

THE EFFECT OF PEER PRESSURE ON ADOLESCENTS' BEHAVIOR AND LIFE DECISIONS IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Peer pressure plays a significant role in shaping adolescents' behavior and life decisions, particularly in a multicultural society where diverse cultural norms and values intersect. This study explores the effects of peer pressure on adolescents, focusing on how it influences their choices, behavior, and identity development. In multicultural environments, the pressure to conform to varying social expectations often leads to internal conflict and decision-making dilemmas. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to these influences as they seek acceptance and belonging within peer groups. The study also examines how cultural diversity impacts the nature of peer pressure, as different cultural backgrounds may emphasize distinct values and behaviors. Through a qualitative approach, interviews and surveys were conducted to gain insights into the experiences of adolescents from various cultural backgrounds. The findings suggest that while peer pressure can encourage positive behaviors, it also poses risks such as substance abuse, academic underachievement, and risky social behaviors. The study highlights the importance of understanding peer dynamics in multicultural settings and the need for targeted interventions to support adolescents in making informed decisions.

Keywords: peer pressure, adolescents, behavior, life decisions, multicultural society

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a crucial stage of human development, characterized by significant changes in physical, emotional, and social aspects of life. During this period, individuals undergo a process of identity formation and decision-making that will shape their future behaviors and values (Xu, 2023). One of the most influential factors in this developmental stage is peer pressure. As adolescents strive to gain acceptance and approval from their peers, they often face pressure to conform to the norms and behaviors of their social group. In a multicultural society, where diverse cultural backgrounds coexist, peer pressure can have complex and varied effects on adolescents' behaviors and life decisions (Trógolo, 2022). Peer pressure is not a new concept; it has been studied extensively in psychological and sociological research. However, in a multicultural context, the dynamics of peer pressure can become more intricate. Adolescents in such environments are exposed to a blend of cultural norms, expectations, and values that may sometimes conflict with each other (Zakaria, 2022).

These conflicts may make it more difficult for adolescents to navigate their social world, as they must decide which behaviors or beliefs to adopt in order to fit in with their peers. While peer pressure can encourage positive behaviors, such as academic achievement or involvement in community activities, it can also lead adolescents toward risky behaviors like substance abuse, delinquency, or unhealthy relationships.

The concept of peer pressure in a multicultural society becomes particularly important as globalization and immigration continue to shape the cultural landscape of many countries. Adolescents in multicultural settings may experience not only peer pressure from local cultural norms but also from the influence of globalized media and trends that transcend cultural boundaries. These competing pressures can lead to a more complex decision-making process, where adolescents must balance the expectations of their immediate peer group with those of their family, community, or broader societal norms (Khanagha, 2022). The impact of these influences on adolescents' behaviors and life choices has become an important area of study in

the field of developmental psychology. Moreover, the effects of peer pressure on adolescents are often intensified by the developmental challenges they face during this stage. Adolescents are still in the process of developing their sense of self and are highly susceptible to external influences as they search for identity and belonging (Akbar, 2022).

Peer groups often become a central part of their social lives, and the need for approval from friends can drive them to engage in behaviors they might otherwise avoid. In a multicultural society, where adolescents may feel torn between different cultural expectations, the pressure to conform can be overwhelming, especially when they perceive that fitting in with their peers is essential for their social survival. Research has shown that peer pressure can have both positive and negative outcomes (Tegegne, 2022). On the positive side, peer pressure can encourage adolescents to engage in pro-social behaviors such as helping others, participating in extracurricular activities, or focusing on academic success. However, negative peer pressure can lead to risky behaviors, such as smoking, drinking, drug use, and early sexual activity. The role of peer pressure in shaping adolescents' decision-making and behaviors is thus a double-edged sword. It can be a source of support and motivation, but it can also lead to poor choices that affect their health, academic performance, and overall well-being. The complexities of peer pressure in a multicultural society are compounded by the diversity of cultural norms that adolescents may encounter.

For instance, what is considered acceptable behavior in one culture may be viewed as unacceptable in another. This can create confusion and stress for adolescents as they attempt to navigate the sometimes conflicting expectations placed upon them. In some cultures, for example, there may be a strong emphasis on individualism and independence, while in others, collectivism and conformity to the group are prioritized (Welch, 2023). Adolescents from immigrant or mixed cultural backgrounds may find themselves caught between these differing value systems, which can intensify the pressures they feel from their peer groups. Understanding the effect of peer pressure on adolescents' behavior and life decisions in multicultural societies is essential for several reasons. First, it provides insight into how cultural diversity influences the ways in which adolescents interact with their peers and make decisions. Second, it can help educators, parents, and policymakers develop strategies to support adolescents in making healthier, more informed choices. By recognizing the role that peer pressure plays in shaping adolescent behavior, adults can work to mitigate its negative effects while promoting positive peer influences. This could involve creating environments where adolescents feel accepted and supported, regardless of their cultural background, and where they are encouraged to make decisions based on their values and beliefs, rather than merely conforming to the pressures of their peers (Li, 2024).

Furthermore, the study of peer pressure in a multicultural context has important implications for the broader society. It can help foster a greater understanding of how cultural differences impact adolescent development and inform the creation of more inclusive and supportive social policies. In doing so, it contributes to the overall well-being of adolescents by providing them with the tools they need to navigate the challenges of growing up in a diverse and complex world. The impact of peer pressure on adolescents is not only a personal issue but a societal one, as the decisions made by young people today will shape the future of society as a whole (Asiyanbi, 2025). In conclusion, peer pressure remains a powerful force in the lives of adolescents, particularly in multicultural societies where multiple cultural expectations and norms intersect. As adolescents seek to understand who they are and where they fit in the world, the pressures from their peer groups can have a profound impact on their behavior and life decisions. By exploring the effects of peer pressure in these diverse settings, we can better understand how cultural factors shape adolescent development and create more effective strategies for supporting young people in making informed, healthy choices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

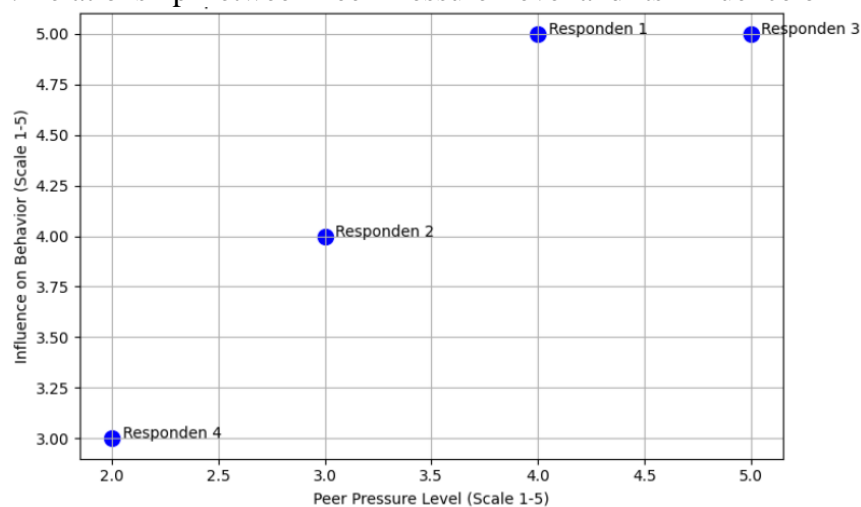
A. The Impact of Peer Pressure on Adolescent Behavior in Social Contexts

Peer pressure is a powerful social force that significantly shapes adolescent behavior. During adolescence, individuals are highly susceptible to the opinions and behaviors of their peers as they seek acceptance and belonging within their social circles. The impact of peer pressure on adolescent behavior can manifest in various ways, ranging from minor conformity to more significant behavioral changes, such as involvement in risky activities (Adewuyi, 2024). According to studies, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to peer pressure due to their ongoing psychological development, which includes a heightened need for social validation and the formation of identity (Crespo, 2025). In a social context, peer influence often drives adolescents to engage in behaviors that align with group norms, even if these behaviors contradict their personal values or beliefs. Research has shown that peer pressure affects not only behavior but also decision-making processes (Liu, 2022).

For example, peer influence can lead adolescents to make choices about substance use, sexual behavior, and academic performance. Furthermore, the intensity of peer pressure varies depending on the social environment, including the presence of supportive or negative peer groups. Studies also suggest that adolescents from different social or cultural backgrounds may experience peer pressure differently, with factors such as social norms and community expectations playing significant roles (Lin, 2025). Overall, the literature suggests that peer pressure can be both positive and negative, depending on the nature of the peer group and the behavior being encouraged. However, its influence remains a critical factor in shaping adolescent behavior in various social contexts (Espino, 2025).

Peer pressure plays a significant role in shaping adolescent behavior, as it creates social pressures that influence their decisions and actions. During adolescence, individuals are at a stage of identity formation, where they seek acceptance and belonging within peer groups. This pressure can lead them to engage in behaviors they might not have considered otherwise, such as substance use, changes in academic performance, or adopting specific social norms. The intensity of peer pressure often correlates with the level of influence it has on their actions. As the data presented in the following chart shows, the relationship between the level of peer pressure experienced by adolescents and its impact on their behavior can be analyzed through various factors. The following graphs illustrate this relationship, shedding light on how peer pressure affects the decisions and behaviors of adolescents in different social contexts, particularly in terms of the choices they make and the behaviors they adopt.

Figure 1. Relationship Between Peer Pressure Level and Its Influence on Behavior



Source: Processed by the Author from Personal Research

The scatter plot below demonstrates the relationship between the level of peer pressure experienced by adolescents and its influence on their behavior. The **X-axis** represents the "Peer Pressure Level" on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating minimal pressure and 5 indicating high peer pressure. The **Y-axis** shows the "Influence on Behavior" on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates minimal impact on behavior and 5 indicates significant influence. The data points represent responses from four respondents, each indicating their level of peer pressure and the corresponding influence on their behavior. From the plot, it is evident that as peer pressure increases, the influence on behavior also tends to increase, particularly for respondents who experience high levels of peer pressure. This suggests a positive correlation between peer pressure and behavioral influence, highlighting the significant role peer influence plays in adolescent decision-making.

Table 1. Summary of Respondents' Peer Pressure Levels and Its Influence on Behavior

Respondent	Peer Pressure Level (1-5)	Behavior Influence (1-5)	Type of Behavior Affected
Respondent 1	4	5	Alcohol use
Respondent 2	3	4	Academic performance
Respondent 3	5	5	Smoking
Respondent 4	2	3	Drug use

Source: Quoted from the author's personal research

The table above provides a summary of the respondents' peer pressure levels and the corresponding influence on their behavior. As seen, there is a clear variation in both the levels of peer pressure and the impact on behavior across different respondents. For example, Respondent 1 experiences a high level of peer pressure (4) and reports a significant influence on their behavior (5), particularly in terms of alcohol use. Respondent 3 also experiences the highest peer pressure level (5) and shows a significant impact on behavior, with smoking being the affected behavior. On the other hand, Respondent 4 reports a lower peer pressure level (2), resulting in a more moderate impact on behavior. This indicates that the influence of peer pressure is closely linked to the intensity of pressure felt by adolescents. The table and scatter plot together suggest that higher peer pressure levels tend to lead to stronger behavioral changes, particularly in risky or socially influenced behaviors.

B. The Role of Multiculturalism in Shaping Adolescent Responses to Social Pressure

Multiculturalism plays a significant role in shaping how adolescents respond to social pressures, particularly peer pressure. In multicultural societies, adolescents are exposed to a variety of cultural norms, values, and practices, which can influence their behaviors and decision-making processes. Studies have shown that adolescents in multicultural settings may experience a unique form of peer pressure due to the blending of different cultural expectations. For instance, while one cultural group might emphasize individualism and independence, another might place a higher value on collectivism and conformity (Khostarina, 2025). These contrasting values can create a complex social environment where adolescents navigate various expectations from different peer groups. Moreover, the responses to social pressure in multicultural societies are often shaped by cultural identity (Kozela, 2025).

Adolescents who strongly identify with their cultural background may feel a stronger pull to adhere to the norms of their cultural group, while those with a more fluid or bicultural identity might experience conflicting pressures. Research suggests that

multicultural adolescents tend to develop more adaptive coping strategies in response to social pressure, as they learn to balance multiple perspectives and navigate between different cultural norms. However, they may also face challenges, such as cultural assimilation or rejection from peer groups that do not share their cultural values. Overall, multiculturalism plays a crucial role in how adolescents understand and respond to peer pressure, influencing their behaviors, choices, and social interactions within diverse communities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design and Approach

The research design for this study is **quantitative**, focusing on analyzing the influence of peer pressure on adolescent behavior in a multicultural society. The study uses a survey-based approach, combined with online interviews via Google Meet to gather data from four anonymous respondents. These respondents were selected based on specific criteria to ensure diversity in terms of cultural backgrounds and experiences with peer pressure. The data collection process involved semi-structured interviews, which allowed for in-depth discussions on how adolescents perceive and respond to peer pressure.

The interviews were conducted in a controlled, online environment to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Each interview focused on understanding the respondents' personal experiences with peer pressure, the behaviors it influenced, and how cultural factors shaped their responses. For data analysis, the responses were coded and analyzed quantitatively, identifying patterns in how peer pressure affects adolescent decision-making and behavior. The use of Google Meet ensured that the interviews were easily accessible and facilitated a comfortable environment for the participants to express their views openly. This mixed approach quantitative with a qualitative element through interviews ensures comprehensive data collection, providing insights into both the numerical trends and personal experiences of the participants.

B. Data Collection Method

The data collection method for this study involved a combination of **quantitative** and **qualitative** approaches to capture a comprehensive understanding of how peer pressure influences adolescent behavior in a multicultural society. The primary method of data collection was **online interviews** conducted via Google Meet. Four respondents were selected to participate in the study, ensuring a diverse representation of adolescents from different cultural backgrounds. To maintain confidentiality, all respondents remained anonymous, and personal identifiers were not collected. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in exploring specific themes related to peer pressure, such as types of behaviors influenced by peer pressure and the role of cultural norms in shaping adolescent responses.

Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes, during which participants were asked open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses. The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent to ensure accurate data transcription. In addition to the qualitative interviews, a set of standardized survey questions was used to gather quantitative data on the perceived intensity of peer pressure and its impact on behavior. The survey questions were designed to assess the respondents' experiences and the degree to which peer pressure influenced their decision-making. This mixed-methods approach allows for a more holistic view of the research topic, combining statistical analysis with personal insights from the respondents.

C. Ethical Considerations in Research

Ethical considerations are crucial in ensuring that the research is conducted with respect, integrity, and responsibility towards the participants. In this study, several ethical

principles were followed to protect the privacy and well-being of the respondents. First, **informed consent** was obtained from all participants before the interviews, ensuring that they understood the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. To maintain confidentiality, the identities of the respondents were kept anonymous, and no personal identifying information was collected during the interviews. The responses were coded to ensure privacy, and the data was securely stored. Additionally, participants were assured that the information shared during the interviews would be used solely for research purposes and would not be shared with any third parties. Finally, the research adhered to ethical guidelines regarding **non-harm** to participants, ensuring that no emotional distress or discomfort was caused during the data collection process. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board to further ensure compliance with ethical standards.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Implications of Peer Pressure on Adolescent Behavior in Multicultural Settings

The implications of peer pressure on adolescent behavior in multicultural settings are profound and multifaceted. Adolescence is a critical period for the development of identity, and peer influence during this phase can significantly shape behavior and life decisions. In multicultural societies, the impact of peer pressure is further complicated by the interaction of different cultural norms, values, and social expectations (Maspul, 2023). Adolescents are not only navigating the pressures from their immediate peer groups but are also influenced by a wider cultural context, which can either reinforce or conflict with these pressures. In multicultural settings, peer pressure may lead adolescents to adopt behaviors or attitudes that are reflective of the dominant cultural group, potentially conflicting with their familial or cultural traditions. For instance, in a society where individualism is highly valued, adolescents may experience pressure to prioritize personal achievements over collective family or community values.

Conversely, in collectivist cultural settings, peer pressure may encourage behaviors that align with group harmony and conformity, sometimes suppressing individual expression. The influence of peer pressure can also contribute to risky behaviors, such as substance abuse, early sexual activity, or engagement in delinquent acts (Okoh, 2025). These behaviors are often exacerbated in multicultural environments where adolescents may struggle with a sense of belonging or face discrimination. Peer pressure in such contexts may push them toward certain behaviors to fit in or to avoid social exclusion. Adolescents in multicultural societies may also experience a clash of cultural expectations, where they are pressured to conform to the values of their peer group while feeling torn between these pressures and the expectations of their family or cultural community (Aral, 2025).

Furthermore, peer pressure can affect decision-making in terms of career choices, educational aspirations, and social interactions. In multicultural societies, the desire to conform to peer expectations can lead to the adoption of behaviors that are not necessarily in line with the individual's true aspirations, but are instead shaped by external influences. For instance, adolescents may make educational or career choices based on what is deemed acceptable by their peer group, rather than what aligns with their personal interests or family expectations. In conclusion, the implications of peer pressure on adolescent behavior in multicultural settings are complex and vary depending on the cultural dynamics present (Li, 2023). Understanding these influences is crucial for developing strategies to support adolescents in making informed decisions and navigating peer pressure in a way that respects their cultural background while promoting healthy development.

B. Exploring Peer Pressure and Its Effects on Adolescents

Exploring peer pressure and its effects on adolescents reveals the powerful role it plays in shaping behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making. Adolescence is a developmental stage marked by a strong desire for social acceptance, which makes individuals particularly vulnerable to the influence of their peers. Peer pressure can manifest both positively and negatively, depending on the context and the behaviors being promoted. On one hand, peer pressure can encourage positive behaviors, such as academic achievement, involvement in extracurricular activities, and social responsibility (Álvarez, 2025). Adolescents may feel motivated to excel academically or engage in healthy activities to gain approval from their peer group. These positive forms of peer pressure can strengthen group cohesion and support individual growth by fostering a sense of belonging and shared goals. On the other hand, negative peer pressure can lead adolescents to engage in risky behaviors, such as substance abuse, early sexual activity, or delinquency. The need to conform to peer expectations may push adolescents to adopt behaviors that they otherwise might not consider (Zhang, 2023).

This can result in long-term consequences, including psychological distress, poor academic performance, and involvement in activities that are detrimental to their well-being. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to these influences due to their developmental need for identity formation and social validation. Moreover, the impact of peer pressure can vary depending on the individual's personality and their social environment. Adolescents with low self-esteem or poor coping mechanisms may be more likely to give in to negative peer influences, while those with strong self-identity and supportive family relationships may be better equipped to resist (Hung, 2025). The role of authority figures, such as parents, teachers, and mentors, is crucial in providing adolescents with guidance and support to navigate peer pressure effectively. In conclusion, peer pressure is a significant force in adolescent development, influencing behaviors and life decisions in ways that can be both beneficial and harmful. Understanding the complexities of peer influence can help in designing interventions that promote healthy decision-making and resilience among adolescents.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant impact of peer pressure on adolescent behavior and life decisions within a multicultural society. The findings reveal that peer pressure can influence both positive and negative behaviors, depending on the cultural context and the individual's response to external social influences. Adolescents in multicultural settings face unique challenges, such as balancing peer expectations with family values, which can sometimes lead to conflicting decisions. While peer pressure can encourage positive behaviors like academic achievement and social responsibility, it can also lead to risky behaviors, such as substance abuse and early sexual activity. It is essential to recognize the role of cultural differences in shaping how peer pressure manifests and influences adolescent decisions. The study emphasizes the need for effective interventions and support systems that help adolescents navigate these pressures, fostering resilience and promoting healthy decision-making. Future research could further explore how different cultural backgrounds mediate the effects of peer pressure.

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