

Psychology essays - peer adolescents development



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Peer Adolescents Development

Peer pressure and the need to belong

Primarily, understanding human development can help us better appreciate our own life experiences and life path. It promotes better self-understanding and personal development. From ages twelve to nineteen is a stage in a teenager's life that determines what kind of adult he or she will become. This stage of adolescence, characterized by “ identity formation” (gaining a sense of yourself and you fit in the society), is the subject of research to establish why adolescents are vulnerable to this phenomenon called peer pressure (Craig & Dunn, 2007).

Adolescence is a developmental transition between childhood to adulthood . This research paper will give an insight of human development, focusing on adolescent years, which starts from the puberty period to 18 or 21 years old, in its most realistic approach. Learning about human development gives us a deeper understanding of the many different pathways humans can take as they grow and develop through the lifespan.

It is important to understand child life from the child's point of view. This means understanding how the way we see and make sense of the world is affected by cognitive-developmental factors. The same applies to understanding adolescents and adults of all ages. Physical, cognitive and social Capacities are intertwined.

The environment plays a big role in modeling adolescence in what they will become later in life. Being the most sensitive part of life, the parent's role is very important and most sought. Even if parents show love and emotional

support, this young people still look up to their peers which greatly affect their way of life. Peer pressure can be described as a positive or negative reaction that occurs when one is influenced by certain people or peers (Healey, 2007) and we are constantly surrounded by it.

Individuals are introduced to peer pressure at a very young age and young people can be influenced easier than matured adults. I believe family members, friends and religious institutions have the strongest influence of peer pressure on adolescence. But from past experiences, friends have the strongest influence on teenagers. The most troublesome, most argumentative, emotional, impulsive and lack self-control . . . they are known to be adolescents. This is where teenagers are bound to delinquency like using drugs, academic failure, risky sexual behavior, emotional problems (Craig & Dunn, 2007).

In the process of their life, the first step they do is to achieve identity, sense of belongingness and security. Eric Erikson refer to this stage as the period of identity versus identity confusion when these young ones are struggling to fill in the answer to the question of who am I? (Craig & Dunn, 2007). If they don't feel they belong or accepted by the people around them like their parents, friends, classmates, insecurities will find its way into their emotion, which often results to negative attitude and finally, suffer anxiety or depression. The average teen feels pressure either from the school, peers, or parents; thus enticing the need to belong to groups.

This is where peer pressure comes into their young and confused life.

Teenagers who get involved with delinquent friends shun themselves away

from good or straight kids and choose to fit in to their own kind. Nowadays, majority of families are headed by single parents, most of them mothers, who work extra jobs. Single parent are spending little time with their teens, thus leaving them victim to peer group pressure. Research shows that peer group pressure may lead to delinquent behavior among teenagers, which includes criminal acts such as motor vehicle theft, burglary, and robbery and others (Craig & Dunn, 2007).

Though we say parenting practices contribute to a lasting result in all aspects of child development, we must also be aware that their need to belong to group of peers succumb them to do things which are not healthy for their growth. This does not necessarily mean that peer pressure is always negative; it also has its positive side. The negative peer group is being named by the society as gangs. Adolescents associated with these groups feel they gain prestige. Nevertheless, not all peer groups have negative influence, like academic and athletic achievement (Ayres & Nalebuff, 2005). This is where you find friends and peers that give advice and help you see what is really best for you. Since adolescents would rather seek advice from their peers and friends, it would be best for them to choose a better group.

During adolescence, peers become progressively more important because they spend more time with them than with any other cluster . So we say peers are their group and definitely in this group they find their worth, security and sense of belonging. In any case, they choose to belong to a wrong group or gang, in order just to fit in the jibe, blend with them and play same role as these gangs do because they consider them their friends. On the other hand, some people struggle because they are depressed by what <https://assignbuster.com/psychology-essays-peer-adolescents-development/>

they have done or what people have done to hurt their feelings in the past such as sexual abuse or domestic violence (Healey, 2007).

Unknowingly, the processes we go through become a part of our daily routines, part of our lives and become us in the later stage. Peers are our strong influence. Our manner of speaking, behavior, dressing, hairstyle, hobbies, habits, food we eat, drinks, movies we see, places we go, sports we do, books we read, music, songs we sing, dances, brands of cigarettes, perfumes, clubs, organizations, all of which are influenced by peers. They are the group we are trying to impress in order to fit in. Going back, I try to critically examine the importance of peer pressure. Other issues such as family life, economic background, environment, and biological tendencies all may be as important as or even more important than peer pressure in determining behavior (Craig & Dunn, 2007).

However, in our young lives no matter how great the emotional quest, the pains, our identity and sense of belonging, the pressure of peers, we must have a great respect on ourselves to say no repeatedly to friends if the things they do or ask you to do are not beneficial. And be able to express what you believe in and not give in to their pressure. Others may go along because they are curious to try new things they see others doing, being into a gang, sharing the same commonness, is tremendously strong and seductive to resist.

Family and school can sometimes pressure adolescents to give in to peer pressure because of an overemphasis on the importance of socialization coupled with a lack of interest and communication on the parents and

teachers' part, producing unrealistic expectations. As we progress to young adults, peer pressure finds its way to sneak into our lives.

Interactions with friends or other peers are crucial for the development of a child. Almost everyone would agree that social interaction is essential but at times parents are guilty of over-stressing this importance. Take for Example, a birthday party where every child in the neighborhood is invited to come regardless of whether or not they are actual friends, but the parent would say something like " it's the neighbor's daughter's birthday , why don't you go make new friends?". Teachers promote social interaction by assigning exercises that necessitate working in pairs or groups.

Besides, when a teacher notice a child playing alone, they talk him/ her to joining the other children or by assigning grades/points based on their interaction with others therefore failing to notice the possibility that the child might have preferred to be alone. This shows that from an early age, children are taught to value the importance of social interaction which remains in them as they move into the adolescent years. As a result adolescents value their friendships deeply and in some cases more so than their relationships with family members, therefore accounting for the adolescent not being able to deny their friends for fear of losing the bonds that they have formed causing greater vulnerability to peer pressure.

The pressure of being one group shows the need for approval and acceptance of their being equal. Could this mean that children are struggling to declare freedom from their parents, therefore, striving to prevail the acceptance and support of friends and classmates? Having experienced peer

pressure, during my adolescent years in order to fit in, because it's not easy being the only one doing something different.

Oftentimes, I feel worried I'll be picked on if I don't go with the crowd, or I lose my friends. Other times I do stuff because I think my friends will like me more, or because my gangs are doing it, so it seems normal. Both close and wider friendship groups have provided opportunities for me to join them, and that was to smoking. Until I realized that I was into smoking for a longer period of time and hard to quit.

But I asked myself if I was doing what I really think is right or just giving in to my peer's pressure to impress my friends and my gang. But as I grew older, I was faced with some challenging decisions. Some of them don't have a clear right or wrong answer. Meaning I don't really know if what I was doing was really good for me. I realized that making decisions on my own was hard enough, but when people got involved and tried to pressure me one way or another, it was even harder. People, who were my age, like classmates and gangs, tried to influence how I act, to get me to do something I do not really want to do. But because I want to stay in the gang, I was pressured to do things and sometimes overdo them to impress my gang.

The peer pressure during my adolescent years was really something I had to deal with, maybe even adults too. And I must confess that I still get that pressure from both my parents and my friends' even though I am struggling to be as much independent as I can be.

I underwent a peer mentoring program, which matches older youths with younger ones. The former provide the latter with guidance, advice, and all

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forms of support I need to be able to meet challenges of my adolescent life. The older youth do not only serve as mentors but as role models to the younger ones like me. They were not perfect but having been through the same stage and most likely, the same problems, predicaments, and challenges in their homes, school and community; they are in the position to provide friendly advice, positive influences, attention and moral support to me and other younger teens. Good friends respect my individuality and I stood up for what I believe in and learned to respect myself more.

Giving in to peer pressure tapers off later in life. If adolescents and the society at large realize that social interaction is important but only to a certain extent, then there will be a better communication and friendship amongst all. Similarly, if parents and teachers somehow find a way to better communicate with their children and students respectively, these adolescents would most likely come to share their feelings with them and not rely so much on their peers for feedback (Havelin, 2000).

Lastly, if parents and teachers became aware of the unrealistic expectations they place on teenagers, the result would be a decrease in conflict as well as a decrease in the number of adolescents who feel the need to rebel through conformity to peer pressure. In other words, examining the ways in which family and school cause adolescents to give in to peer pressure leads to a resolution of the causes.

What is the overall result? Adolescents have a healthier sense of the meaning of friendships, they have an alternative other than peers to whom they can turn to and they are freed from any unrealistic expectations that

they themselves can't understand. But most importantly, they become less susceptible to the traps of peer pressure, thereby, giving in to peer pressure is narrowed (Kaplan, 1983).

Associating with groups who like doing similar things may assist in avoiding a circumstance where you feel pressured into matters you do not like to do. Belonging to the "in group" might not be a lot fun as it seems. Having the courage to say "no" may be difficult, but, it may also feel nice to continue with what you believe in. Making clear to people in a composed manner why you don't like to be part of something may gain you admiration from others. Try not to be biased on other people's preferences.

Respecting an individual's decision can teach them to value yours.

Remember that you do not have to go along with their conduct.

Concentrating on the logic why you don't sense happiness or fulfillment with the choice may help you not to be subjective to them. At times, an individual is more capable in handling peer pressure because he or she is older, or more assure and secure in his or her present situation. Being an advocate to someone may help. Both of these are ways wherein you may be able to handle peer pressure smoothly.

With the proper guidance and right choice of friends, one will not have any trouble with life's difficult decisions, and will hopefully, do the right thing.

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