

Risks of youth internet use



MURPHY 1

The internet and various social networking sites, specifically, have seen a surge in activity from adolescents and young adults in the past few years. Individuals, ages ten years old to thirty years old, are the main users of these social networking sites. These same individuals either view or post themselves involved in some kind of challenge game for the amusement of themselves or others. People see these games as fun and entertaining to watch; however, some of these games are very dangerous. Many of these individuals experience peer pressure at the hands of their friends and family to do these challenges. To determine how peer pressure and challenge games affect these people, we must define peer pressure, look at those who are the most susceptible, look at the evolution of these challenge games, and how these games can have detrimental effects on those who engage in them

Peer pressure, or peer influence, is the persistent and persuasive verbiage or tactics used by a group of individuals known as a peer group to encourage other individuals to change their values, beliefs, or actions in exchange for acceptance into said peer group. According to Calvó-Armengol and Jackson, there are two types of peer pressure. One is positive and the other is negative. In the case of positive pressure, “ the pressure exerted by one agent reduces the cost that other agents face for taking a particular action, thus encouraging other agents to take the action. Essentially, this is like subsidizing other agents’ activity. In the case of negative pressure, the pressure exerted by one agent increases other agents’ costs of not taking an action. That is, one way to encourage an agent to take an action is to make it

more costly for him or her not to take the action.” Calvó-Armengol and Jackson states that positive and negative peer pressure have more nuanced differences and similarities. They also suggest looking at the intentions rather than the actions of the person. However, for the scope of this paper, we will look at the basic definition of negative peer pressure where one agent makes it costly for another agent to not take action.

When considering those who are the most susceptible to peer pressure, several areas surface such as the person’s age, gender, socioeconomic status, and the atmosphere at the person’s home. Rihtaric and Kamenov places these factors into four different categories, “ adolescent’s openness to influence, salience of peers who exert pressure, adolescent’s ability or opportunity to perform, and relationship dynamics.”

Openness is chiefly a personality trait that determines a person’s willingness to try new things and have new experiences. Being open to influences is not inherently a bad thing; however, if left unmonitored or improperly monitored, the adolescent could experience negative effects in their personalities and their actions. The adolescent being open to influence could result in them being urged and encouraged to act in ways that they would not normally act. Adolescents with low will power will often conform and fall victim to peer pressure.

According to Berk, due to school, jobs, and other factors, adolescents spend less time with close family members and more time with their peers. Adolescents often seek intimacy or psychological closeness, loyalty, mutual

understandings, beliefs, and feelings from their peers. The peer group, then, strengthens with each criterion that the person meets.

With the internet now being no more than a hands reach, finding friends on social networking sites often supplement actual friends. In some cases, to adolescents, these internet relationships are the closest adolescents have to actual friends. In other cases, these cyber friends are just as important as real friends are. Berk states that it is because of this closeness and the need to be close that increases the susceptibility in many adolescents for facing degrading racial and ethnic slurs, potentially harmful social experiences, sexually obscene remarks, and even peer pressure.

To find the group that is the most susceptible, you must look at the individual's attachment style. There are two different forms of attachment, secure and insecure. Those with a secure attachment style seem to have peer relationships that are low in peer pressure. This may be due to the more positive choices and influences that someone with a secure attachment has. "The results of several studies favor the assumption that susceptibility to peer pressure concerning misconduct could be higher among adolescents with insecure attachment." (Calvó-Armengol & Jackson, 2010) Susceptibility increases with the insecure attachment anxious type. For both males and females, susceptibility increases if they have anxiety about their relationships and the group's perception of them if they do not go along with the crowd. Research has also shown that insecure attachment to peers or parents correlated with high alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking, and drug abuse among adolescents. For males, there seems to be more openness to engage in misconduct than their female counterparts. There is <https://assignbuster.com/risks-of-youth-internet-use/>

an even higher chance to engage in misconduct if the male's friends ask them to do so. Females are susceptible to peer pressure but not to the extent of males. Essentially, adolescents are the group that is most susceptible to deviant behavior and misconduct because of peer pressure and peer influence. This influence seems to be greater in males than in females. It is even greater if males or females experience anxiety about their social standing in their peer group.

Challenge games are tasks where a person or groups of people perform some feat, often of stupidity, for the amusement of themselves and others. The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge is one of the more recent challenge games that brings awareness to Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease, which is a debilitating progressive and degenerative neuromuscular disease. In this challenge, people were to record themselves dumping a bucket filled with ice water over themselves and nominating three other friends for the challenge or donating money to the ALS foundation. This fad spread like wildfire and almost every social media outlet filled with ALS Ice Bucket Challenge videos seemingly overnight. People posted these videos so that everybody could see exactly who has to do the challenge next. Those called out might not have had any money to donate or they did not want to be drenched in icy cold water. Those who received the challenge experienced peer pressure to donate or pouring water over their head. The pressure to perform came from them not wanting to seem insensitive to the goal of the ALS ice bucket challenge. Since this challenge was for charity, there was more of a receptive nature having multiple news

outlets, athletic teams, schools, musicians, actors, and everybody in between performing the challenge.

The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge is a harmless game; however, there are others with a higher chance to cause serious harm. There was the cinnamon challenge where the participant must hold a large amount of cinnamon in their mouths for a certain amount of time. Some people reported respiratory problems because of this game. Another game that many are pressured into is the knockout game. This was showcased in the media because children, most often adolescent males from low socioeconomic statuses and broken homes, in essence stalked a person, waited until it was clear, then ran up behind the person they were stalking and punched them as hard as they could. This often ended in multiple adolescents, predominantly male, going to detainment centers or jail.

There are several more games of the likes of the Ice Bucket Challenge, Cinnamon Challenge, and the Knockout Challenge. All of the games vary in degree and severity. It could be as innocent as the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge or as severe as the Knockout Challenge. The common thread in all challenge games is the idea that to be a part of the collective, you must conform or do whatever they ask of you. This is especially hard for young adolescent, females, and especially males, who are the group that is most susceptible to peer pressure and influence. For both men and women, susceptibility to peer pressure often decreases with age and experience. This decrease in susceptibility comes from the development of more warm and positive relationships with people who exhibit low peer pressure abilities.