

# A Survey of the Causes and Effects of Peer Pressure in College Students

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## ABSTRACT

Peer pressure refers to the psychological pressure generated by people of similar age and status comparing with each other, thus promoting changes in individual thoughts and behaviors. Peer pressure, as a common pressure in the lives of college students, has profoundly affected the studies and lives of college students. Therefore, it is of great significance to correctly recognize and deal with peer pressure. Through literature reading, field interviews, questionnaire surveys and other methods, this paper explores the main manifestations, influences and deep-seated causes of peer pressure in college students, so as to help college students and similar groups better understand peer pressure and propose reasonable ways to cope with peer pressure. Prior to this survey, a scientific survey method was developed through extensive reading. In this paper, a large number of books and journals have been consulted to explore the effects of peer stress and the scientific response to peer pressure. Moreover, through field interviews and questionnaire surveys of college students, the author found that a large number of students have academic pressure, employment pressure and emotional pressure, which is manifested in about 67% of the students, who found that their academic qualifications were inferior to those of other peers in the comparison of peers, resulting in anxiety and inferiority psychology; 80% of respondents said that the employment space is being squeezed by people with higher education and better backgrounds; and 60% of respondents said that emotional pressure comes from the lack of intimate relationships such as friendship and love. This once again proves the accuracy and practicality of the survey results and theories. Finally, this paper also puts forward suggestions for college students to improve their self-confidence, establish independent thinking, turn stress into motivation, improve themselves, and reasonably vent bad emotions to cope with the pressure of their peers.

**Keywords:** *Peer Pressure, Peer Group, College Students, Psychological Stress, Bad Mood*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings have social attributes, whether physical or psychological aspects, they cannot live completely separate from the group. People live in the group; it has been formed by law that under the same generation: birds of a feather flock together. In a more authoritative definition, a peer group is a "group of people who are more closely related by family background, age, hobbies, characteristics, etc. [1]" Peer pressure refers to the psychological pressure generated by peer comparisons with each other, and a peer group exerts influence on individuals, which will prompt individuals to change their attitudes, values, or behaviors to comply with group guidelines [2]. It appears at all stages of life and has the most prominent impact on adolescents. From the perspective of social development tasks, according to the theory of social impact, the closer

people are to each other in thoughts, values, attitudes, behaviors and cultures, the more they can influence each other. In the interpersonal interactions of teenagers, no one knows themselves better than their peers, and no one is more trustworthy than their peers. Adolescents have important social development tasks that need to be accomplished by peer groups, such as establishing good and satisfactory relationships with people, expanding interpersonal relationships, learning to interact and get along with the opposite sex, and the recognizing and developing gender roles. In summary, it shows the importance of peer groups for adolescent development. In social life, it is easy to find that the survival of peer groups is accompanied by the role of peer pressure. Peer pressure refers to the invisible force of the values and behaviors of the majority of the people in the peer group that aligns the group members with the majority [3]. As an important transition period for teenagers to enter society after school, college students face the pressure of

their peers and need to be paid more attention to and handled.

Through literature reading, field interviews, questionnaire surveys, etc., this paper explores the main manifestations, influences and deep-seated causes of peer pressure in the college student group. Prior to this survey, a scientific survey method was developed through extensive reading. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed to college students through online and offline channels, and 230 valid questionnaires were recovered, with a recovery rate of 76.67%. In this paper, a large number of books and journals have been consulted to explore the effects of peer stress and the scientific response to peer pressure. Finally, the accuracy and practicality of the survey results and theories are supported by field interviews with college students. By exploring the main manifestations, influences and deep-seated causes of peer pressure in the college student group, this paper hopes to help college students and similar groups better understand the pressure of peers, and propose some reasonable ways to deal with peer pressure, help college students cope with peer pressure, and how educators can help college students get out of the shadow of peer pressure.

## **2. THE MAIN MANIFESTATIONS OF PEER PRESSURE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS (SOURCE)**

In general, there are two types of peer pressure: herd peer pressure and competitive peer pressure. Crowd-type peer pressure is simply the pressure to be consistent with peers, such as having similar values, items of the same price, and so on. Competitive peer pressure refers to the psychological pressure of comparing with people of similar age, status, and environment, because the achievements of the other party bring to themselves, that is, forcing themselves to "become excellent". Among the peer pressures faced by college students, competitive peer pressures are the most common and have the worst impact [4].

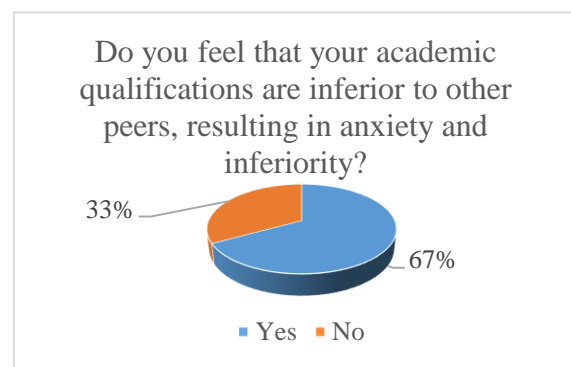
Peer pressure also manifests itself in a variety of ways, and is defined in Western countries as following: participation in peer social activities (with friends, parties, concerts, school events, the pursuit of heterosexual relationships, etc.), misconduct (drug use, alcoholism, sexual intercourse, theft, vandalism, and minor violations), obedience to peer norms (dress, musical preferences, etc.), participation in school activities (learning and extracurricular activities), and participation in family activities [5].

In our daily life at home, this peer pressure is more reflected in the study life and emotional life. It is mainly manifested in three aspects: academic pressure, employment pressure and emotional pressure. It should be noted that the presentation of peer pressure in college

students is often not a single pressure, but the result of the combination of multiple pressures.

### **2.1. Academic Stress**

Through the questionnaire survey, it was found that academic pressure is one of the main manifestations of peer pressure of college students. Because the university curriculum is much higher in terms of breadth than in high school, this often brings great pressure to students who are not adaptable, resulting in academic difficulties and lagging behind their peers in learning progress. In the questionnaire survey, it was found that about 67% of the students found that their academic qualifications were inferior to those of their peers in the comparison of peers, resulting in anxiety and inferiority.



**Figure 1.** Academic pressure of college students

### **2.2. Employment Pressure**

For students, college is a critical transition period from school to society [4], after which students learn a professional skill, find a job after graduation, and officially start working life, which is often full of fierce competition.

There are two main reasons for peer pressure on college students in terms of employment [6]:

1. In today's society, employment competition is fierce, and the number of fresh graduates is increasing year by year. Many large enterprises have stricter academic requirements for job seekers, and the discrimination of the first degree will keep many students out. Some students with lower academic backgrounds suffer from strong peer pressure, and according to the survey, 80% of ordinary undergraduate graduates believe that their employment space is being squeezed by graduates of key universities (such as 211, 985) and feel anxious and inferior.

2. Psychological gap caused by the comparison of peer employment within the same university. When the employment situation of the students around them is good, and they have not made any progress, the pressure from the same generation makes some college students

physically and mentally depressed, negative and pessimistic.

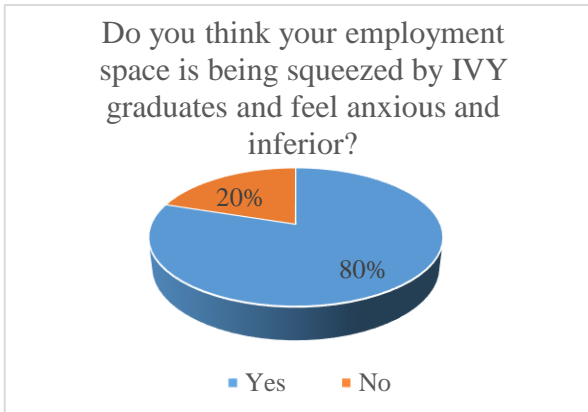


Figure 2. Employment pressure of college students

### 2.3. Emotional Stress

Social networking, as an important part of college students' lives, carries the emotional value of college students. In the process of socializing, college students may receive emotional pressure from their peers. 138 (total respondents number is 230, accounting for nearly 60%) respondents said that emotional stress stems from the lack of intimate relationships such as friendship and love.

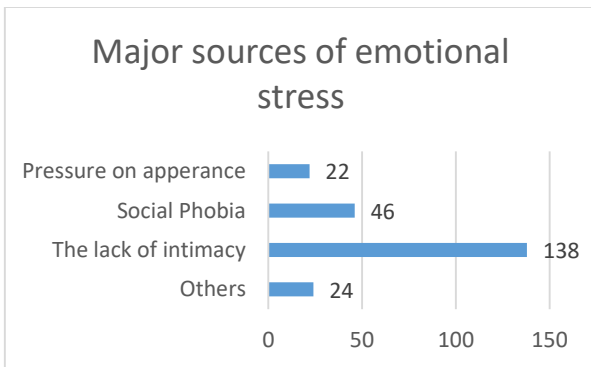


Figure 3. Emotional stress of college students(number of people)

## 3. CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF PEER PRESSURE IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

### 3.1. Causes of Peer Pressure Among College Students

#### 3.1.1. Comparison Mentality

The physical and mental development of college students is not fully mature, and it is easy to produce a comparison psychology [5]. Especially college students have just experienced the tempering of the college entrance examination, and there is still a strong psychology of comparison or comparison in their study

and life. College students who are not fully mature in body and mind always want to be better than the people around them, meanwhile they are afraid of seeing that they are inferior to others, unable to accept a non-excellent self, and at the same time very concerned about what others think of themselves. Therefore, when some college students who are not firm enough in their hearts see that they are lagging behind their peers, they often have anxiety and inferiority, and then fall into the trap of peer pressure.

#### 3.1.2. Sense of Identity and Belonging

As an individual, people want to be identified with the mainstream values of this society and are afraid of being isolated, and the same is true for college students. In particular, college students are often far away from home and relatives, and they are more willing to integrate into the group to obtain a sense of belonging. Therefore, when college students encounter obstacles and cannot be in an echelon with others, there will often be a lack of sense of belonging and identity, resulting in pressure.

#### 3.1.3. Lack of Self-Confidence

Self-confidence deserves to be the individual's sense of identity and affirmation of self. As an important part of the individual's personality, it affects the development of the individual. In the process of individual growth, if self-confidence is lacking, it is easy for oneself to have negative emotions. So students are more inclined to seek standards and examples from the outside world, resulting in herd psychology. Therefore, it is easy to be affected by the psychology and behavior of peer groups. If it is not correctly guided, it is very likely to become a victim of peer pressure.

#### 3.1.4. Dependent Thinking

College students are not very mature in nature and do not fully have independent thinking, which makes it difficult for them to make correct and rational judgments about the behavior of the outside world alone while still having the dependent thinking of childhood. This leads to the fact that when they face the peer group, it is difficult to make independent judgments on the behavior and thoughts of the peer group, and under the inducement of herd psychology, it is very likely to produce conformist behavior and receive the influence of peer pressure.

### 3.2. Effects of peer pressure on college students

#### 3.2.1. Negative Effects

Under the pressure of excessive peers, college students are extremely prone to fall into the trap of anxiety. It is embodied in feeling confused and worried

about the future, and it is difficult to rest assured in the current study and work.

Excessive pressure from peers can lead college students to reduce their self-perception and engage in self-denial. This creates a "frustrated" effect. The "frustration" effect refers to "being among excellent peers, an individual's self-evaluation or self-esteem decreasing" [3]. Peer pressure usually arises from the comparison and competition of college student peer groups. If the "backward group" in the peer group fails to make good psychological adjustments, it is very likely to cause self-doubt and self-denial. When college students are under pressure to reach the threshold that college students can afford, their sense of self-identity tends to decrease and they self-deny [7].

### *3.2.2. Positive Impact*

Peer pressure from college students also has a positive impact. In society, it often fulfills its motivating function through the exemplary demonstrations of outstanding peers. For example, selecting three good students in school and selecting outstanding employees in the company are all to motivate everyone. Practice has shown that the publicity of appropriate peer pressure is conducive to stimulating the sense of competition and catching up with college students and consciously moving closer to the superior, thus creating a strong learning and working atmosphere that is conducive to further improving the overall behavior of the group and helping college students grow into talents.

## **4. ADVICE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS TO COPE WITH PEER PRESSURE**

### *4.1. Improving Self-Confidence*

People with strong self-confidence are more likely to be firm in their inner thoughts, so they are less likely to be affected by peer pressure. Therefore, it is recommended that college students cultivate self-confidence in their studies and life to better cope with peer pressure. Improving self-confidence begins with positive psychological cues from yourself, such as doing well in the small things of life and learning, having the courage to exercise and try, and cultivating self-confidence, which creates a positive cycle. At the end of the day, college students need to cultivate self-confidence, which requires upgrading their own abilities, allowing themselves to achieve something, and having enough advantages, so that they can have self-confidence and not feel pressured to have self-confidence in front of their peers.

### *4.2. Establishing Independent Thinking*

College students need to cultivate independent thinking, have an opinion, think independently about things, and maintain their own opinions. Don't blindly follow the trend, don't blindly follow the crowd. More often, we should think calmly and rationally and treat it. Keep thinking independently and have an opinion so there's no peer pressure.

### *4.3. Turn Stress into Motivation and Improve Yourself*

College students should strive to learn professional knowledge, enhance their knowledge reserves, and expand their horizons. Exercise regularly, have a healthy body, and at the same time, have a strong body. They can improve their abilities in many ways. Make yourself good enough so that you can be recognized by your peers and have more confidence. [8]

### *4.4. Reasonably Vent Bad Emotions*

There are many ways to alleviate bad emotions and choosing the one that suits you can vent your bad emotions by exercising, listening to music, and doing what you like to do. [9]

In addition, when necessary, it is recommended to seek help from teachers, family members, and even professional psychological counselors, conduct periodic counseling and counseling, and analyze and sort out all aspects of their lives through weekly communication and exchanges, so as to expose some knots and complexes that they cannot see, so that the problem of excessive pressure can be alleviated naturally [10].

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This paper explores peer pressure in the college student group through literature reading, field interviews, questionnaire surveys, and other methods. The questionnaire survey found that a large number of students have academic pressure, employment pressure and emotional pressure, which are manifested in: in the comparison of peers, they find that their academic qualifications are inferior to those of other peers, resulting in anxiety and inferiority; the employment space is being squeezed by people with higher education and better origins; and emotional pressure comes from the lack of intimate relationships such as friendship and love. The deep causes often come from the psychology of comparison, and the need for a sense of identity, lack of self-confidence, and dependent thinking. Peer pressure is mainly manifested in the three aspects of academic pressure, employment pressure, and emotional pressure, and the presentation of college students' peer pressure is often not a single pressure, but the result of the combination of multiple pressures. In addition, peer

pressure has both positive and negative effects, people should actively use its positive impact. Finally, it is also proposed to college students to improve self-confidence, establish independent thinking, turn stress into motivation, and vent bad emotions reasonably to cope with the pressure of college students' peers. Through this survey, we hope to help more college students and similar groups better understand the pressure of peers and assist educators in helping college students get out of the shadow of peer pressure.

However, due to the sample size problem, the research results may be partially biased, and future studies can dig deeper on the basis of enriching the amount of data.

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