



Social Changes and Peer Group Influence among the Adolescents Pursuing Under Graduation

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of impact of social changes and peer group influence during adolescence. Adolescence is an age when an individual becomes integrated into the society of adults, the age when the child no longer feels that he is below the level of elders, equal, at least in rights. This integration into adult society has many affective aspects and changes in social behaviour. The purpose of this quantitative, descriptive study was to explore social changes and peer group influence during adolescence. Self-prepared 5 point scale was used to assess the social changes among adolescence. Since friendship in early adolescence plays an important role in psychosocial development, the findings of the study shows that overall social changes has positive correlation with various dimension of social changes like peer group influence, changes in social behaviour, social grouping, selection of friends, social acceptance and selection of leader during adolescence.

Keywords: Social change, peer group influence, adolescenc.

Introduction

Adolescence is a period in human development characterized by transition. One of the most important transitions occurring during adolescence is the rise of peer relationships in importance and influence. Peer relationships provide a context not only for the acquisition and maintenance of friendships and friendship networks but also for the development of key social skills, social problem solving skills, and empathy¹. Peer relationships are not entirely positive, however, and peers may also play a role in the development of negative outcomes, such as poor academic. A complex of biological, cognitive and social changes characterizes the period of adolescence. All these changes affect and are affected by changes in young people's social relations. Their relationships with parents become more symmetrical and the adolescents gain greater freedom to make their own decisions about their behaviour and personal commitments²⁻⁴. Social change, which entails large scale alternations in ideological, technological, and economic systems within societies, has significant implications for adolescent's development. For example, social change can affect the structure and dynamics of social contexts that adolescents experience on a daily basis such as family, school and youth groups⁵.

Social Change and Peer Group Influence: Social change is expected to have implications for adolescent development and adjustment. Although some degree of social change is characteristic of modern industrialized societies, changes that alter the organization of social life are presumed to present major adaptive challenges that can overburden the coping capacities of some young people. This should be especially true when young people are also attempting to cope with the normative changes of adolescence or with non-normative life events such as parental

death⁶. Adolescents spend most of their time our side the home with members of the peer group, it is understandable that peers would have a greater influence on adolescent attitudes, speech, interests, appearance, and behaviour than the family has. Most adolescents, for example, discover that if they wear the same type of cloths as popular group members wear, their chance of acceptance are enhanced. Similarly, if members of the peer group experiment with alcohol, drugs, or tobacco, adolescents are likely to do the same, regardless of how they feel about these matters. As adolescence progresses, peer-group influence begins to wane. There are two reasons for this. First, most adolescents want to become individuals in their own right and to be recognised as such. The second reason for waning of peer-group influence is the result of the adolescent's choice of peers as companions. No longer are adolescents interested in large group activities, as was true during their childhood days. In adolescence there is a tendency to narrow down friendships to smaller numbers though most adolescents want to belong to longer social groups for social activities. Because these social activities are less meaningful to adolescents than close, personal friendships, the influence of the larger social group becomes less pronounced than the influenced of friends⁷.

Objectives: i. To find out the socio-demographic characteristics of the adolescence. ii. To study about the peer group influence during adolescence. iii. To evaluate about the new values in selection of friends.

Research Methodology

This study tries to understand the social changes among adolescence through their peer group influence. Descriptive research design was used. The investigator has attempted to

describe the variable peer group influence during the adolescence. The respondents were 100 (51 male and 49 female) undergraduate students of Urumu Dhanalakshmi College of Arts and Science, Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu and they were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling procedure. The demographic questionnaire included information regarding the respondents age, gender, course of study, religious orientation, domicil, economic status, family size, and staying. 77-Item Self -prepared 5 point scale was used to assess the social changes among adolescence. The items of scale have been divided into 6 major categories: peer group influence, social behavior, selection of friends, selection of leaders, social acceptance, social grouping adolescence and selection of leaders during adolescence. The scale ranges from 1 strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Strongly agree and 5. Agree. The researcher also found the reliability of the scale, which is 0.811.

Results and Discussion

From an ecological perspective adolescent development takes place within the immediate social contexts of everyday life: the family, the peer group, the school, and, increasingly, the adolescent workplace. The roles and relationships within these "microsystems" form the basis of daily interactions between the adolescent and the social environment which, over time, shape individual development⁸. Further table-1 depicts that 43 percent of the respondents were in the age group of 18 year. With respect to the sex of the respondents, 59 percent of them are female and social changes are more among the female counterparts. With regard to the domicile of adolescents, 52 percent of them are from urban area. The study reveals that 60 percent of the respondents are from Arts discipline and remaining 40 percent of the respondents are from science discipline. Hence, it is clear the adolescents from arts discipline have more peer group influence compared to the science students. It was also found that 72 percent of the respondents are from the nuclear family and peer group influence is found to be more among the adolesce form nuclear family.

Research suggests that adolescents spend much less time with their parents than they spent with them as children⁹ and table-2 indicates that 38 percent of the respondents have 1-5 friend and 28 percent of them have 6- 8 friends. Peer relationships provide a context not only for the acquisition and maintenance of friendships and friendship networks but also for the development of key social skills, social problem solving skills, and empathy¹⁰. This study shows that 52 percent of the respondents have an intimate relationship and 39 percent of them have very good relationship with their friends. Research directly comparing peer and parental influences has determined that while parents continue to provide support for their adolescents during this age, peers appear to become a major source of socialization¹²⁻¹³. It was also found that 89 percent of the respondents are staying with their parents.

Table -1
Distribution of the Adolescents by their Age, Sex, Domicile, Course of study and Type of family

| Characteristics | No. of Respondents (n:100) | Percentage |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------|
| Age | | |
| 17 | 27 | 27.0 |
| 18 | 43 | 43.0 |
| 19 | 30 | 30.0 |
| Sex | | |
| Male | 59 | 59.0 |
| Female | 41 | 41.0 |
| Domicile | | |
| Urban | 52 | 52.0 |
| Rural | 48 | 48.0 |
| Course of Study | | |
| Arts | 60 | 60.0 |
| Science | 40 | 40.0 |
| Type of Family | | |
| Nuclear | 72 | 72.0 |
| Joint | 28 | 28.0 |

Table - 2
Distribution of the Adolescents by their Friends, Relationship with Friends and Staying

| Characteristics | No. of Respondents (n:100) | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|
| Number of Friends | | |
| 1-5 | 38 | 38.0 |
| 6-10 | 28 | 28.0 |
| Above 10 | 34 | 34.0 |
| Relationship with Friends | | |
| Intimate | 2 | 52.0 |
| Very good | 39 | 39.0 |
| Good | 06 | 6.0 |
| Fair | 03 | 3.0 |
| Staying | | |
| Parents | 89 | 89.0 |
| Relatives | 6 | 6.0 |
| Hostel | 5 | 5.0 |

Table-3 shows that the mean score of science students (30.85) is high compared to the mean score of arts students (28.58), where 't' value 2.671 is significant at 0.05 levels and thus implies that there is a significant difference between the adolescents course of study and peer group of influence. Changes in social behaviour of adolescence do not differ with their course of study, where the 't' value 1.83 is not significant at 0.05 levels. There is a significant difference between the social grouping during adolescence and the course in which they study. Since the mean score of arts students (34.90) is high compared to the mean score of arts (32.33), where 't' value 2.485 is significant at 0.05 levels. Further, significant difference was not observed between the course of the respondents and other dimensions of social changes like selection

of friend, social acceptance, selection of leaders and overall social changes among adolescence.

The socio-demographic finding of this study indicates that most of the adolescents are staying with their parents and very few respondents stay with their relatives and in hostel. An attempt was made to find out the association between the respondents staying and peer group influence. Further, significance association was found between the respondents staying and peer group influence during adolescence. Adolescence is a period in which the youngsters spend most of the time with their friends and other than parents. Besides, this study also reveals that there is no significance association between the adolescents staying and other dimensions of social changes like changes in social behaviour, social grouping, selection of friends, social acceptance, selection of leaders and overall social changes among adolescence. The important social changes in adolescence include increased peer-group influence, more mature patterns of social behaviour, new social groupings, and new values in the selection of friends, leaders and social acceptance and table-5 indicates that overall social changes has positive correlation with various dimension of social changes like peer group influence, changes in social behaviour, social grouping, selection of friends, social acceptance and selection of leader during adolescence at 0.01 levels.

A complex of biological, cognitive and social changes characterizes the period of adolescence. All these changes affect and are affected by changes in young people's relations. Their relationships with parents become more symmetrical and the adolescents gain greater freedom to make their own decisions

about their behaviour and personal commitments¹⁴. The findings of this study show that 72 percent of the adolescences are form nuclear and peer group influence are found to be more among the adolescents form nuclear family. One of the most important transitions occurring during adolescence is the rise of peer relationships in importance and influence. Peer relationships provide a context not only for the acquisition and maintenance of friendships and friendship networks but also for the development of key social skills, social problem solving skills, and empathy and moreover, this study reveals that 52 percent of adolescents have intimate relationship with their friends. Significant difference was observed between the peer group influence during the adolescence and their course of study and further, the peer group influence is found to be high among the adolescents form arts discipline. Findings of this study make it clear that overall social changes has positive correlation with various dimension of social changes like peer group influence, changes in social behaviour, social grouping, selection of friends, social acceptance and selection of leader during adolescence at 0.01 levels. The results of the present study have implications for social workers who work with adolescents. As such social works should strive to understand the friendship network with which their clients associate. Changes in social attitudes and behaviour takes place during the adolescent period which results in social participation. So the adolescents should learn to adjust with the environment in order to reduce prejudice and discrimination. The adolescents should use their own values in social acceptance other than using the values of his peer groups. Adolescent counselling services can be provided with all information related to adolescent development so as to deal with the preliminary issues related to social change when ever arises.

Table -3
Difference between the Respondents course of study and various dimensions of social changes among adolescence

| S. No | Course of study | Mean | Std. Deviation | Statistical Inference |
|-------|--|------------------|----------------|---|
| 1 | Peer group influence during Adolescence Arts (n:60) Science (n:40) | 28.58 30.85 | 3.86 4.47 | t =2.671 P> 0.05 Significant |
| 2 | Changes in Social Behavior during Adolescence Arts (n:60) Science (n:40) | 33.70 35.33 | 4.71 3.74 | t =1.83 P>0.05 Not Significant |
| 3 | Social Grouping Adolescence Arts (n:60) Science (n:40) | 34.90 32.33 | 5.22 4.87 | t =2.485 P< 0.05 Significant |
| 4 | Selection of Friends during Adolescence Arts (n:60) Science (n:40) | 31.10 31.13 | 3.73 3.49 | t =0.034 P> 0.05 Not Significant |
| 5 | Social Acceptance during Adolescence Arts (n:60) Science (n:40) | 25.08 24.78 | 3.68 3.34 | t =0.425 P< 0.05 Not Significant |
| 6 | Selection of Leaders during Adolescence Arts (n:60) Science (n:40) | 31.27 32.83 | 4.27 3.99 | t =1.835 P> 0.05 Not Significant |
| 7 | Overall Social changes among Adolescence Arts (n:60) Science (n:40) | 184.63 187.20 | 16.22 13.46 | t =0.828 P> 0.05 Not Significant |

Table -4
Association between the Respondents staying and various dimensions of social changes among adolescence

| S.No | Variables | Staying with | | | Statistical Inference |
|------|---|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| | | Parents (n:89) | Relatives (n:6) | Hostel (n:5) | |
| 1 | Peer group influence during Adolescence | | | | $X^2 = 5.8$ |
| | Low level | 43 | 2 | 5 | $P > 0.05$ |
| | High level | 46 | 4 | 0 | Significant |
| 2 | Changes in Social Behavior during Adolescence | | | | $X^2 = 1.345$ |
| | Low level | 51 | 2 | 3 | $P > 0.05$ |
| | High level | 38 | 4 | 2 | Not Significant |
| 3 | Social Grouping Adolescence | | | | $X^2 = 1.37$ |
| | Low level | 56 | 3 | 2 | $P > 0.05$ |
| | High level | 33 | 3 | 3 | Not Significant |
| 4 | Selection of Friends during Adolescence | | | | $X^2 = 1.068$ |
| | Low level | 54 | 3 | 4 | $P > 0.05$ |
| | High level | 35 | 3 | 1 | Not Significant |
| 5 | Social Acceptance during Adolescence | | | | $X^2 = 1.224$ |
| | Low level | 50 | 3 | 4 | $P > 0.05$ |
| | High level | 39 | 3 | 1 | Not Significant |
| 6 | Selection of Leaders during Adolescence | | | | $X^2 = 5.342$ |
| | Low level | 47 | 2 | 5 | $P > 0.05$ |
| | High level | 42 | 4 | 0 | Not Significant |
| 7 | Overall Social changes among Adolescence | | | | $X^2 = 5.64$ |
| | Low level | 44 | 2 | 5 | $P > 0.05$ |
| | High level | 45 | 4 | 0 | Not Significant |

Table -5
Inter correlation Matrix between Peer group influence and overall social changes among adolescence

| | Peer group influence | Changes in Social Behaviour | Social Grouping | Selection of Friends | Social Acceptance | Selection of Leaders |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Overall Social changes | 0.508(**) | 0.686(**) | 0.593(**) | 0.629(**) | 0.545(**) | 0.638(**) |

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels

Conclusion

A social change is expected to have implications for adolescent development and adjustment. Although some degree of social change may give overburden the young people. Hence social change is like two sides of a same coin which has both risk and opportunities. Social adjustment being the most difficult task for adolescence, it is better to have a thorough analysis of pros and cons of social change among adolescence. It should also be evaluated through necessary enumeration and investigation. In this aspect the researcher took this study with social interest and brought out in-depth investigation on analysis. If adolescence are re-moulded or re-shaped in a proper way, their attitudes would be positive; their life styles would be effective and they may become the most suitable citizens of India.

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