

The Impact of Peer Pressure on Decision Making and Impulsivity Among Young Adults

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Abstract:

The study investigated which peer pressure predicted decision making and impulsivity also investigates the significance of peer pressure on decision making and impulsivity among young adults in Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire developed from the combination of demographic profile of the respondent and the standardized psychological tools such as Singh and Saini (2016) Peer Pressure Scale, L. Mann (1997)'s Melbourne Decision Making questionnaire, Ernest Barratt (1995) Barratt Impulsiveness scale. Data was collected in 60 days from common young adults in Cuddalore districts. The sample for the study consists of 200 participants selected using the purposive sampling. The data was analysed using IBM SPSS version 20 by applying independent sample t-test, one-way ANOVA, correlation (Pearson's) and simple linear regression analysis. The result indicated that peer pressure predicts decision making and impulsivity. Peer pressure on decision-making and impulsivity is significantly positively correlated.

Keywords: Peer pressure, Decision making, Impulsivity, t-test, One way-Anova, Pearson correlation coefficient, Simple linear regression.

Introduction:

Definition of peer pressure:

Clasen and Brown (1985), It act as a social force. As the impact that peers have in promoting or discouraging certain behaviours. It frequently overrides personal preferences and plays a critical role in young adults. Numerous researchers have shown that influence can appear in both direct and indirect forms, sometimes occurring without full awareness (Ryan, 2000; Kiran- Esen & Aktug, 2003).

Brown (2020), It is the impact that peers have on individual identifying with specific norms, behaviours, attitudes or values within a group or social environment.

Marsiglia et al. (2018), It refers to the perceived or real experience of being compelled to act in accordance with the expectations of one's peer group.

Lashbrook (2000), defines Peer pressure as a specific example of social influence that usually results in conformity to a certain behaviour or mindset. However, a key drawback of this conceptualization is its failure to acknowledge instances of peer pressure that do not lead to conformity.

Types of Peer Pressure:

Peer pressure is basically divided into two distinct forms that depend on the individual.

Positive Influences from peers:

It can have a beneficial impact on life when one adopts positive habits from others. It can be advantageous if the behaviours are healthy, suitable for one's age, and socially acceptable. These dynamic assists young individuals in transitioning from a dependent and sheltered childhood to a stage of independence in their thoughts and actions (Lebedina- Manzoni et al. 2011). Friends may motivate someone to make constructive changes in their life by guiding them to make the right decisions.

Negative influences from peers:

It turns detrimental when behaviour contradict moral values or family principles. It can lead to numerous consequences in everyday life such as abandoning one's personal lifestyle, habits and preferences. There have been cases where young people make significant mistakes due to peer pressure (Lebedina- Manzoni et al. 2011). At times, individuals may feel forced to act against their own desires, ultimately finding themselves in situations they would typically avoid due to peer pressure.

Definition of Decision making:

Making decisions is intricate and involves various elements. It is a key aspect of daily life which people engage in, either purposefully or subconsciously, to organize and drive their behaviours (Peterson, 2009). Decision making is the cognitive skill of choosing an option from various alternatives. It involves a deliberate choice that is influenced by an individual's needs, knowledge, experiences, values, and beliefs. This process is an ongoing interaction with the environment aimed at achieving specific goals.

According to Simon (1977), decision making consists of a three-phase managerial process. The first phase involves recognizing when a decision needs to be made, the second phase entails exploring all possible courses of action, and the final phase is selecting the course of action that will best fulfil the decision-making purpose.

Importance of decision making in young adults:

Making decisions is a crucial developmental challenge in young adulthood. This time is characterized by greater independence and the necessity to make significant choices regarding education, careers, relationships, health, and finances. Arnett (2000) notes that young adulthood, often referred to as emerging adulthood, is defined by exploration and uncertainty, making effective decision-making vital for a successful transition into adulthood. The decisions made during this time can have lasting effects on personal well-being, social adjustment, and overall life satisfaction.

Neurodevelopment and cognitive control:

According to developmental psychology research, decision-making skills continue to evolve during young adulthood, largely due to ongoing brain maturation, particularly in the prefrontal cortex, which governs executive functions such as planning, impulse regulation, and risk assessment (Steinberg, 2008). Even if cognitive capacities develop, young adults usually demonstrate a heightened response to emotional and social stimuli, which might impact their judgment and result in riskier choices (Casey, Jones, & Hare, 2008). This discrepancy between cognitive regulation and emotional responses highlights the need to enhance decision-making skills during this developmental stage.

Decision making and identity formation:

From a psychosocial viewpoint, effective decision-making is intricately connected to personal identity and the development of independence. Erikson (1968) focused on young adults encounter the task of crafting a cohesive sense of self, and decision-making is central to forming personal values, objectives, and commitments. Poor decision-making abilities can lead to confusion, stress, and maladaptive behaviours, while informed and thoughtful decision-making fosters resilience and healthy functioning.

Definition of Impulsivity:

Impulsivity is the inclination to act without thoroughly contemplating the repercussions. It is a psychological concept that is marked by spontaneous and hasty behaviours. Impulsivity impacts a variety of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements in a person's life, including difficulties in regulating emotions, ineffective problem-solving, addiction issues, and challenges with anger, among others.

In his personality theory, Eysenck (1993) described impulsivity as the inclination to act without thinking and often without regard for the inevitable consequences. He defined it as behaviours that are "poorly planned, hastily expressed, excessively risky, or unsuitable for the circumstances."

Moeller et al. (2001) define impulsivity as "a tendency to have swift, unplanned responses to internal or external stimuli while disregarding the negative effects of these responses on oneself and others."

Relationship between Peer Pressure, Decision-Making, Impulsivity:

Peer pressure significantly influences the decision-making processes of young adults by changing their preferences and behaviours in social situations. Studies reveal that when young people make choices in the presence of peers, particularly those they perceive as important or relatable, their selections are generally more spontaneous and in accordance with the group's standards rather than based on their judgments. For instance, Gilman et al. (2014) discovered that individuals aged 18–25 displayed a greater propensity for impulsive choices in a temporal discounting task after being exposed to impulsive peer influence, as opposed to non-impulsive or neutral conditions, highlighting that impulsive decision-making in this group can be directly impacted by social influence. Decision-making and peer pressure are directly linked to impulsivity, which is defined as acting without sufficient consideration. People frequently make quick choices themselves when they spend out with impulsive peers. In contrast, being among more intelligent peers seems to foster a greater attention on long-term implications. According to research on delay discounting, young adults who are under social pressure from impulsive peers are more likely to favour immediate, smaller benefits (Gilman et al., 2014). These results highlight the idea of behavioral contagion in social settings, where friends can impact not only outward behaviours but also the cognitive processes involved in evaluating benefits and dangers.

Problem of the study:

The problem of the current study investigates how peer pressure impacts decision making and Impulsivity in young adults.

Objectives of the study:

1. To analyse the difference in mean score of peer pressure on decision making and impulsivity across related demographic variables.
2. To investigate the impact of peer pressure on decision making and impulsivity in young adults.

3. To test whether peer pressure will predict decision making and impulsivity in young adults.

Hypotheses:

H₁: There will be a significant difference between peer pressure on decision making and impulsivity on the basis of demographic data among young adults.

H₂: There will be a significant relationship between peer pressure on decision making and impulsivity.

H₃: Peer pressure is a greater predictor of decision making among young adults.

H₄: Peer pressure is a greater predictor of impulsivity among young adults.

Materials and Methods:

During the study, individuals are asked to fill the demographic variables that includes their personal life such as age, gender, marital status, location, living situation, no. of close friends, time spends with friends and time spends with social media and questionnaires were given and collected with their permission.

- a) Period of the study: Data was collected on the day of November 20 to January 20 from common young adults around Cuddalore district from Tamil Nadu.
- b) Sample size: 200 samples collected through questionnaires including the age group of 20 to 30 years. N = 200
- c) Sampling technique: The sampling technique used to collect the data is purposive sampling technique.
- d) Research design: The study adopted the correlational research design.

Instruments:

To measure the variable in the study, psychological scale such as Singh and Saini (2016)'s Peer Pressure Scale, L. Mann (1997)'s Melbourne Decision Making questionnaire, Ernest Barratt (1995)'s Barratt Impulsiveness scale. The description of the scale is discussed as follows,

Peer Pressure Scale (PPS) – Singh and Saini (2016)

Peer pressure scale was developed by Singh and Saini in 2010 and it was amended in 2016. The degree of peer pressure experienced by young adults was measured using this scale. According to Indian conditions, it has 25 items on a five-point scale.

Reliability and validity:

Internal Consistency: Cronbach's alpha - 0.79. Test- Retest Reliability: The correlation coefficient obtained was 0.33 with 0.01 level of significance. A tool is said to be valid if it what it claims to be measure. The validity is examined by face validity, content validity, predictive validity, concurrent validity and construct validity.

Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire:

MDMQ was developed by L. Mann, P. Burnet and S. Ford in 1997 to measure the individual decision-making circumstances. This questionnaire consists of 22 items which separated into four sub scores; Vigilance, Buck- Passing, Procrastination and Hypervigilance.

Reliability and validity

The MDMQ subscales have internal consistency ranging from 0.74 to 0.87. The reliability of vigilance

scale $\alpha = 0.80$, the buck- passing scale $\alpha = 0.87$, the procrastination scale $\alpha = 0.81$, the hypervigilance scale $\alpha = 0.74$. Factorial validity of the instrument was tested by confirmatory factor analysis.

Barratt Impulsiveness Scale:

The Barratt Impulsiveness Scale was established by Ernest S. Barratt in 1995. It is the revision of the original scale developed in 1959. It is the instrument that used to assessing Impulsivity. This scale consists of 30 items and it is four-point item scale. It has three subscales: Attentional Impulsiveness, Motor Impulsiveness, Non-planning Impulsiveness.

Reliability and validity:

The internal consistency has good consistency with the Cronbach’s alpha ranging from 0.79 to 0.83. The scale has good validity in measuring impulsivity related behaviour and aligns with three factor structure.

Result and Discussion:

Table:1 Independent sample t-test of peer pressure among young adults based on gender

VARIABLE	SUB – VARIABLE	N	MEAN	SD	t value	p value
Peer pressure	Male	100	68.76	15.435	3.921	.000
	Female	100	60.40	14.706		

The table mentioned above displays: The peer pressure scores according to gender, which is divided into two categories (Male and Female). For Male, the mean and standard deviation are M= 68.76 and SD= 15.435, whereas for female, the mean and standard deviation are M= 60.40 and SD= 14.706. The significance (p value) is .000, while the t value is 3.921. It suggests that the mean of male is higher than that of females. Thus, it demonstrates that there is a significant difference in the level of peer pressure among young adults according to their gender. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table:2 Independent sample t-test of decision making among young adults based on gender.

VARIABLE	SUB- VARIABLE	N	MEAN	SD	t value	p value
Decision making	Male	100	4.892	1.158	2.426	.016
	Female	100	4.509	1.072		

The table mentioned above displays: The decision-making scores according to gender, which is divided into two categories (Male and Female). For male, the mean and standard deviation are M= 4.892 and SD= 1.158, whereas for female, they are M= 4.509 and SD= 1.072. The significance (p value) is .016, while the t value is 2.426. It suggests that the mean of male is higher than that of female. Thus, it demonstrates that there is a significant difference in the level of decision making among young adults according to their gender. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table: 3 Independent t-test of impulsivity among young adults based on gender

VARIABLE	SUB-VARIABLE	N	MEAN	SD	t value	p value
Impulsivity	Male	100	69.52	9.098	3.727	.000
	Female	100	64.62	9.492		

The table mentioned above displays: The impulsivity scores according to gender, which is divided into two categories (Male and Female). For male, the mean and standard deviation are M= 69.52 and SD= 9.098, whereas for female they are M= 64.62 and SD= 9.492. The significance (p value) is .000, while the t value is 3.727. It suggests that the mean of male is higher than that of female. Thus, it demonstrates that there is a significant difference in the level of impulsivity among young adults according to their gender. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table: 4 Pearson correlation analysis shows the relationship between peer pressure, decision-making and impulsivity among young adults.

VARIABLE	DECISION MAKING	IMPULSIVITY
PEER PRESSURE	.222**	.356**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table shows that the relationship between the peer pressure on decision making and impulsivity in young adults. The peer pressure and decision making are positively correlated ($r = .222, p < 0.01$); and peer pressure and impulsivity are positively correlated ($r = .356, p < 0.01$). This reveals that there is a significant relationship between peer pressure on decision making and impulsivity in young adults. Hence the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table: 5 Simple linear regression shows the Peer pressure predicting on decision making.

VARIABLE	B value	β value	R square	F value	p value
Peer pressure	.016	.222	.049	10.303	.002

The above table illustrate how effectively decision making is predicted by peer pressure. Peer pressure was statistically significant ($R^2 = .049, p < 0.05$) in predicting decision making according to the basic linear regression analysis. The model fit the data with $F = 10.303$ and $p < 0.01$, according to the ANOVA table. According to the beta value ($\beta = .222, p < 0.05$), decision making had a good contribution from peer pressure, with $B = 0.016$. On the whole the result reveals that the effect of peer pressure was statistically significant in predicting decision making. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table: 6 Simple linear regression shows the Peer pressure predicting on impulsivity.

VARIABLE	B value	β value	R square	F value	p value
Peer pressure	.219	.356	.127	28.741	.000

The above table illustrate how effectively impulsivity is predicted by peer pressure. Peer pressure was statistically significant ($R^2 = .127, p < 0.05$) in predicting impulsivity according to the basic linear regression

analysis. The model fit the data with $F= 28.741$ and $p<0.05$, according to the ANOVA table. According to the beta value ($\beta= .356$ $p<0.05$), impulsivity not had a good contribution from peer pressure, with $B= 0.219$. On the whole the result reveals that the effect of peer pressure was statistically significant in predicting impulsivity. Thus, the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Conclusion:

Depending on the response of young peoples, this study discovered that peer pressure on decision making and impulsivity is positively correlated among young adults. The independent sample t-test reveals that gender is statistically significant for peer pressure, gender is statistically significant for decision making and impulsivity. One-way ANOVA reveals that time spends with social media is statistically significant for peer pressure. The analyse of simple linear regression reveals that the peer pressure is a greater predictor of decision making and impulsivity for young adults. Therefore, Peer pressure is highly influenceable factor that affects the decision making and their impulsivity of young adults. Overall, the conclusion suggests that peer pressure would greatly impacts the decision making and impulsivity in young adults.

Implications:

This study reveals a considerable need for integrating life skills education, including assertiveness training and decision-making skills, to assist individuals resist harmful peer influences. Additionally, the findings carry significance for counselling. The results highlight the significance of early intervention initiatives aimed at combating peer pressure. Training sessions focused on developing self-awareness and eliminating negative peer influence are vital.

Limitations of the study:

This study focuses exclusively on young adults; hence its results cannot be applied to other age groups. The research uses a correlational design, which limits the capability to determine causal links between peer pressure, decision-making, and impulsivity. Moreover, the study does not investigate the specific factors or origins that contribute to peer pressure, hindering a more comprehensive understanding of its effects. Additionally, the data depend on self-reported answers, which could be affected by response bias.

Suggestions for future Research:

Future investigations into the factors of peer pressure on decision-making and impulsivity in young adults could benefit from a broader and more varied sample that encompasses different regions and socio-cultural contexts. Additionally, research should explore specific forms of peer pressure (both positive and negative) and their distinct impacts on cognitive control and risk-taking behaviour. Including other characteristics like self-regulation, self-esteem, and the influence of digital peers may give better understanding of impulsivity.

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