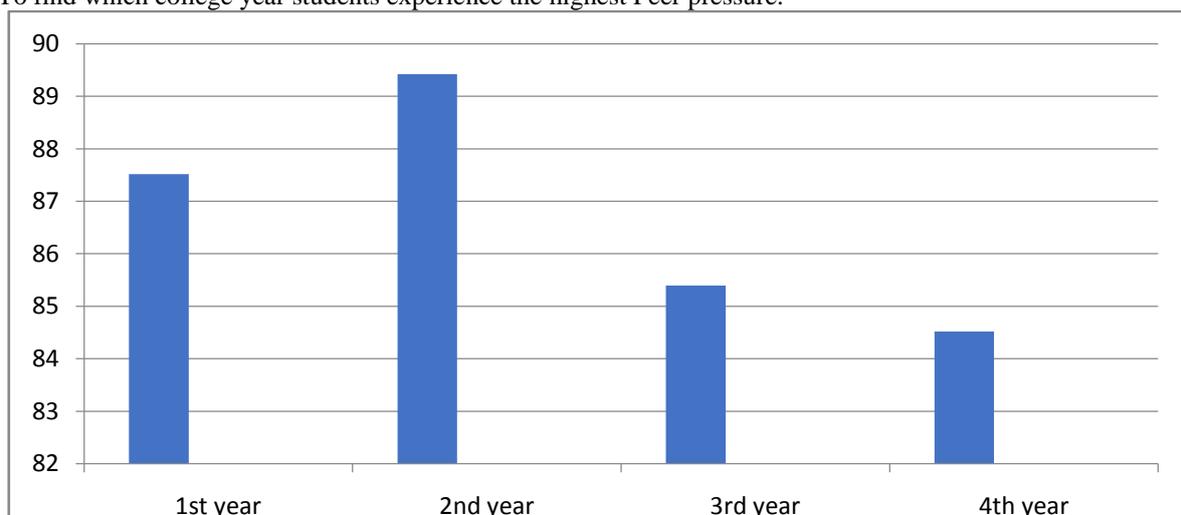
### IX. RESULTS

After arranging the data in Excel sheet, the average mean of Peer Pressure in different college years were calculated.

The skewness of the total sum of all the data was calculated as -0.66. While the kurtosis was calculated as 0.19. On the basis of this the t-test was applied to test the hypothesis; first with the sample of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year college students and then with the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year college students.

#### Objective

To find which college year students experience the highest Peer pressure.



#### INTERPRETATION:

On the y-axis, the percentage of average mean representing Peer Pressure is taken and on the x-axis, different college years i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 3<sup>rd</sup> year and 4<sup>th</sup> year is taken. The bars represent the level of Peer

pressure experiences by the students in different college years. Looking at the bar graph, it can be interpreted that 2<sup>nd</sup> year students experience the highest Peer Pressure in comparison to freshmen and even senior year college students. It can also be seen that the senior most students, the students studying in 4<sup>th</sup> year, experience the least Peer Pressure.

**Table 1:** Mean Table

1st year	87.52
2nd year	89.42
3rd year	85.40
4th year	84.52

**H1.** First year college students experience more peer pressure as compared to second year students.

**H0.** First year college students do not experience more peer pressure as compared to second year students.

**Table 2.1:** t-test Results: Peer Pressure levels of 1st year college students and 2nd year college students.

	<i>1<sup>st</sup> year</i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> year</i>
Mean	87.84313725	89.39215686
Variance	136.814902	145.4431373
Observations	51	51
Pooled Variance	141.1290196	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	100	
t Stat	-0.658443998	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.255882998	
t Critical one-tail	1.660234327	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.511765996	
t Critical two-tail	1.983971466	

**INTERPRETATION:**

If  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ , the Null Hypothesis is rejected and Alternate Hypothesis is accepted. Here, in the table, considering the value of P (T<=t) two-tail which is 0.52, which is more than 0.05, the **Null Hypothesis is accepted** and the Alternate Hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it can be said the **First Year college students** do not experience more Peer Pressure than **Second Year college students**.

**H2.** Fourth year students experience more peer pressure as compared to third year students.

**H0.** Fourth year students do not experience more peer pressure as compared to third year students.

**Table 2.1:** t-test Results: Peer Pressure levels of 3<sup>rd</sup> year college students and 4<sup>th</sup> year college students.

	<i>3<sup>rd</sup> year</i>	<i>4<sup>th</sup> year</i>
Mean	85.16326531	84.71428571
Variance	174.8894558	195.2916667
Observations	49	49
Pooled Variance	185.0905612	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	96	
t Stat	0.163349386	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.43529337	
t Critical one-tail	1.660881441	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.870586739	
t Critical two-tail	1.984984263	

**INTERPRETATION:**

If the  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ , the Null Hypothesis is rejected and the Alternate Hypothesis is accepted. Here, in the table, it can be found, looking at the P (T<=t) two-tail value which is 0.87, which is greater than the p-value. Therefore, the **Null Hypothesis is accepted** and the Alternate Hypothesis is rejected. Hence, it can be concluded that **Fourth Year college students** do not experience more Peer Pressure than **Third Year college students**.

**Result table**

Table 3: Results

	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>High</b>	165	82.5%
<b>Average</b>	32	16%
<b>Low</b>	3	1.5%

From Table 3, it is found that out of the total sample of 200 students, 16% students experienced moderate/average Peer Pressure. 82.5% students experienced high Peer Pressure and only 1.5% of the sample data collected experienced Low Peer Pressure. The above mentioned statistics is regarding the entire sample size that was collected. This gives a general idea about the amount of Peer Pressure experienced by the students in colleges, apart from the different levels of Peer Pressure experienced in different college years. Looking at the data, it is concluded that high Peer Pressure is experienced by most of the college students.

## X. DISCUSSION

From the findings of the study, it can be inferred that the students who are studying in the second year of college experience the most Peer Pressure and the students who are studying in the fourth year of college experience the least Peer Pressure. Both the Null Hypothesis have been accepted in this study and thus it can be concluded that second year college students experience more Peer Pressure than first year college students and third year college students experience more Peer Pressure than fourth year college students.

The results found from the study clearly state the levels of different peer pressure and more studies can be conducted to find the reasons of the varying levels of peer pressure in different college year students. The student in the same year also have different views regarding the peer pressure and thus within one particular year also, the students have different mind sets. This is because the individuals have a different psyche and thought process towards peer pressure and this determines whether they want to succumb to peer pressure and if yes than to what extent. The many questions in the scale provided by Singh and Saini gave a detailed outlay of how many are willing to do actions under peer pressure and what is their mindset towards those activities. Although there might be a difference when it comes to generalizing the analysis because of difference in environment around different universities and the areas they are situated in. The surrounding environment has a huge influence on the upbringing of an individual and how they are moulded by their families and schools in early stages of life.

Personal questions referring to *smoking* or *dating* were generally marked in negation which states that the tendency is still not that high to succumb to peer pressure when the situations are about personal life where as students are more likely to follow the path of their peers when they are aware that there are others included with them such as *missing classes* or *going for parties*.

The results of the study shown in table 1 also indicate the peer pressure levels based on the norms described in the manual by Singh and Saini in the year 2010. It was found that majority of both males and females experience *high* peer pressure as per the norms in the manual. Majority of both have their score ranging above 73 which indicate the high levels of stress.

College students should be made aware of the effects of peer pressure on their behaviour and there should be lectures on the pros and cons of peer pressure in the school itself so teenagers can keep check on their behaviour and infer whether the reason behind that is the pressure from their peers. It is a general fact that college students have the tendency to go with the flow as they don't want to feel left out. The kind of peer pressures also has an impact on the personal life of an individual. The consequences of peer pressure can even lead to stress in the lives of some people. Succumbing to peer pressure and doing what one might not do otherwise can lead to stress or even depression while the feeling of being left out can also lead to depression. Hence, for a college student it becomes a difficult situation to choose between whether to get under the influence of peer pressure or not.

## XI. RECOMMENDATION

From this research, it can be recommended that students, from the school level itself should be given proper awareness about peer pressure and how to not dwell into bad habits under the influence of peers. Students should know to identify between a good company and a bad company and should be encouraged to be surrounded by peers who will help them develop holistically.

Individuals should know to encourage their peers to improve academically and also be better at social and personal skills. Good habits and values play an important role here and this grooming can be started from the early stages of life. Getting under the influence of peer pressure is easy but one should know how to stay away from bad influence and for that life lessons are necessary which a person generally receives from their family members and at school by their teachers and peers. This development should not be overlooked by

elders. Only when students are aware of their surroundings and needs, will they be able to identify and choose their company wisely.

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