

PEER GROUP

**COURSE: CLINICAL ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION
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By

Dr. Priyanka Kumari

Assistant Professor

Institute of Psychological Research and Service

Patna University

**Contact No.7654991023; E-mail-
drpriyankakumari1483@gmail.com.com**



FUNCTION OF PEER GROUP

PEER GROUP

TERMS

Peer Group

A peer group is a social group whose members have interests, social positions, and age in common.

Peer pressure

Peer pressure is the influence exerted by a peer group, encouraging individuals to change their attitudes, values, or behaviors in order to conform to group norms.

Peer group for Identity Formation

Adolescent is a period characterized by anxiety, doubts, questions, indecision etc. Adolescents are very often perplexed with the question "Who am I?" The rapid changes occurring during adolescence and the feeling of self consistency makes the search for identity more prominent during adolescence. Identity can be defined as a sense of uniqueness as a person and distinctiveness from others equivalent to answering the question who am I? (Rogers, 1962). The adolescent's main task is to discover and establish an identity. Erickson describes identity as integration between what a person once was and what he is now and what he wishes to become in future. The formation of identity very much depends on the society, its values and the people with whom he interacts. His task is in building up a self-structure. This sense of self is termed as identity. This search for identity is crucial in adolescence and this is attained through identification with different individuals such as parents, peers, teachers, heroes etc.

Peer group for Identity Formation

The adolescent having a strong sense of identity considers himself as a separate individual. It means both distinctiveness from others and unity of the self or the feeling of wholeness. The role of the peer group in the formation of identity is very vital. In the earlier period the child tries to identify with the parents and later as role models, but as the child enters adolescence, due to the relation with the peers, he strives to get relieved from the control of parents and identifies with the peers. The peer group facilitates ground for developing identity. The particular advantage of the adolescent friendship is that it offers a climate for growth and self knowledge that the family is not equipped to offer and that very few persons can provide for them (Conger, 1973). Erickson, a Psychologist describes the self reflective aspect of growth as a major point of identity. He says that adolescent are caught up with "identity crisis" which is the relation between what a person appears to be in the eyes of others and what he himself feels he is. It refers to the search for an inner continuity that will match the external social conditions. The intervention on peer group at this juncture is very relevant for the adolescent to overcome this crisis and establish an identity of his own.

Peer group on Behaviour

The influence of peer group on the development of personality and behaviour has been described in many different studies. Early studies on juvenile delinquency pointed out that majority of the crimes committed by juveniles are done by a group and even in case of delinquency done alone will have the support or influence of a group. Sociologists and social psychologists are of the opinion that peer group influence particularly in adolescence, are some of the strongest factors determining the behaviour of adolescents.



Peer group on Morality

Piaget a Psychologist says that for a proper moral development, cognitive growth and social experience, group relations are very important and peer group can provide it to a great extent. The social activities in which there is a good deal of give and take approach can promote moral growth.

They also provide a ground for change from self centeredness and selfishness to a morality of co-operation. The goals of the group become the basis for co-operation. As the capacity for reasoning develops, the morality of a person also develops to a higher stage. The blind obedience to the established rule is questioned, and is declared as unreasonable. There will not be any fixed and unchangeable rule but they are set by group consent and maintained as long as they are useful.



Peer group on Morality

Piaget, who studied children at the age when they develop their morality or the super ego, found that there seems to be two moralities, the morality of constraint and morality of co-operation. The morality of constraint is formed through one way relations between child and adult especially parents and superego becomes dominant. Morality of co-operation is formed and developed by the spontaneous give and take approach of peer interaction. As the child grows the relation between parents and child becomes less important and peer group more important. Then the superego gets concentrated on a morality of co-operation. The morality of peer group and the morality derived from parents should be agreeable to the morality of the society. Therefore a consensus between parental and peer group



Peer group on social cognition

A distinction can be made between knowledge and process in cognition. In studying cognitive aspects of peer relations, this distinction can be made. Learning about the social knowledge adolescents bring with them to peer relations is important, as is studying how adolescents process information during peer interaction. As children move into adolescence, they acquire more social knowledge, and there is considerable individual variation in how much one adolescent knows about what it takes to make friends, to get peers to like him or her, and so forth. From a social cognitive perspective, children and adolescents may have difficulty in peer relations because they lack appropriate social cognitive skills (Underwood & Hurley, 1999).



Peer group on Emotion

Emotion is also playing an important role in peer relation. The ability to regulate emotion is linked to successful peer relations (Underwood., 2003). Moody and emotionally negative individuals experience greater rejection by peers, whereas emotionally positive individuals are more popular (Saarni, 1999). Adolescents who have effective self-regulatory skills can modulate their emotional expressiveness in contexts that evoke intense emotions, as when a peer says something negative.

Rejected children are more likely than popular children to use negative gestures in a provoking situation.

