

IFSIJ IMPACT FACTOR: 6.225

ISSN: 2455-15

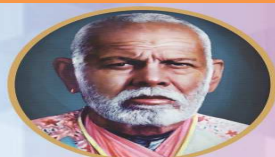
SANSKRUTI

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

PEER REVIEWED & INDEXED JOURNAL

Special Issue: 013

November – 2022



Rayat Shikshan Sanstha's

Sadguru Gadage Maharaj College, Karad

(An Autonomous College - Affiliated to Shivaji University, Kolhapur)

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RECENT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS

Tuesday 11th October, 2022



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IFSIJ IMPACT FACTOR: 6.225

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Study of Influence of Peers on Physical Activity of Students

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Abstract:

In recent years, physical inactivity among students has become an area of great concern. Peers or friends are the social partner of the children and adolescents in school and play important role in increasing or decreasing Physical activity (PA). To understand pattern of peer influence on physical activity in childhood and adolescence is the main objective of this study. Total 619 students (251 children; mean age= 10.9 years and 368 adolescents; mean age= 14.6 years) from 18 schools of Satara city were completed in the study researcher-made Peer Influence on Physical Activity (PIPA) Scale consisted of 12 items based on five factors- peer support (PS), peer socializing (PSc), peer acceptance (PAc), peer physical activity (PPA), peer pressure (PP) (Reliability = 0.69). Likert's 5-point scale was used for scoring which indicates frequency of the occurrence of the situation mentioned in the statements. It is concluded that both children and adolescents have peer influence on physical activity. Peer influence in both the age category there were found significantly equal ($p = 0.225$). Adolescent boys tends to influence more by their peer than adolescent girls ($p = 0.001$) during physical education class; but in childhood age no significant difference found in boys and girls ($p = 0.092$).

Keywords: Peer influence, physical activity, children, adolescents

Introduction:

In recent years, physical inactivity among youth has become an area of great concern. Several intrapersonal, social and environmental correlates led to decreased PA among youth. In school teachers and schoolmates/friends are the intrapersonal correlates of physical activity (PA) of children. Peer is companion or friend for playing. Ramsey (1991) stated that peer competence of child is developed in their early childhood and as they grow and get older (in adolescence) they are increasingly influenced by their peers (Smith & Biddle, 2008; Kirby, Levin and Inchley, 2011). Mears (2008) stated the element of social learning theory that, as humans learn by observation they are likely to continue behaviors observed in others (his/her peer) of similar age and ability. Peer can strongly influence values, behaviors and physical activity. According to Heitzler, (2009) it is possible in adolescence that, as per the choices of their friends they may be more likely to adhere or quit activities. The short-term and long-term physical activity behaviors of youth has been affected by peer influence (Heitzler, 2009).

School is the place where youth spends most of their waking hours. In school settings, especially in physical education class there are many factors that can influence the physical activity during the class like nature of activity, teachers' participation in class, time of the class and the playing

partners or friends. Positive and negative influence of peers associated with physical activity level. Hence, understanding influence of peer on physical activity during physical education (PE) class in both -childhood & adolescence phases becomes important.

The previous researches demonstrated that peers and friends play an important role in the PA behavior of adolescents. Variables which may influence the PA of adolescents are; peer and/or friend support, presence of peers and friends, peer norms, friendship quality and acceptance, peer crowds, and peer victimization.

According to Bandura (1997), the support from parents and friends can reduce the perceived obstacles and increase the chances of physical activity practice. Peer groups can influence multiple behaviors and peers can provide a number of supportive functions including- active role models, companionship during activities and social support via emotional support and verbal reinforcement, encouragement, informational support and instrumental support (Sandra, et al. 1988).

As children age, they spend more time with their friends and peer groups. Among middle and high school youth, the opportunity to be with friends and make new friends was one of the key benefits of participating in PA (Humbert, et al. 2008). They often choose their friends who are similar to themselves (Iervolino et al., 2002). In addition, (Duncan,et al., (2007); Salvy,et al., 2009) youth who are in greater presence of peers in their lives reported greater engagement in PA. Smith (2003) observed that companionship provided by friends is associated with increased PA. Salvy, et al. (2012) have concluded that lack of positive relation with peers and friends is resulted in decreased PA. Researchers further state that, presence of peers not always determinant of PA, but the youth's peer relations and peer experiences is an important determinant of increase in PA. They suggest that, lack of positive peer experiences, negative and critical peer experiences decrease PA in youth. Negative experiences include, teasing, peer rejection, physical as well as verbal victimization and ostracism. Ostracism is intentional exclusion or ignoring of an individual or group by another individual or group.

According to the social behavior theory, human behavior is acquired and modified from the observation of the behavior of and learning experiences from socially important people (Trost and Loprinzi, 2011; Pugliese and Tinsley, 2007). Hence, PA of parents and friends would act as a model for the practice of adolescents and adolescents with physically active parents and/or friends are more likely to be more active (Edwardson and Gorely, 2010; Trost and Loprinzi, 2011). For both girls and boys, those with physically active friends were more physically active at age 12 and among boys only (Duncan,et al., 2007).

Peer pressure occurs when someone is influenced by his/her peer to act in a certain way. The way pressure is applied by peers can vary. According to Lee (2012), peer pressure is defined as social pressure on members of one's peer group to take a certain action, adopt certain values or otherwise confirm in order to be accepted. Peer pressure can be used for good habits like being

physically active. It is possible that adolescents may be more likely to continue or quit activities dependent on the choices of their friends. Researchers have demonstrated that peer pressure is one of the self-reported barriers of children and adolescents to participate in PE and PA.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To understand pattern of peer influence on PA of students.
2. To study age differences in peer influence on PA of students.
3. To study gender differences in peer influence on PA of students.

Hypotheses:

H_{1,1}: There will be influence of peers on physical activity of children and adolescents.

H_{1,2}: Adolescents will have more influence of peers than children have

H_{1,3}: There will be significant difference in peer influence of boys and girls in childhood age.

H_{1,4}: There will be significant difference in peer influence of boys and girls in adolescence age.

Review of literature:

According to Bandura (1997), the support from parents and friends can reduce the perceived obstacles and increase the chances of physical activity practice. Peer groups can influence multiple behaviors and peers can provide a number of supportive functions including- active role models, companionship during activities and social support via emotional support and verbal reinforcement, encouragement, informational support and instrumental support (Sandra, et al. 1988).

As children age, they spend more time with their friends and peer groups. Among middle and high school youth, the opportunity to be with friends and make new friends was one of the key benefits of participating in PA (Humbert, et al. 2008). According to some studies, adolescents spend more time with peers than doing almost anything else and tend to identify more with peers than with adults (Passer and Smith, 2007). In choosing friends, adolescents tend to select peers who are similar to themselves (Iervolino et al., 2002). In addition, (Duncan, et al., (2007); Salvy, et al., 2009) also found that, youth who are in greater presence of peers in their lives report greater involvement in PA. Research done by Smith (2003) indicated that companionship provided by friends is associated with positive effects on PA.

Salvy, et al. (2012) have concluded that lack of positive relation with peers and friends is resulted in decreased PA. Researchers further state that, presence of peers not always determinant of PA, but the youth's peer relations and peer experiences is an important determinant of increase in PA. They suggest that, lack of positive peer experiences, negative and critical peer experiences decrease PA in youth. Negative experiences include, teasing, peer rejection, physical as well as verbal victimization and intentional exclusion or ignoring of an individual or group by another individual or group. Rejected children are off task more often on playground (Ladd, 1983).

Researchers (Salvy, Bowker, Germeroth and Barkley, 2012) elaborate the social factor for lack of participation of overweight youth in PA, is negative nature of social interactions and the weight stigmatization. They concluded that lack of positive relation with peers and friends is resulted in decreased PA. Researchers further state that, presence of peers not always determinant of PA, but the youth's peer relations and peer experiences is an important determinant of increase in PA. Positive peer experiences characterized by positive interactions, mutual affection, co-operation, support and respect increases the participation in PA.

Findings of the several studies (Faith, Leone, Ayers, Moonseong, and Pietrobelli, 2002; Hawkey, Thisted, and Cacioppo, 2009; Storch, Milsom, DeBraganza, Lewin, Geffken, and Silverstein, 2007) have shown that, weight criticism during PA, verbal teasing spreading rumors, manifestations of victimization are predictive of time spent alone, feeling of loneliness, reduced sports enjoyment, and decrease in overall PA. Children and youth who encounter rejecting peers stop enjoying PA. Peer problems, such as rejection and lack of close friends, have been linked to a variety of maladaptive outcomes for children, including loneliness and low self-esteem (Asher, Parkhurst, Hymel, and Williams, 1990).

According to the social behavior theory, human behavior is acquired and modified from the observation of the behavior of and learning experiences from socially important people (Trost and Loprinzi, 2011; Pugliese and Tinsley, 2007). Hence, PA of parents and friends would act as a model for the practice of adolescents and adolescents with physically active parents and/or friends are more likely to be more active (Edwardson and Gorely, 2010; Trost and Loprinzi, 2011). For both girls and boys, those with physically active friends were more physically active at age 12. Adolescents whose parents and friends participated in physical activities more frequently had higher levels physical activity (Cheng, Mendonc and Cazuza, 2014).

Researchers (Sherral, et al., 2007; Salvey et al. 2009) have demonstrated that peer pressure is one of the self-reported barrier of children and adolescents to participate in PE and PA. In a study by Jenkinson and Benson (2010), teacher participants of the study claimed peer pressure of students is the most frequently ranked barrier to participate in PA. Peer pressure occurs when someone is influenced by his/her peer to act in a certain way. The way pressure is applied by peers can vary. According to Lee (2012), peer pressure is defined as social pressure on members of one's peer group to take a certain action, adopt certain values or otherwise confirm in order to be accepted. Peer pressure can be used for good habits like being physically active. It is possible that adolescents may be more likely to continue or quit activities dependent on the choices of their friends.

Methodology:

Sample: The study is conducted by descriptive survey method. Total 619 students from 18 schools of Satara city were participated in the present study. Multi-stage/ cluster random sampling technique is used for selecting participants. 251 children (mean age= 10.9 years; 136 boys and 115 girls) and 368 adolescents (mean age= 14.6 years; 169 boys and 199 girls) were completed researcher-made Peer Influence on Physical Activity (PIPA) scale.

Tool: Researcher-made Peer Influence on Physical Activity (PIPA) scale is used as tool. The scale consisted of 12 items based on five factors viz., peer support (PS), peer socializing (PSc), peer acceptance (PAc), peer physical activity (PPA), peer pressure (PP). Through these factors influence of peers on physical activity during Physical Education Class was measured. The content validity of the scale was determined by experts while reliability was determined by test-retest method ($r = 0.69$). Likert’s 5-point scale was used for scoring which indicates frequency of the occurrence of the situation mentioned in the statements. The 5-point scale used was- Always, most of the time, sometimes, rarely and never.

• **Peer support (PS):**

Peer support includes verbal reinforcement and encouragement, active role model, motivation for PA participation, involvement in the activity, instructional support.

• **Peer socializing (PSc):**

It includes Amount of time spent with friends in PE class, Opportunity to be with friends, opportunity for making new friends

• **Peer acceptance (PA):**

Influence of acceptance as a playing partner or involving in an activity by peer due to being close friend; having mastery over skill, good fitness level.

Peer rejection is influence of rejection to involve in an activity due to hate, jealousy, anger or having low skills and low fitness level. Self - rejection to involve in an activity due to fear of making fun by peers.

• **Peer Physical Activity (PPA):**

It includes peer PA participation, physically active peer or sedentary peer or independently active peer, PA of peer during game situation

• **Peer Pressure (PP):**

It indicates positive and negative peer pressure to be physically active.

Results:

The data collected was analyzed by using SPSS Software (Version 17.0) and presented in the tables below.

Table 1

Percentage of students having Peer influence

		PS	PSc	Pac	PPA	PP	Total_PIPA
Children	Less PI	39.8%	33.9%	33.5%	37.8%	43.8%	39.0%
	Moderate PI	21.1 %	13.5 %	16.3 %	27.0 %	14.3 %	23.6 %
	High PI	39.1 %	52.6 %	50.2 %	35.2 %	41.9 %	37.4 %
Adolescen	Less PI	34.8 %	34.0 %	42.4 %	42.1 %	35.1 %	33.7 %
	Moderate PI	28.0 %	26.1 %	13.8 %	16.0 %	30.8 %	29.1 %
	High PI	37.2 %	39.9 %	43.8 %	41.9 %	34.1 %	37.2 %

Percentile score of the PIPA score is calculated and according to the percentiles students are categorized into three categories as, students having low moderate and high level of peer influence. It is seen from table 1, in both the age categories above 60 % students have moderate to high peer influence.

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of age and gender differences in peer influence of students

Variables	Gender	Children			Adolescents		
		N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
PS	Boys	136	10.26	2.202	169	10.01	2.658
	Girls	115	10.02	2.672	199	9.09	2.651
	Total	251	10.15	2.427	368	9.51	2.690
PSc	Boys	136	6.91	2.304	169	6.89	3.025
	Girls	115	6.68	1.954	199	7.13	2.669
	Total	251	6.80	2.150	368	7.02	2.837
Pac	Boys	136	5.38	1.642	169	5.07	1.807
	Girls	115	4.84	1.554	199	4.56	1.819
	Total	251	5.13	1.621	368	4.79	1.828
PPA	Boys	136	5.46	1.881	169	6.02	2.175
	Girls	115	5.65	2.039	199	5.92	1.945
	Total	251	5.55	1.954	368	5.96	2.051
PP	Boys	136	5.29	1.893	169	5.14	2.168
	Girls	115	4.83	1.757	199	4.29	1.919
	Total	251	5.08	1.842	368	4.68	2.078
Total score of PI	Boys	136	33.37	5.763	169	34.53	6.412
	Girls	115	32.16	5.572	199	32.46	5.876
	Total	251	32.81	5.697	368	33.41	6.206

Table 2 represents the pattern of peer influence and it's sub-factors on physical activity of children and adolescents according to their gender. It is seen that, mean values of peer influence of peer support, peer acceptance and peer pressure of children is greater than that of adolescents. Gender-wise analysis shows adolescent boys have greater mean score of influence of peer than adolescent girls.

Table 3

Independent sample t-test for peer influence on PA of children and adolescents

Variables	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean diff.	Std. error diff.
PS	4.522	0.034	3.097	571.314	0.002*	0.643	0.208
PSc	4.322	0.038	-1.068	610.161	0.286	-0.214	0.201
Pac	9.931	0.002	2.437	576.500	0.015*	0.341	0.140
PPA	0.007	0.933	-2.518	617	0.012*	-0.415	0.165
PP	8.277	0.004	2.519	576.411	0.012*	0.400	0.159
Total_PIPA	2.244	0.135	-1.216	617	0.225	-0.598	0.492

Note: “*” – significant at 0.05 level.

Table no. 3 indicates analysis of independent sample t-test for age-wise influence of peer physical activity of students during PE class. Table shows there is no statistically significant difference in overall peer influence score of children and adolescents at 0.05 level of significance ($p= 0.225$). But in case of influence of peer support (PS), peer acceptance (Pac), peer physical activity (PPA) and peer pressure (PP) score; significant differences were observed in both the age groups ($p= 0.002, 0.015, 0.012, 0.012$ respectively)

Table 4

Independent sample t-test for gender differences in peer influence on PA of children

Variables	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances of t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean diff.	Std. error diff.
PS	3.415	0.066	0.804	249	0.422	0.247	0.308
PSc	4.208	0.041	0.869	248.997	0.386	0.234	0.269
Pac	0.018	0.892	2.619	249	0.009*	0.532	0.203
PPA	0.928	0.336	-0.763	249	0.446	-0.189	0.248
PP	1.312	0.253	1.948	249	0.053	0.452	0.232
Total_PIPA	0.032	0.858	1.689	244.549	0.092	1.211	0.717

Note: “*” – significant at 0.05 level.

Table no. 4 indicates analysis of independent sample t-test for gender-wise influence of peer physical activity during PE class in adolescents. Figures of the table indicates that, t value of overall peer influence is statistically not significant at 0.05 level of significance ($p= 0.092$). The significant difference is seen between the mean score of peer acceptance in boys and that in girls at 0.05 level of significance ($p= 0.009$).

Table 5

Independent sample t-test for gender differences in peer influence on PA of adolescents

Variables	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances of t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean diff.	Std. error diff.
PS	0.025	0.874	3.315	366	0.001*	0.920	0.278
PSc	7.796	0.006	-0.811	338.191	0.418	-0.243	0.300
Pac	1.663	0.198	2.675	366	0.008*	0.507	0.190
PPA	1.558	0.213	0.457	366	0.648	0.098	0.215
PP	0.751	0.387	3.964	366	0.001*	0.845	0.213
Total_PIPA	0.000	0.987	3.238	366	0.001*	2.075	0.641

Note: “*” – significant at 0.05 level.

Table no. 5 indicates analysis of independent sample t-test for gender-wise influence of peer physical activity during PE class in adolescents. Table represents there is statistical significant difference found in overall peer influence score of adolescent boys and adolescent girls at 0.05 level of significance ($p= 0.001$). Whether, in case of influence of peer support (PS), peer acceptance (PAc), and peer pressure (PP) score; significant differences were observed in both the groups ($p= 0.001, 0.008, \text{ and } 0.001$ respectively)

Discussion:

In recent years many researchers have been focused their attention towards role of peers in increasing or decreasing PA and found that peers may promote PA and helps to increase their motivation to participate. The results of the present study reveal the same fact. From the data analysis it is found that physical activity of majority (above 60%) of children and adolescents is affected by influence of their peers. Hence, in present study, research hypothesis $H_{1.1}$ is accepted.

Researchers state positive and negative peer experiences are contributing factors that promotes or detract youth from participating in leisure time PA. Studies have shown that adolescents are more influenced by their peers (Van Der Horst, Paw, Twisk, Van Mechelen, 2007). On the contrary, this study shows influence of peers in childhood and in adolescence age is not differentiated. So researcher rejected research hypothesis $H_{1.2}$.

According to Duncan, et al., (2007) social support from friends was a significant correlate of PA at age 12. The present study also reveals influence of social support from peers on physical activity of both children and adolescents; peer support is seen more in children. Kunesh, Hasbrook, and Lewthwaite (1992) had also shown the positive association between peer encouragements, support with participation in PA.

According to some studies, adolescents spend more time with peers than doing almost anything else and tend to identify more with peers than with adults (Passer and Smith, 2007). The results of the present study show no significant influence of peer socialization on physical activity of children and adolescents which is contrast to the fact. In present study the influence of peer is studied during physical education class, the class is often controlled by physical education teacher, the activities and tasks of the class may affect the socialization with peers.

Findings of some studies demonstrate that, adolescents who had more physically active friends had higher levels of physical activity (Cheng, Memdonca and Cazuza, 2013). The results of the present study shows similar thing. Findings of the several studies also reveals that, adolescents who had friends who were more physically active and frequently participated in PA had seen to have higher levels of physical activity (Beets, Vogel, Forlaw, Pitetti, and Cardinal, 2006; Salvy, et al., 2012; Kirby, Levin, Inchley, 2011; Duncan, Duncan, and Strycker, 2005).

According to Sherral, et al., (2007); Salvy, et al., (2009) for children and adolescents, peer pressure is the important factor to participate in PE and PA. Present study also observed that peer

pressure is important in both the age groups but it influence more in childhood than adolescence age. Result of the present study reveals that influence of peer in boys and girls in childhood age is not significantly different, so research hypothesis $H_{1,3}$ is rejected. Influence of peer is seen greater in adolescent boys than in girls, this accepts research hypothesis $H_{1,4}$. The study done by Passer and Smith, (2007) was also revealed the same fact, boys reported higher levels of physical activity and peer support than girls suggesting that they are more likely than girls to have friends to be active with.

Conclusion:

It is concluded from the results, children and adolescents have moderate to high influence of their peers on physical activity during their PE class. It is also concluded that, children get more support, acceptance and pressure for being physically active or inactive from their peers as compared to adolescents. In adolescents, physical activity of peer or playing partner affects physical activity during physical education class. Physical activity of adolescent boys is highly influenced by support of their peers, acceptance from peers and pressure by peers for being physically active.

Future Outcome:

The PIPA-scale constructed by the researchers will helpful to physical education teachers to determine whether student have peer influence and whether it is positive or negative. The study has concluded that majority of students have moderate to high influence of their peers on physical activity during their PE class. Hence physical education teacher could plan his/her lesson in such a way that all the students will participate and engage in physical activity.

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