

## Effect of Socio Dynamic Aspects of Peer Influences amongst Day Scholars and Boarders of Senior Secondary Schools in Tamil Nadu

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ONOMÁZEIN 63 (March 2024): 136-148  
ISSN: 0718-5758



## Abstract

Peer influence is one of the most crucial factors affecting adolescents' behaviour. Peer influence has multiple dimensions that manifest as positive and negative. Positive interventions are suggested to overcome the negative influences of peers. The present study aims to ascertain the peer influence experienced by Senior Secondary School Day Scholars and Boarders who reside in Tamil Nadu in the domains of socialising and career decision-making. A quantitative descriptive approach is adopted where the data is collected from a cross-sectional population of Class XI and XII standard students from various schools in the state, who form the units of analysis. The study has addressed the research gap in assessing the characteristics of peer influence amongst Boarding School and Day School Children. Results indicate that mode of boarding, i.e., Day Scholars and Hostellers have significantly different peer pressure. Based on the outcome of the study, interventions at various levels to minimize the ill effects of peer influence have been suggested.

Keywords: Peer influence, Secondary School, Socio dynamics, Adolescents.

## 1. Introduction

Peer influence is described as one of the strongest determinants of adolescent behaviour. The Oxford Learner's Dictionary defines a peer as "a person who is of the same age or who has the same social status as you". The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines adolescents as individuals in the age group of 10-19 years (WHO, 2006). Among the adolescent, classmates, friends and members of the community and family who belong to a similar age group can be considered peers. There are various dimensions to peer influence. Peer influence also manifests as negative and positive (Rohrbeck & Garvin, 2014). In order to counter the negative influences of peers, positive interventions are implemented (Chen & Deng, 2022). At present, these interventions are uniformly applied to children of day schools and boarding schools alike. This may affect the efficacy of the interventions as the peer pressure influenced by the adolescents of day school and boarding schools may differ. Therefore, there is a requirement to assess the peer influence experienced by the boarders and day schoolers.

In India, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has directed through various circulars that children's mental health needs to be nurtured through various methods and has mandated the presence of a school counsellor to address mental health issues. In addition, the website 'manodarpan' administered by the CBSE also makes many tools and resources available to promote this. However, these resources, guidelines, and the CBSE manual of Mental Health treat the day scholars and the boarders differently. The National Council of Education and Training (NCERT) has brought out a document in 2022 termed the Training and Resource Material Health and Wellness of School-going Children Under the aegis of the School Health Programme of Ayushman Bharat (NCERT, 2022). This comprehensive document details various interventions and addresses peer pressure but does not comment on this issue concerning day scholars and boarders. The State Government of Tamil Nadu, through the Department of Health and Family Welfare and the Dept of School Education, has implemented various schemes and policies to improve adolescents' mental health (Health & Family Welfare Department, 2023). The documentation perused indicates that laudable measures have been implemented by various health and education departments of the state and central government. However, though Peer pressure and the problems of adolescents are detailed and interventions at multiple levels have also been recommended, whether there exists a need to consider day scholars and boarders differently has neither been explored nor explained.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Negative effects of Peer influence

The Effect of Peer influence can either be positive or negative. It has also been brought out that negative peer influence (direct and indirect) has a stronger impact on adolescent behaviour (Padilla-Walker & Bean, 2009). Research has proved that adolescents have displayed the negative effect of peer influence through antisocial behaviour, aggressive behaviour, health-risking behaviour, depression and effects on academic performances (Allen et al., 2006; Dishion & Tipsord, 2011; Jaccard et al., 2005; Prinstein et al., 2011; Sullivan, 2006).

On the other side, Positive effects of peer influence can also have positive effects when youth are encouraged by their peers. It can be a very useful and apt method for correcting the unacceptable

behaviour of classmates (Sandler et al., 1987). It has also been brought out that influence of peers who are highly engaged in academics would also lead others in the group from not engaging in deviant behaviour, which is a positive effect. This is also congruent with the notion that positive role models inspire others to perform and succeed, especially in academics (Véronneau & Dishion, 2011). Therefore it can be understood that not only would a bright student in a peer group influence peers positively to do well, but he or she would exert a positive influence in such a manner as to prevent deviant behaviour. It has been studied that positive peer influence can also provide protective effects against smoking and alcohol consumption (Wang et al., 2017).

## 2.2. Interventions to counter Negative influence

It has been indicated that a group of positive factors help to counteract the negative influences in the lives of youth. These are termed 'Resilience Factors' (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman, 2013). These factors are classified as assets and resources. Assets are the positive factors internal to an individual. Assets are those that are within the individual. Resources include parental support, adult mentoring, or community organisations. It has been indicated that the involvement of parents with adolescents can lead to positive peer interactions, and this can lead to comfortable peer relationships (Updegraff et al., 2001). It has also been noted that social support can positively influence the alleviation of aggressive behaviour among adolescents (Dishion & Tipsord, 2011).

While it has been indicated that adolescents are relatively efficient in accomplishing academic tasks, they are found to be low in emotional efficiency and therefore require support (Andrew & Flashman, 2017). Studies give weight to this posit that the involvement of parents and negative aspects of peer influence can be reduced by the intervention of parents (Shute et al., 2011). As it is evident that the school environment can lead to stress and other negative influences brought about by peer influence, it is comforting to note that support from teachers plays an important role in students' psychological and school adjustment and contribute to their well-being. (Korir & Kipkemboi, 2014).

## 2.3. Theoretical Frame Work

The previous sections of this paper dealt with various aspects of peer influence and its negative and positive effects. It has also been brought out how positive interventions can lead to overcoming the negative influences of peers. All the literature that has been perused has been built upon certain foundations. The theoretical framework this study would rely on is Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963), wherein he has illustrated a child's transition into adulthood and various influences that the child experiences during adolescence. This theory thereby highlights the importance of peers in an adolescent's life. This study's next theory depends on the 'Cognitive Dissonance theory' (Festinger, 1957), which illustrates why individuals perform or subjugate to negative influences to reduce dissonance, leading to peer conformance. The way to overcome negative influences is through positive interventions. The theoretical framework that has led to the development and implementation of a large number of positive interventions and which this paper relies on is Fordyce Happiness Cognitive-Behavioral Training.

## 2.4. Research Gap and Objectives

A literature survey has indicated that various aspects that affect the boarders and day scholars, such as academic outcomes (Martin et al., 2021), student motivation, engagement, and psychological well-being (Martin et al., 2014), an accomplishment of economic and cultural assimilation (Feir, 2016), mental health and loneliness (Simpson et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2023), reduction of

depression due to peer support (Pfeiffer et al., 2011), and also the beneficial effects of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) on boarding school children (Sari et al., 2019) have been explored. The following objectives were framed based on the identified themes:

- i. To ascertain whether boarders and day scholars in the domain of socialising and career decision-making experience a difference in peer influence
- ii. To find out if there is any difference between peer influence experienced by boys and girls in the age group of 16-18
- iii. To assess whether there is a requirement to carry out further study on the present suggested uniform positive interventions applied uniformly to girls, boys, day scholars and boarders to overcome the negative influence of peers.

The available literature does not illuminate differences or similarities between the peer influences experienced by boarders and day scholars. Literature also indicates that positive interventions by teachers and mentors can help boarding school youth cope with peers' negative influence (Agmon et al., 2015). At this juncture, there arises the question of whether the positive interventions to be implemented by the parents and teachers to alleviate the negative effects of peer influence are equally applicable in a day school setting and a boarding school setting. This is because the implemented interventions do not distinguish between day scholars and boarding school children. For that, a clear indication of the similarity or difference in peer influence between adolescents in day schools and boarding schools needs to be ascertained. Since the available literature does not throw adequate light on differences or similarities between peer influences experienced by boarders and day school children, there is a need to undertake this study. This information is deemed essential to ascertain the efficacy of positive interventions that are being implemented equally on day scholars and orders as per the policy in vogue. Hence this study, using the descriptive survey method, intends to collect data to ultimately address and bridge the knowledge gap in the domain of peer influence in boarders versus the peer influence in day scholars.

### 3. Research Methodology

The study aims to ascertain any difference in peer influence experienced by day scholars and boarders in Senior Secondary Schools of Tamil Nadu. A quantitative approach has been adopted in this study, and a descriptive survey questionnaire was utilised to obtain data.

#### 3.1. Hypothesis

It is hypothesised that day school children and children in boarding schools in the domain of socialising and career decision-making experience no difference between peer influence. The Alternate hypotheses are:-

- (a) Peer influence experienced by Boarding School Children is stronger than that experienced by Day School Children.
- (b) Peer influence experienced by Day School Children is stronger than that experienced by Boarding School Children.

#### 3.2. Sampling Strategy and Data Collection

Since negative peer influence has been demonstrated to be a major cause of delinquent behaviour, it was ascertained as to which age group of adolescents in India is maximum in conflict with the law. As per the records brought out by the National Crime Record Bureau Statistics, the majority of the Juveniles who are in conflict with the law are in the age group 16 years to 18 years, which is

76.2% of the total cases (NCRB, 2021). It is the age group of children who attend the Senior Secondary School. Therefore the adolescents of Senior Secondary Schools who are Day Scholars and Hostellers (Boarders) of Tamil Nadu have been considered as the Units of Analysis. This group is also the group that requires positive intervention more than other adolescents. This particular age group has also been chosen to ensure that children would be able to answer the questionnaire better, owing to their age and relative experience amongst other adolescents.

### 3.3. Data Collection Tool and Items

The method used to obtain data is based on the survey questionnaire known as the Peer Pressure Scale by Sunil Saini, Sandeep Singh and Neelima Goyal, 2010. This tool was selected because of its robust validity and reliability. In addition to the original 25 questions of this scale, five questions were added to bring out specific answers to achieve the stated objectives. These questions are mentioned in questions numbered 26 -30.

To give adequate representation, appropriate samples that represent the total population of Senior Secondary Schools of Tamil Nadu Schools were selected based on geographical distribution. Data was collected from 13 Schools belonging to the East, West, North, Central and South zones of Tamil Nadu. These schools belonged to both rural and urban locations. The total number of samples collected is 1283, out of which 999 samples belong to data pertaining to Day Scholars and 284 belong to boarders. The items identified are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Item Descriptions

Item No	Description
1	Sometimes, I miss classes because my friends urge me to do so.
2	There are always friends pressure to date.
3	I feel friends pressure to chat for long hours on the internet.
4	Sometimes, I do something wrong just to be good in my friends' view.
5	At times, I feel friends pressure me to smoke.
6	I usually accept with friend's request for a movie, party etc.
7	At times, I feel my friend's pressure to watch pornography.
8	In close relationships, we have to approve pressure of friends.
9	I know my limits when I am with my friends.
10	I go out with my friends despite parental warnings.
11	I find it difficult to escape from my friends' pressure.
12	Sometimes, I have to go undergo friends' pressure to be liked in a group.
13	Many times, I put off my homework and other important assignments for friends.
14	Sometimes, I have to please my friends by doing things I don't want to do
15	To maintain my status in a friend group, sometimes I pressurise my parents to buy an expensive item.
16	I do not take advice from my parents about the activities I do with my friends.
17	It is difficult to think about the negative consequences of what we do with friends.

18	There is no harm in doing one wrong thing with friends when we do a number of good things with them.
19	Sometimes, I do things because my friends want me to do so
20	It is very difficult for me to deny my friend's request to drink or smoke at a party or on other occasions.
21	Sometimes, I do risky and harmful acts to get acceptance in my friend's group.
22	Sometimes, I do violent acts to keep up with my friends.
23	When I feel uncomfortable in a group, I do not know how to say NO.
24	I cannot resist going to a party with my friends.
25	I cannot say NO to my friends even if my parents do not agree.
26	I feel that my friends are more knowledgeable than my parents as to which career I should choose.
27	I feel that I will choose a career that my friend recommends even if my parents do not agree.
28	I feel that my friends are more knowledgeable than my teachers as to which career I should choose.
29	Choosing a career similar to my friend's will be the best option for me.
30	All my friends have spoken and decided which career we should choose.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1. Internal Validity of the Tool.

The items of this tool are related to the phenomenon being measured, and hence it measures what it is intended to measure. Therefore the tool has face validity. The Authors of the tool have used the services of experts to assess content validity, and they have declared that this tool has good content validity.

### 4.2. External (Criterion) Validity of the Tool

The authors assessed the Criterion Validity through Predictive Validity and Concurrent Validity. The authors (Saini et al., 2020) conducted a pilot study with peer pressure and found a highly significant relationship between variables like HIV risk perception and alcohol and drug attitude scale. It was found that peer pressure was significantly correlated with HIV risk perception ( $r=0.22^{**}$ ) and attitude toward alcohol and drug abuse ( $r=0.22^{**}$ ). Both studies were conducted on a sample of 200 adolescent boys and girls, and the authors reported that the coefficient of alpha for the scale was 0.80. For the current study, the peer pressure subscale of the peer pressure and conformity Scale developed by Brown et al., 1986 was used to check the concurrent validity of the measure. The new scale was administered before the other measures to avoid the contamination of the responses. The two measures had a significant positive correlation ( $r=0.38^{**}$ ,  $R<.01$ ). Therefore, the finding suggests that the peer pressure scale is valid for assessing peer pressure among adolescents.

### 4.3. Reliability of the Tool

The tool's reliability was established using an assessment of Internal Consistency and proving that the Test-Reliability has temporal stability. The internal consistency of the scale was established by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and a reliability of 0.79 was obtained, establishing that the scale has a good reliability coefficient. For test-retest reliability analysis, the authors used Pearson product-moment correlation method, and the scores' internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's alpha. The results obtained indicated high test-retest reliability ( $r=0.33$ ,  $P<.01$ ) and internal consistency ( $=0.77$ ). Since five new questions were added to the tool, a Reliability Analysis was again carried out. The reliability test (Cronbach Alpha) result shows that the alpha coefficient value is 0.923 (Normally, the alpha value should be above 0.75 to accept the scale as reliable), which shows that the scale constructed is very reliable. In addition to this, the test to assess the increase or decrease in reliability by removing items was also carried out (Total Item Statistics). The removal of any of the items from the scale also gave higher reliability values as indicated in Table 1. Therefore the reliability of the thirty-item scale is very good. Table 2 shows the increase or decrease in reliability (alpha value) when each item is removed from the scale.

Table 2: Item Total Statistics

Item No	Scale Mean if item Deleted	Scale Variance if item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if item Deleted
1	63.30	405.561	.699	.919
2	63.30	401.194	.784	.917
3	63.14	397.143	.764	.917
4	62.90	393.602	.744	.917
5	63.26	434.115	.044	.929
6	62.60	409.061	.478	.922
7	60.80	468.245	-.690	.934
8	62.94	404.751	.633	.919
9	63.46	428.743	.228	.924
10	63.12	396.638	.734	.918
11	63.08	407.259	.566	.920
12	62.92	391.830	.859	.916
13	62.92	401.708	.692	.918
14	62.94	395.241	.766	.917
15	63.46	407.315	.649	.919
16	63.38	409.057	.624	.920
17	63.14	399.388	.702	.918
18	62.82	409.171	.540	.921
19	62.88	408.189	.554	.920
20	63.80	424.571	.459	.922
21	63.56	409.394	.601	.920
22	63.38	409.057	.595	.920
23	62.54	402.662	.594	.920
24	63.12	410.475	.530	.921
25	63.22	412.257	.488	.921
26	63.44	420.741	.405	.922



27	63.78	427.114	.362	.923
28	63.30	423.547	.283	.924
29	63.30	423.929	.329	.923
30	62.66	422.433	.309	.924

#### 4.4. Analysis of Peer Pressure

There are 30 items given under this scale to measure the extent of peer pressure. Each statement has options ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree or on the reverse side (5-point rating scale). The ratings for each option were assigned in such a way that a higher rating would be a level of peer pressure for the student. The mean ratings were found for each statement of Peer Pressure which are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Peer Statements

Item No	Mean	S.D	Item No	Mean	S.D
1	2.08	1.22	16	2.02	1.19
2	1.82	1.13	17	2.36	1.3
3	2	1.18	18	2.57	1.24
4	2.12	1.26	19	2.64	1.26
5	2.04	1.61	20	1.48	0.95
6	2.76	1.44	21	1.74	1.06
7	4.49	1	22	1.88	1.15
8	2.32	1.1	23	2.62	1.29
9	1.73	0.98	24	2.29	1.35
10	2.04	1.25	25	2.11	1.29
11	2.15	1.25	26	1.92	1.16
12	2.18	1.23	27	1.76	0.99
13	2.39	1.28	28	1.98	1.22
14	2.31	1.32	29	2.07	1.06
15	1.67	1.04	30	2.71	1.23

#### 4.5. Hypothesis Testing.

A comparison was carried out between Day scholars and Boarding School Children to examine the Null Hypothesis. It is seen from Table 4 that the average peer pressure score is higher for Hostellers (74.49) compared to day scholars (63.90). The S.Ds of both day scholars and Hostellers show significant variations in the scores as S.D. is approximately 20, more than one-third of the mean score. The following hypothesis was framed and tested to test whether the mean peer pressure scores differ significantly among day scholars and hostellers. In the next step, the peer pressure was ascertained between boys and girls of Classes XI and XII.

H<sub>0</sub>: The peer pressure scores do not differ significantly among day scholars and hostellers.

Table 4: Descriptives of Day Scholars and Boarders

Mode	Peer Pressure		
	Mean	Standard deviation	Number
Day Scholar	63.9	19.82	999
Hosteler (Boarder)	74.49	18.57	284
Total	66.25	20.03	1283
Day Scholar Boys	67.53	20.36	540
Boarders Boys	76.95	17.28	216
Total	70.22	19.98	756
Day Scholar Girls	59.64	18.29	459
Hosteler Girls	66.66	20.43	68
Total	60.55	18.7	527

Table 5: t-test for Equality of Means

	t	Df	Prob.	Sig.
Total	8.051	1281	0	**
Boys	5.994	754	0	**
Girls	2.909	525	0.004	**

\*\* - Significant at 1% level.

The test results (Table 5) show that the t-values are significant at the 1% level as the probability is 0.000 (i.e.,  $P < 0.01$ ). From this, it can be inferred that the peer pressure scores differ significantly between day scholars and boarders. Hence the hypothesis is rejected. Since the average peer pressure score is higher for Boarders compared to day scholars, it can be inferred that the Alternate hypothesis of Peer pressure experienced by Boarding School Children is stronger than that experienced by Day School Children.

#### 4.6. Discussions

It is seen that the ratings vary between a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 5. The comparison of mean ratings between statements can be understood in such a way that the highest mean rating shows that, among other statements, the statement with the highest mean rating enjoys more peer pressure among the students. The lowest mean rating of the statement has less influence among the students. It can be seen from the above statements that the overall mean ratings fall around 2 to 3. It indicates that there is a moderate level of peer pressure among students with respect to each statement included. The highest mean rating (4.4864) can be attributed to the statement "7. At times I feel friend's pressure to watch pornography". The lowest mean rating (1.4801) is found for the statement, "It is very difficult for me to deny my friend's request to drink or smoke at a party or on other occasions". The overall Score on Peer Pressure was calculated by adding the ratings (after recoding as defined above) of all 30 items. The higher the score, more will be the peer pressure. This moderate level of peer influence may be attributed to the age of the children under consideration in late adolescence, and during this period, the intensity of peer influence is expected to reduce as they gradually progress to young adulthood. The results also indicate that susceptibility

to peer influence is higher amongst boys of the age group than girls. From the analysis carried out, the following has been established:-

- (a) Children (Boys and Girls) of classes XI and XII of Tamil Nadu staying in hostels are more affected by Peer influence than children who are day scholars
- (b) Boys of Tamil Nadu studying in classes XI and XII are more susceptible to peer influence than girls.

Therefore the analysis indicates that there is a requirement to carry out further studies, as it has been brought out that children of this age group who stay in a boarding set-up are more susceptible to peer influence. It may be hypothesised at this juncture that a larger amount of peer influence may be influenced as boarders spend more time in each other's company than day scholars. The causative effect of time spent on peer influence also needs to be examined. Similarly, it has also emerged that boys of classes XII and XI are more susceptible to peer influence compared to girls of the same classes.

It, therefore, naturally leads to the next question regarding the effectiveness of implementing similar positive interventions for adolescents in boarding schools and day schools. Since the children in boarding school environments are more affected, it is opined that there is a requirement for proactive interventions by the managements housemasters, wardens and teachers as compared to the day schools. The appropriate methodology to achieve this end may be ascertained and implemented to achieve the best results. Further to this, there is also a need to carry out further studies to ascertain the need to formulate gender-specific interventions to overcome peer influence, as it has been established that boys are more susceptible to peer influence than girls.

##### 5. Implications for practice

Studies have been working on multiple aspects of peer influence as it is a major factor in building the future generation. Some of the interventions for policymakers and educational institutions have been discussed based on the findings and observations. Analysing various dimensions of influence and their root causes is essential at individual, group, and school levels. Reducing inequalities between schools could be an initiative to bridge the vast gap that lies among children from various demographic backgrounds. Allocation of resources across the schools is a vital element in establishing equality. Government initiatives like enhancing the resources in public-run schools and those in rural areas where the parents lack education might be helpful (Horoz et al., 2022). Conducting awareness programmes for parents in rural and lower-educated geographies could help them decide better on the selection of schools for their children. Such positive interventions develop social, emotional, behavioural, and peer-relationship aspects (Horoz et al., 2022; Xie & Cui, 2022). Social interactions and peer socialisation have a considerable impact in terms of students adapting to their peers' educational expectations or unifying their expectations when from different and the same socioeconomic statuses, respectively (Lorenz et al., 2020).

Imposing stricter delinquency prevention standards could reduce the unhealthy practices among adolescents in Secondary Schools. Emphasising holistic development, moral values, and ill effects of crimes regularly could lay a strong foundation as most of the adolescent time is spent in schools. Creating a productive atmosphere. Including parents and children collectively in campaigns about education and healthy practices to create awareness about its benefits to society as a whole could make enormous changes in shaping the future generation (Ifedigbo & Anyaorah, 2023). Teachers,

warden, and caretakers at school need to ensure that students feel safe at hostels. Additionally, adolescents fail to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy practices due to peer influence. This might steer them into undesired directions, thus disrupting their growth. Also, there needs to be proper rules to identify peer influence and peer pressure, especially among the hostelers, as they are more susceptible and spend more time with peers when unnoticed. Interventions to build emotional strength and independent thinking in hostelers would significantly reduce the rate at which they get driven by their peers out of insecurity and fear of being left out by their peers (Xie & Cui, 2022). Delaying the school start times is deemed to increase sleep time, which offers protection against being influenced by peers. Yet, it has its own drawback as it subdues the children's risk-taking ability, which makes it designed based on a trade-off to balance these aspects (Semenza et al., 2022). These would also enhance their decision-making in terms of choosing their career, deciding between dos and don'ts, and maintaining a clear line between getting influenced by peers and deciding by themselves (Xie & Cui, 2022).

## 5. Conclusions

The results indicate that there is considerable peer influence among Secondary School children across different aspects. Further, it was clear that the hostelers are more susceptible than the day scholars, and boys are more susceptible than girls. Though these throw light on the requirement for tailored interventions, tracking the root cause of these influences is essential. This study has indicated that boarding school children of senior secondary level in Tamil Nadu are more susceptible to peer influence than day scholars of the same age. It has also been found that boys in Tamil Nadu of classes XI and XII are more susceptible to peer influences than girls. Therefore the efficacy of applying the same positive interventions so as to overcome the negative effects of peers, equally to the day scholars and boarders as well as to boys and girls, needs to be examined. Additional studies are also suggested to identify the cause of boarders and boys being more susceptible to peer influence than day scholars and girls.

### Conflict of Interest

authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### Data Availability Statement

No new data were created or analysed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article

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