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Group Pressure: Between Suffering and Motivation

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Abstract

A perspective analysis by a survey conducted to identify how personal behavior gets moulded under the pressure exerted by the group a student stays in. The participants chosen for this survey include students of 18 to 21 years of age. The questions framed for this survey are kept very simple so that it can easily be comprehended by the participants. An important finding is that participants are unaware of the sudden change of mood when experiencing this pressure, so the danger lies here that if repeatedly he/she undergoes this condition then most likely chances are there that this, what we call as not rational behavior, becomes his/her attitude. This survey aims at finding out this erratic change of pattern in behavior and how the surveyed students dealt with the group pressure.

1. Introduction

Everyone desires to have a sense of accomplishments and to attain that he/she chooses a carrier path. Traversing this path, especially the students are bound to form groups while doing the several tasks they are assigned. Here, group pressure plays a role which grips the individual and then under these pressures he/she adopts some irrationality in his /her attitude unconsciously which he /she thinks will drive well to achieve the objective assigned. But the converse may also take place as this irrational attitude may land him/her in trouble personally.

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2. Literature Review

The current survey undertaken to GUAGE the general impact of group pressure on students. Very rarely we may find the literature of research material available on this topic instead most of the research carried out on studying the peer pressure .As we go deeper into the subject we can easily draw that peer pressure is one kind of group pressure as always an informal group is formed whenever we interact with our friends relatives, colleagues etc. and peer pressure is a result of that. So delving deeper into literary study of research undertaken of peer pressure provides us a greater insight into the effects of group pressure.

A significant research published by Donna Ray Clasen and B Bradford Brown from University of Winsconsin Whitewater and University of Winsconsin Madison respectively in 2016. It was centered around how the adolescent perceived peer pressure by measuring perception of peer pressure in five areas involvement with peers, school involvement, family involvement, conformity to peer norms, and misconduct. Findings showed that peer pressure differed in strength by domain and that the degree to which pressures were felt varied by crowd. Results provided insight into adolescents' perceptions of peer pressure in middle school and prompted suggestions for helping young adolescents manage peer pressure more effectively.

Many adults view peer pressure as a negative force, responsible for the feverish conformity of adolescents and for their delinquent behavior. Teachers may regard peer groups as intimidating, a cohesive counterinfluence to school goals regarding achievement, school involvement, and the development of autonomy and self -reliance. Indeed, research studies do demonstrate that peers can undermine achievement (Cusick, 1973) and can contribute to drug use (Jackson and Jackson, 1983; Kandel, 1974) and to sexual activity (Coles and Stokes, 1983). Teenagers themselves point to the need to belong to a group as a primary factor in their antisocial behavior (Gallup, 1977; Kaplan, 1983).

It is often overlooked, however, that peer pressure also can be a positive force in adolescents' lives. It can exert positive influences on school involvement and academic achievement (Ide et al., 1981), educational aspirations (Davies & Kandel, 1981) and can be a counterforce against drug and alcohol use (Clasen & Brown, 1985). School crowds often contribute substantially to helping school personnel meet their educational objectives particularly that of involvement in school activities (Newman & Newman, 1976).

Many of our perceptions of peer pressure come to us through adult interpretations. Few studies have focused on how adolescents perceive peer pressure in general or the kinds of pressures they identify. This study concentrated on the perceptions of middle school students and addressed the following questions: What pressures do they perceive? Do they sense that pressures impact with equal intensity in all areas of their life? How does the adolescent's peer group affect peer pressure? Does perceived peer influence vary across grade levels? Student responses in the study provided insight into the complex picture of peer pressure in early adolescence. Responses also suggested implications for teachers, counselors, and parents as they seek to help young people become more effective in their management of peer pressure.

3. Research Methodology

Aim: To examine the change in behavior and decision making ability of students under group pressure.

A survey is conducted spreading over to 50 students of age groups 18-25 to know about whether they were aware of group pressure while performing any group task and if they were so, then how they dealt with it.

Questionnaire for survey:
Q1) How do you come to know that you are undergoing and experiencing group pressure?
Q2) Elaborate upon the various group pressures that you have experienced?
Q3) How does this affect your behavior and decisions?
Q4) How do you deal with group pressure?
Q5) Whenever you are under extreme pressure inflicted upon by the group you are part of, whom you rely upon?
a) Parents
b) Friends
c) Teachers
d) Counselors
e) None
Q6) Whenever you find any of your friend undergoing enormous group pressure, what suggestions you would offer?

4. Obtaining Perceptions of Peer Pressure

Following the assignment to crowds, students from the six major crowds and the unknown group were selected at random to respond to a questionnaire containing a Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) (Brown, Clasen, & Eicher, 1986). The PPI assessed students' perceptions of the amount of pressure they felt from friends in five domains: Involvement with peers, involvement in school, involvement with family, conformity to peer mores, and misconduct (drug use, sexual intercourse, delinquency). The items allowed students to rate the degree of "positive" pressure in each domain (pressure toward peer involvement, etc.) and the amount of "negative" pressure in three domains (pressure against school and family involvement and misconduct). A separate score, representing the mean response to scale items, was calculated for each scale. For the three domains in which both positive and negative pressures were measured, a "balance score" was calculated by subtracting the mean score for the 67 negative pressure scale from scale. In all, 368 students the PPI. At the same time, to socioeconomic status the mean score for the positive pressure (one-third of the student body) completed students also responded to questions related.

The PPI scales displayed adequate reliability. Cronbach internal consistency alpha's ranged from .75 to .92; all but the negative school and family involvement scales were above .82. Test-retest stability correlations, over a five-week period, ranged from!. = .48 to!. = .65. It is difficult to test the validity of measures of subjective perceptions. One indication of the PPI's validity, however, was that perceived pressure scores within each peer group for peer involvement, school involvement, and misconduct, closely paralleled an independent rating of the norms of each peer group. Details of the PPI's derivation are provided in Brown et al. (I 986) and Clasen and Brown (I 985).

Results of the Survey Analysis of student responses to the PPI and study of students' perceptions of pressures across crowds produced several major findings.

Peer pressure is multidimensional

Adolescents reported feeling pressure in all five domains: Peer involvement (spending time with friends, going to parties, trying to impress the opposite sex, etc.); involvement in school (finishing high school, getting good grades, getting along well with teachers); family involvement (spending time with family, obeying family rules, keeping parents informed); peer conformity (talking or acting like everyone else, conforming to friends' dress code, musical tastes, etc.); and misconduct

(smoking, drinking, doing drugs, having sex, stealing or vandalizing property). The domains appeared to be distinct because the amount of pressure reported in one was only modestly predictive of the amount perceived in another.

Pressure differs in strength by domains

Although the average amount of peer pressure in each domain differed somewhat across grades, the ordering of domains was consistent (see Figure I). Not surprisingly, the strongest pressures concerned relations with peers (peer involvement and conformity to peer mores). More surprising may be the comparative strength of school involvement pressures from peers and the relatively low amount of peer pressure toward misconduct that was perceived by these students across crowds.

Pressure is both positive and negative

Many middle school students perceived pro-pressures regarding school and family involvement, and most middle school students reported receiving peer pressure against misconduct. This was not the case, however, for dirtballs, who reported peer pressure toward misconduct as early as seventh grade. Nevertheless, the common myth of adolescent peer pressure being dominantly negative was not supported by students' responses.

Peer pressure is not monolithic

When pressures are studied within crowds, it becomes clear that adolescent peer pressure is not uniform or monolithic. The type of pressure perceived and the degree to which it was felt varied by crowd. In Table I, crowds are rank ordered according to the amount of positive pressure they perceived in each domain. Groups that might be considered more alienated from the school structure (unpopulars, dirtballs) reported perceiving little pressure for more prosocial activities. By contrast, pressure toward misconduct was especially strong for dirtballs. Jocks also reported strong pressure toward misconduct--especially concerning drinking alcohol.

5. Results and Discussion

Almost 20% of the students surveyed recognized that they sensed undergoing group pressure by the fact that while performing group task, they took decision or made choices which they would have never taken or chosen had it been done alone. That means they were quite aware of this phenomenon. But then a significant chunk among the participants is also there who could not even distinguish that they felt certain pressure while working in a group. Some even got confused as they related it to the pressure emerging from competitive feeling and also when given the leadership role.

When it came to distinctly define the pressure one important point ushered that majority of the surveyed students seemed to be benefited by the occurrence of group pressure as unconsciously they performed better to protect their individuality and sacrificed their own limiting capabilities. But succumbing to the strayed group member’s pressure also entails the fear of them indulging in wrong doings.

But when asked about the behavioral changes almost everybody reacted that their potential capabilities got obliterated under the pressure and the result was frustration, lack of confidence and impaired decision making capabilities.

Strangely most of the surveyed participants suggested to tackle this pressure with patience and keeping cool while performing the task. Most of them believed that during the stress time it is parents upon whom they can rely to get over. The silver line here is that after passing through this experience they suggested various ways for their friends and colleague to gain back their confidence.

In the survey, approximately 40% of students were aware about their decision making ability is getting affected by the group. And out of that only 25% were managed not to succumb to this pressure.

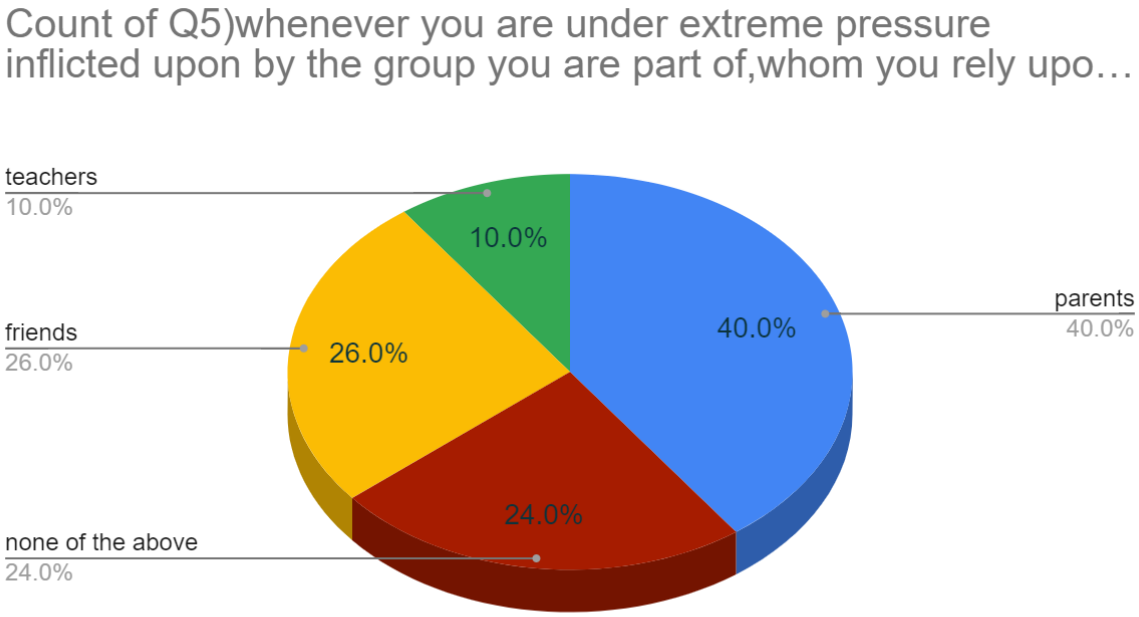
The first question though looked simple but intentionally framed to reveal the psychological comfort we gather once the perturbing events die down. In the answers the students seemed to be offering differing views 6.1% said that whenever friends performance improved they felt under pressure whereas same 6.1% attributed the shouldering of leadership role in class 12 ,some 4.1% sensed the onset of pressure by observing their stress level as high in comparison to normal situation at the same time 4.1% didn't accept that this pressure they felt ,as they assume that if this kind of pressure is there it gets equally divided to the group members (the inference is that this group pressure is upon every group member not only him).Interestingly same 4.1% were there who preferred to say didn't know. Clubbing the rest- low confidence, participating in college events, lack of focus were some general answers.

The second question was to test whether they can substantiate their own answer to the first question. It is observed that almost 70% of the participants elaborated their answers while the rest deviated a little. Here 4% believed that it was pressure due to competition that resulted while working in a group whereas 6% admitted that being a leader in a group brings a lot of pressure, then there were 4% who felt that in sports also this pressure exists. Twisting fact here is admission by 2% that this pressure led them to negative habits. However 4% deliberated upon peer pressure. Although 4% didn't elaborated upon the pressure by saying simply didn't know while the rest were general deliberations.

The third question was designed to know whether the participants were aware that their inherent characteristic in taking decision is affected or not. Surprisingly their response to this one infers that almost 90% of them were aware that they felt under pressure during the group activities they discussed about and how much their decision taking ability is getting affected. Some closure look at answers reveals that majority admitted having their behavior becoming irrational whereas some 10% felt it didn't have negative impact on their characteristics and behavior.

The fourth question was set to elicit the ways the participants thought appropriate to deal with this pressure. The contradiction is noticed here, as those who earlier felt much stressed while performing the group task came suggesting to deal the pressure with keeping cool, listening to others, bringing energy and enthusiasm in the task, facing the situation with confidence etc. However here also some 4% responded with didn't know but the most interesting one was "Suno Sabki Karo Khudki".

The fifth question was to find out whom they considered as pillar in the condition of feeling stressed out under group pressure. Not surprisingly majority of them voted in favor of parents, friends and then came the teachers as a support system.



The last question was to determine how their own experience can benefit the students coming next to them. Here the typical Indian culture gripped large, everybody came out very vocal suggesting all positive qualities to adopt while undergoing stress, **easily said than done**.

6. Conclusion

Several studies, researches and surveys have been conducted to study the impact of group pressure keeping the society at large with the aim of maintaining rational characteristics intact. The survey has its own limitation which is, you cannot assess whether the participants are candidly registering their responses or just putting a biased view in order to be seen as more just. The point here is that you have to draw some inferences as what could be the appropriate answer by taking cue from the general behavioral patterns. In this survey it is noticed that whether we accept or not, now a days, a lot of external pressure prevails in society especially among students wherever formal or informal groups are formed. In their pursuit of good carrier options, unfortunately the parents, relatives and friends unconsciously forms the very first group which exert great pressure upon them. This complicates the situation even more as what could have been the source to rely upon during the stress times has turned out be the source of stress. Another prominent group pressure come from competition as the pressure to beat the competition has grown enormous due to shrinking of carrier opportunities. It is evident that the group pressure can be both positive and negative depending upon how one exercise control over his behavior in this situation and for that if he needs additional support system then naturally it is parents at first who can guide him to tide over this tough situation so that this pressure becomes a motivation rather than a suffering. This new generation now has several tools to combat the pressure but still the most significant one is sharing your thought openly to your parents. Then close friends are the easily available option one

should turn to as talking to them and spending your leisure time with them is always proved to be a great stress buster.

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