Peer Pressure: A Reflection on Adolescent Peer Cultures

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ABSTRACT : *Adolescence is a period of intense bonding with peers; in addition to being a phase of excessive psychological and social changes. The need for belongingness, care, affection and conformity is the basic necessity for an adolescent from his/her peer group. Strong, positive, and effective relationships with peers fulfil the need for support, love, competition, criticism, and the like. In contrast, the same relationship when negative, turns into a nerve-wrecking relation filled with guilt, embarrassment, and pressure from peers.*

To get their approval, adolescents tend to give in to pressures from their peers, which can take both positive and negative forms. Positive peer pressure can be seen in an adolescents' good academic performance, healthy competitions, participation in extra-curricular activities, imbibing good habits, and values. Contrary to this, the negative pressure from peers is evident from adolescents' involving themselves in acts or actions that they feel might not be what is expected from them, like low academic performance, and aggression.

In light of the above, the paper strives to gain an insight into why peers are inevitable for adolescents and the reasons behind following their peers. The specific objectives identified for the study were to understand the importance of peer group interaction and dynamics during adolescence, the concept of peer pressure, and its varied forms. In addition to adolescents' views on friendships and pressure that peers exert on them, experts from the field of adolescent studies, psychologists and psychiatrists were consulted to cognize their perspectives on adolescent peer culture and group conformity.

The findings of the study showed that adolescents select their peers on the basis of self-determined criteria. In general, peers are considered as important entities by adolescents. However, peers are also perceived as sources of tension and unhappiness. The experts' opinions highlight that friendship and peer group conformity is significant during adolescence and hence, peer acceptance has been identified as a powerful indicator of adolescents' long-term psychological adjustment.

Peer pressure, from the study, was identified to have both positive and negative dimensions. Positive pressure from peers is seen to be more than negative pressure as family ties still remain strong in the Indian context, which help adolescents find support and solace in times of need.

***Keywords:** peer-pressure, adolescence, sub-culture, peer-culture*

Introduction

The present article is an attempt to understand the concept of peer pressure and its varied manifestations during adolescence. It seeks to analyse the importance of peer culture during adolescence. The study is descriptive in nature and the attempt is to reflect upon the occurrence of pressure from peers as it unfolds in the Indian setup. The research took into account the perspectives of psychologists, school teachers, and counsellors to understand the thrust area of the study and school students studying in classes 6th to 10th formed the purview of the study.

Conceptualising Adolescence

Adolescence generally refers to the teenage years

between 10 and 19 and can be considered as the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood (WHO, 1997). In studying adolescent development, adolescence can be defined biologically - as the physical transition marked by the onset of puberty and the termination of physical growth, cognitively - as the changes in the ability to think abstractly and multi-dimensionally, or socially - as a period of preparation for adult roles.

Conceptualizing adolescence as a life-stage is of immense significance due to the various issues and debates that the stage is fraught with. Among the key debates and issues raised by many psychologists and sociologists are, whether it is a period of 'storm and stress' (Hall, 1904) or 'challenge and potential' (Maslow, Rogers), whether it is a 'myth or reality' (Saraswathi, 1999) for those in the child-adult continuity in the Human Development cycle, whether as a life stage it is an artefact of an industrial society, whether there are elements of universalism to it or whether it is a contextually embedded phenomenon suggesting the co-existence of several adolescences.

Historically speaking, in the biological and psychological realms, the beginning of the scientific study of adolescence was marked by the work of G. Stanley Hall (1904). The most influential of Hall's concepts was his view of adolescence as a period of 'storm and stress'. He depicted adolescence as a tumultuous period. The beginning of adolescence, according to this view, involves major physical transitions that include growth spurts, sexual maturation, hormonal changes, and, as the most recent neurological research shows, brain development in the prefrontal area that is critical for impulse control. A middle adolescent is often physically mature enough to perform adult functions like work and childbearing, but lacks the psychological maturity, social status, and financial resources to perform these functions responsibly. This disjunction between biology and society has the potential to create a difficult transitional period for adolescents. Consistent with these arguments, adolescence represents a period in the life-span in which problem behaviours including criminal behaviour may rise sharply, as do symptoms of

depression. All these, thus, render it as a period of storm and stress.

In contrast to Hall's view, adolescence is now viewed as a stage replete with challenge and potential (Maslow, Rogers). This perspective has emerged from humanistic psychology. Among the major challenges are those of career and vocational choices, relationships, education and schooling, employment and psycho-social well-being. Coping with familial and societal values, which they are socialized into, as against those of the self, which emerge through personal experience, often pose a serious challenge to most adolescents. They usually face conflicts, dilemmas, difficult choices, often have to move away from the family, form new peer groups and adjust to new institutions where they have to live and study. In humanistic psychology, the belief is that, if the psycho-social environment is supportive, then adolescents are able to deal with these demands and convert them into negotiable challenges into which they invest their boundless energy and move ahead. There is thus no storm and stress. What develops instead is the potential to surge ahead. However, this behoves that the adults around are accommodating and supportive and perceive adolescents as a repository of potential, granting them the freedom to take risks, experiment, make mistakes, etc.

Saraswathi (1999), one of the most eminent contemporary researchers on adolescence in India, holds that, while in many societies adolescence is a distinct milestone, in Indian society, adolescence is the invention of a technological, industrial society that is marked by a discontinuity between childhood and adulthood. She argues that even though puberty marks the beginning of a distinct phase, it does not hold good in the Indian context as puberty might not necessarily be succeeded by the immediate phase of adolescence. In her subsequent writings (2003), she highlights intra-regional variations emanating from societal realities of caste, gender and religion, giving rise to multiple adolescences. Thus, Saraswathi (1999) holds that the nature of the adolescent experience is very variable and while for the middle and upper classes it may be a reality, for many others – girls and lower strata in particular, it is often a myth and may have

only biological proportions. Likewise, for rural India, it is marked more by absence than presence on account of cultural factors and the assumed continuity between childhood and adulthood.

The conceptualization of adolescence as a life stage is further influenced by studies which focus on the shrinking span of childhood and the early advent of adolescence. In a study by Anandalakshmy (1991), it was concluded that the span of childhood was directly related to the economic standing of the family; the poorer the family, the earlier the childhood ended. Saraswathi's work (1999; 2002) discussed earlier, also testifies to this. Ranganathan (2000) drew attention to the fact that all over the world, there is a trend of the age of puberty for both girls and boys getting accelerated, which may be termed as "a secular trend" (p. 213). This trend transcends the barriers of class, caste, religion, and nationality, leading to the shortening of childhood everywhere and signalling early entry into adolescence and adulthood. All this makes adolescence a very interesting life stage to study.

Adolescence, hence, can be a time of both discovery and disorientation. The transitional period can bring up issues of independence and self-identity. Peer groups, romantic interests and external appearance tend to naturally increase in importance for some time during a teen's journey toward adulthood. This leads us to a more important phase of the adolescent stage – the peer group relations.

Adolescent Peer Culture

A very important relationship that emerges during the adolescent years is that of friendship. Friendships hold a special place for adolescents as they are more egalitarian and are based on choice and commitment. Adolescents choose friends who are like them and influence each other to become more alike. Friendships are intimate, involve more intense feelings, and are the most honest and open as compared to other relationships. There is trust, no pretensions, and no necessity for being on guard against betrayal of shared secrets. Confiding in a friend helps young people explore their own feelings, define their identity and validate their self-worth. Friendships provide a safe place to

venture opinions, admit weaknesses and get help with problems. With the approach of the middle years of adolescence, friendships typically become more intimate, emotionally interdependent, and more centered on the personalities of the participants than in the earlier years.

In terms of defining characteristics, a peer group may be conceived as a small group of similarly aged, fairly close friends, sharing the same activities (Castrogiovanni, 2001). Peers have an important place in the life of an adolescent as the role played by them during the trials and tribulations of adolescence is very critical for optimizing psychological and social development. It is a known fact that adolescents are more dependent on peer relationships than are younger children. This is because ties to parents become progressively loose as adolescents gain greater independence (Berk, 2001).

In Indian society, peer relations are often discussed in the context of cultural restrictions related to interactions with the opposite sex, especially for girls after puberty, and also in terms of extended and extensive family relations with plenty of scope for within-family peer relations with siblings, cousins, and even uncles or aunts of the same age (Verma and Saraswathi, 2002). Peers tend to become a part of the adolescent's family, participating in the family festivals, marriages, and other chores.

Relationships with peers during the adolescent years come closer to serving as prototypes for adult relationships in social networks, at work, and in interactions with members of the opposite sex. Miller (1991), cited in Kuchibholta (1995), examined the role of friendship in adolescents' lives and found that experiences of friendship are very facilitative on issues of identity development. Since adolescents must get ready to meet society's demands for social independence, for relationships with other individuals, marriage, and adulthood, they need the support and guidance of their peers. Through the study it emerged that peers are sources of fun, joy, togetherness and support. However, they can also act as sources of unhappiness and tension if they show inappropriate behavior.

Castrogiovanni (2001) has very aptly summarized

the potential of the peer group in terms of what it provides for the adolescent: an uncritical space for experimentation, sharing, vicarious learning and emotional bonding. He specifically highlights that peer groups offer opportunities to learn how to interact with others, instrumental and emotional support, building and maintaining of friendships, support in defining identity, interests, abilities, and personality, and autonomy, without the control of parents and other adults. This is consistent with the findings of the study which reflect that peers share their secrets with their friends, understand each other better and experience a safe and secure environment around them.

Many Western researches have focused on adolescent peer culture (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, Larson, & Prescott, 1977; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Ladd, 1999 etc.). However, in the Indian context, research on adolescent peer group has been relatively more recent. The focus has been on understanding the nature of peer relationships that exist during these years and the influence that they have on adolescents. It has been observed that, from the very beginning, peer group interactions help adolescents to conduct themselves better in social situations, develop age-relevant skills and interests, and share feelings and problems with others. In addition, being with peers of both sexes provides the basis for forming adult relationships in education, work and marriage (Sharma, 2006). As part of socialization, children are also taught the importance of having and maintaining friends by their parents and significant others. In due course, they do not feel that they can talk to their parents or teachers as freely when problems arise as they can confide in their peers. Basically, during adolescence, peer relations become more intense and extensive, and family relations are altered as adolescents begin to encounter many new demands and expectations in social situations. The desire for close friends increases, as adolescents turn to their peers for support, formerly provided by the family. They share affection, thoughts, concerns and common interests with their friends, and desire peers who are loyal, trustworthy, intimate and who demonstrate potential for positive regard, admiration and similarity.

The peer group, thus, serves as an anchoring base, provides solidarity and unconditional acceptance. For many, risk, danger and adventure needs as well as, friends and peers become the most significant reference group (Sinha, 1988; Arora et.al., 1985; Muni & Chowdhury, 1997; Pahuja, 1999; Ranganathan, 2000; Sharma, 2006).

It was seen in the present study that adolescents select their peers on self-determined criteria. These criteria include peers having certain personality traits (being clever, knowledgeable, talented, humorous, trustworthy, loyal, kind, open-minded to name a few), qualities and habits (not telling lies, being polite, having patience etc.) and life attitudes that are desirable and having a good nature (affection, support, encouragement etc.). Dube (1991) and Devadas & Jaya (1991) both cited in Nurjahan (2005) in their respective researches described adolescence as a period of intense socializing. In their view, social relationships attain heightened significance during adolescence which is anyway a crucial stage in personality formation, wherein a unique pattern of characteristics develop in the person. Traits such as cooperativeness, helpfulness, unselfishness, courtesy, cheerfulness, enthusiasm, friendliness, self-reliance, consideration, self-control, even temper, initiative, resourcefulness and dependability were seen to enhance the social acceptability of adolescents. The implication thus was that peer groups induce the development of a number of personality traits in adolescence.

The experts in the study also highlighted the potency of the peer group in adolescents' lives. In their view, peers form the basis of appreciation, criticism, support, encouragement, identification, apprehension and hence, cast a very dominant influence on adolescents' lives. Adolescents tend to discover their real selves when with their peers as there are no pretensions and inhibitions. Peers help them to crystallize their thoughts, ideas and interests. Moreover, friendship and peer group conformity become necessary because adolescents derive a sense of belongingness, affirmation, security and emotional fulfilment through their friendship relations.

The need to establish a unique and autonomous

identity different from that of their parents is one of the driving forces behind adolescents' seeking membership to cliques and crowds. An additional benefit of belonging in various crowds and cliques is the opportunity to explore different value systems and lifestyles in the process of forming one's identity. Adolescents' social-cognitive maturation enables them to seek groups that can meet their emerging social and cognitive needs as well as their emerging values and beliefs (Jersild, 1954; Hurlock, 1955; Mussen, 1979; Dusek, 1991; Rice, 1996).

However, merely being with others does not solve the problem; frequently the young person may feel most alone in a crowd (Mussen, 1979). Since peers play such an important role in the lives of most adolescents, peer acceptance becomes an important adolescent concern. In fact, peer acceptance has been identified as a powerful indicator of adolescents' long-term psychological adjustment.

Many factors may affect an adolescent's acceptance or rejection by peers. These include intelligence and ability, physical attractiveness, special talents, social class, socio-economic status, and ethnic group membership (Conger, 1977).

Adolescents of both sexes who are accepted by their peers are perceived as liking other people and being tolerant, flexible, and sympathetic; being lively, cheerful, good-natured, and having a sense of humour; acting naturally and self-confidently without being conceited; and possessing initiative, enthusiasm, drive and plans for group activity (Conger, 1977). In contrast, the adolescent who is ill-at-ease and lacking in self-confidence, and who tends to react to discomfiture by timidity, nervousness or withdrawal, is likely to be neglected by peers. Rejected children display serious academic and behavioral problems characterized by high rates of conflict, hostility, hyperactivity, inattentiveness, and impulsive behavior. They are also deficient in several social-cognitive skills (Rubin and Daniels-Bierness, 1983; Waas, 1988; Crick and Ladd, 1993).

Peer Group Conformity and Peer Pressure

The above discussion takes us to another important dimension of peer group patterns during adolescence: peer group conformity. Conformity refers to the degree to which the individual follows the behavior patterns, fads, fashions and standards deemed appropriate to the group. According to the social learning theory, conformity to peer behaviors would depend on, and vary according to peer reinforcement, increasing and decreasing with the increase and decrease in reinforcement for conformity behavior (Dusek, 1991).

Arora, Verma, and Agarwal (1985), in their study on conformity found that early adolescents adhere more to their parents whereas late adolescents favour their peers. Reddy, Rao, Sandeep, and Padmakar (1979) in a study on conformity behaviour found that as age increased, non-conformity became more pronounced; males were more non-conforming than females and the lower and higher income groups expressed greater levels of non-conformity than the middle income group.

Conforming to a group requires an adolescent to give in to the pressures of peers. In one study of junior and senior high school students, adolescents reported that they felt greatest pressure to conform to the most obvious behaviours of their peers: dressing and grooming, participating in social activities, and forming relationships. Peer pressure to engage in pro-adult behaviour, such as getting good grades and cooperating with parents was also strong (Berk, 2001).

Peer Pressure

The term peer pressure describes the effect that a group of friends or age-mates can exert on an individual. It is the pressure on the adolescents to conform to the values held by the peer group and behave in ways considered appropriate by them (NCERT, 2009). It is the influence and compulsion that adolescents feel and experience from their peers. These peers, whom adolescents look up to for approval and support, are considered as inevitable and necessary (Steinberg, 1996). According to Kaplan (1993), peer pressure influences adolescents' wardrobes, their music, leisure activities, and their choice of friends. She also states that peers offer independence from the family, acceptance, a sense of personal worth, and support in times of confusion, models for

appropriate conduct in a complex world, and social identity. Thus, there is a natural affinity during adolescence to be one with them. Peer pressure can range from positive influences such as improved academic and co-curricular achievement on the one hand, to negative influences, such as drug and alcohol use, on the other.

Although peer pressure exists for all age groups, it gets greatly exacerbated during pre-adolescence and adolescence. Some experts from the present study opined that pressure from peers can start as early as the child starts recognizing the importance of acceptance and rejection and cognitively develops the notions of comparison. Developmental psychologists attribute this to the rapid hormonal changes and the concomitant physiological and psychological changes, which in turn trigger off bewilderment, a sense of awe, an identity crisis in terms of creating a child-adult discontinuity and an array of challenges to face during adolescence as a preparation for the adult world. Friends and peers who are undergoing similar experiences offer solace and reprieve which adolescents greatly value. The dependence and need for peers thus becomes paramount, since it is the peers who become a reference point for having exploratory fun on the one hand and consolidating one's role for the future, on the other. The pressure for peer acceptance, conformity and retaining one's membership in the peer group are thus very high. This largely explains adolescents' vulnerability to peer pressure. Vulnerability to peer pressure also emanates from the pull between the desire to be seen as individuals of unique value and the desire to belong to a group where they feel secure and accepted.

This becomes further complicated, given the collectivist family culture in the Indian context (Bhende, 1994; Pathak, 1994). Roland (1988) sees the Indian family's members as being interdependent. The Indian identity evolves around 'we', 'us', and 'ours' rather than 'I', 'me', and 'mine'. Adolescents can thus never shed off familialism. Kakar (1979) elaborately discusses how Indians remain embedded within the family structure, lifelong. Family togetherness is an important mode of socialization and children, from

a very early age, as a consequence develop relational identities, which become more pronounced as they grow older and assume adult roles and responsibilities. Autonomy strivings and the concept of 'independence' as understood in western societies are thus very different from that of Indian culture.

Consequently, during adolescence, the power given to either parental or peer opinion depends to a significant degree on the adolescent's appraisal of its relative value in a specific situation. Generally, peer influence is more likely to be predominant in matters such as tastes in music and entertainment, fashions in clothing and language, patterns of same- and opposite-sex peer interactions etc., while parental influence is more likely to be predominant in areas such as underlying moral and social values and an understanding of the adult world. However, there may be many mismatches between family wishes and peer group beliefs, resulting in the adolescents rejecting their family or general society values, while feeling pressure to conform rigidly to the values of their peer group. Peer pressure is also visible when young people join gangs. To belong to the gang, they must conform to the gang's own style of dress, behaviour, and speech, which is often in contradiction to what they have been traditionally socialized into.

Positive and Negative Peer Pressure

Many authors who work on Adolescent Development and Adjustment Psychology have appended the term peer pressure with labels of being 'positive' or 'negative' (e.g., Farrell, et.el, 2006). As the names suggest, positive peer pressure is that which mediates integrative and self-enriching changes in an individual on account of peer influence. Negative peer pressure, on the other hand, refers to compulsions on account of peers, which may assume the form of harassment, bullying and coercion in the extreme form, or lead adolescents into forms and patterns of behavior and beliefs which are antithetical to their existence.

The ability to develop healthy friendships and peer relationships depends on an adolescent's self-identity, self-esteem, and self-reliance. At its best,

peer pressure can mobilize an adolescent's energy, motivate for success, and encourage him/her to conform to healthy behaviours. Peers can and do act as role models. They often listen to, accept, and understand the frustrations, challenges, and concerns associated with being a teenager. The peer group is a source of affection, sympathy, and moral guidance; a place for experimentation, and a setting for achieving autonomy and independence from parents. Supportive peer interactions offer a unique context for developing social competencies, validating emerging self-identity and promoting positive adjustment (Farrell et.al., 2006).

During the study, it was found that adolescents felt that peers help them to try to excel in their academics, clarify their doubts and also tutor them when in need. The experts also upheld these positive forms and highlighted a few other psychological influences that peers usually have on each other. High self-confidence, becoming more mature, developing a sense of belongingness, learning appropriate social skills, learning to generate positive feelings and attitudes, developing independent thinking, decision making power and learning survival techniques were cited as illustrative examples by the experts.

In a somewhat contrasting lens lies the phenomenon of negative peer pressure. Since, the need for acceptance, approval, and belonging is vital during the teen years, adolescents who feel isolated or rejected by their peers - or in their family- are more likely to engage in risky behaviours, in order to fit within a group. In such situations, peer pressure can impair good judgement, and fuel risk-taking behaviour, drawing an adolescent away from the family and positive influences, and luring him/her into dangerous activities. A powerful negative peer influence can motivate adolescents to make choices, and engage in behaviour that their values might otherwise reject. They risk being grounded, losing their parents' trust, or even try at any cost to fit in with a group of friends they can identify with, and who accept them. They may often change the way they dress, and give up or create new values as well. Negative peer pressure may take on very severe forms of harassment, victimization and

bullying. While these have been the subjects of research in the Western context where they are highly prevalent, there is considerable paucity of research in India. The few clinical studies, which do exist, focus on the treatment and therapy dimensions of the victims. However, there are some studies on aggression as a form of peer pressure, which is defined as "an unprovoked attack or hostile, destructive behaviour" (Kureshi & Hussain, 1982).

Forms of negative peer pressure, through the study, surfaced in the form of teasing, bullying and harassment. It was apparent from the findings that the magnitude of harassment restricted itself to and included verbal and physical abuse which consisted of name calling, relationship labelling, using foul language, teasing, laughing, being made fun of publicly, demeaning, fighting, hitting, pushing, kicking and boxing, a feature seen more among boys. Girls take resource to emotional blackmail, keep secrets from others, snub them, ignore and exclude others from peer group.

However, from the study, it was evident that forms of positive peer pressure that adolescents experienced far outweighed the negative dimensions. Co-operation, team work, sharing, cheering others for competitions, supporting in times of need, guiding them towards the correct path, consoling, helping peers to be more organized and systematic, being enabled to think rationally and developing a sense of discrimination between good and bad, were cited as the tangible manifestations and gains from positive peer pressure.

The main reason that positive peer pressure surfaced more was that adolescents felt that they usually listen to their parents when in a conflicting situation as their parents are more experienced than their peers and would never lead them on the wrong path. In addition, listening to parents means restraining oneself from bad habits and experiences and being able to distinguish between the good and the bad. Since young people in Indian families generally receive a good deal of attention and nurturance from the older generation and maintenance of family integrity is valued higher than an unfolding of individual capacities, the young Indian neither seeks a radical demarcation

from the generation of his parents nor feels compelled to overthrow their authority in order to live life on their own terms (Kakar and Kakar, 2007). Because of the dominant culture of collectivism which permeates Indian society, Peter Blos's (1967) theory which suggests individuation following separation from dependence ties, is usually not possible since family continues to be an all-pervasive institution throughout the adolescent years.

Conclusion

It can be derived from the above discussions that the institution of peer pressure and its varied manifestations get influenced by the contexts they are placed in. In the Indian society, family socialization is of crucial significance as it reflects the socio-cultural, historical and economic aspects of the larger society. The self that develops in the family model of interdependence is the relational self. It is characterized by relatedness and heteronomy. The self that emerges in the family model of independence is the separated self, which involves autonomy and separateness. The self that develops in the family model of psychological interdependence is the autonomous- relational self, manifesting autonomy and relatedness (Kagitcibasi, 2003). Hence, development has to be understood holistically as well as contextually. From the contextual perspective, it is not appropriate to study the adolescents in isolation from their environment. The socio-cultural context affects the meaning of physical development, the expectation for one's gender and the important themes of life.

Tripathi (1988) upheld that the form of collectivism found in Indian society is a mix of individualism and collectivism that is conditioned by many values and contingencies. Contrasting values of basic properties often co-exist and Indians display a high "tolerance of dissonance". The Indian self is so constituted that the typical way in which an Indian responds and reacts is contextual (Sinha & Tripathi, 2003).

Within this contextual setting, there are a common set of developmental tasks identified for adolescents. Peer relationships change during the adolescent years in that the adolescents develop a better and more mature understanding of others, their involvement with peers becomes increasingly critical to the progress of self-understanding, the peer group helps develop personal identity and new types of peer groups emerge. Since friendships hold an important place for the adolescents, conformity to group and group members becomes essential.

There are distinct patterns in the forms that peer harassment takes place. In terms of positive peer pressure, girls and boys appear to benefit equally from it. According to Verma and Saraswathi (2002), the role of peers is subservient to that of the family in all spheres, except for school-based activities. Indian parents monitor peer choice and peer influence is moderate and mainly confined to overt expressions of peer culture. Peer sociability in collectivist societies like India, which stress group harmony, differs from that in the Western individualistic cultures. In India, peers function in large groups, where group members require high levels of co-operation (Roopnarine et.al., 1994).

Berk (2007) was of the view that parental monitoring during adolescence protects the adolescents' involvement in anti-social activities. Saraswathi (2003) highlighted that family, in the Indian sociological setting, continues to play a major role in socialization, despite the fast pace of social change. Parental involvement and control is very high, especially in the middle class. There is continued prevalence of traditionalism and familialism and is evident in various facets of family life, even among the educated Indian adolescents from both rural and urban settings (Bhende, 1994; Pathak, 1994).

Hence, the study of the adolescent age group and the various concerns and issues that engulf it, brought to light the critical phase of development that it is. While the findings highlight that peer influence and peer pressure do not necessarily have to be negative (as it exists both in its positive and negative forms), peer pressure can lead youth towards unhealthy and unsafe behaviours. To minimize the negative effects of peer pressure, it becomes imperative that adolescents, and parents come together in the quest to prevent occurrences of negative pressure from peers.

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