

Shaping Identities: Peer Pressure and Gender Role Attitude among Urban Adolescents

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The research aimed to examine the relationship between gender role attitude and peer influence among 400 adolescents, comprising 200 boys and 200 girls, randomly chosen from government senior secondary schools across four zones of Ludhiana city. A Self-constructed Demographic Information Sheet was used to assess the personal information. The Modified Gender Role Attitude Scale (Pareek & Jain, 2019) and Peer Influence Scale (2023) were used to assess the different levels of gender role attitudes and peer pressure of adolescents. The findings indicated that most adolescents were in a transitional stage regarding their gender role attitudes and experienced a moderate level of peer pressure. Additionally, significant gender differences emerged across all three categories of gender role attitudes. A larger proportion of boys fell into the transitional category, while a greater number of girls exhibited modern gender role attitudes. Notably, no girls were found to have traditional gender role attitudes. Regarding peer pressure, more boys reported low levels, while more girls reported experiencing moderate levels. A significant correlation was identified between gender role attitudes and peer pressure, indicating that higher peer pressure was associated with a greater shift towards transitional gender role attitudes.

Keywords: adolescents, gender role attitude, and peer pressure

Adolescence is a critical stage in human development, as well-being during this period significantly influences future outcomes (Blum et al., 2017). Additionally, during this phase of human development, gender attitudes and perceptions of gender norms are constructed. Gender attitudes refer to an individual's views, beliefs, or support for specific gender norms (Kagesten et al., 2016). The gender role attitudes are categorized as traditional, transitional and modern. Socially accepted expectations about behaviours and characteristics that men and women should show are commonly referred to as gender norms (Yu et al., 2017). This encompasses the roles, characteristics, status, and power that are socially recognized as associated with masculinity and femininity within the specific culture (Kagesten et al., 2016). An adolescent's attitudes regarding gender are primarily shaped by these gender norms.

According to Evans et al. (2022), many Indians hold the view that men and women should share certain household work. However, traditional patriarchal beliefs persist among many. A slight majority of Indians (54%) think that both men and women in a household should be involved in earning an income. However, 43 percent of people believe that men should be the primary earners. Moreover, 61 percent of Indian women fully support the notion that a wife should

always obey her husband.

According to Barak et al. (1991), children with working mothers have more egalitarian attitudes about marriage, parenthood, and careers than children with unemployed mothers. The mother's employment during her children's adolescence had a big impact on the egalitarian values that they later held as young adults. The family plays a pivotal role in shaping a child's understanding of gender, influencing their gender identity, conception, and expression (Davidson et al., 2015; Kaplan, 1991; Lauer & Lauer, 1994; Santrock, 1994). However, the peer group acquires greater significance when a child's social circle expands to include individuals outside of their own family. According to social identity theory, a person's perception of themselves is greatly impacted by their involvement with peer groups, as members are motivated to establish and uphold the group's standards to develop a positive identity (Tarrant, 2002). Adolescents start adopting the behaviour of their friends because they look to their peer group to define gender stereotypes.

Taking all these factors into consideration, the present research is planned to examine the relationship between gender role attitude and peer influence among urban adolescents.

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Method

Participants

The study was conducted on 400 urban adolescents (16-19 years) in the 11th and 12th classes. All four zones of Ludhiana city were included in the research. A comprehensive list of Government Senior Secondary schools was obtained from the official Punjab School Education Board website (pseb.ac.in). To gather the sample of 400 adolescents, nine schools were randomly selected from the four zones of Ludhiana. The sample was evenly divided on the basis of gender, with 200 males and 200 females. Only adolescents with full-time working mothers were selected for the study.

Measures

A *Self-constructed Demographic Profile Sheet* was used to collect the personal information of adolescents. The Modified Gender Role Attitude Scale (Pareek & Jain, 2019) was used to assess gender role attitudes. The total 40 items on the scale were primarily focused on three areas viz., roles related to paid and unpaid work, roles within the family, childcare, and roles that are expected by society. The questionnaire included an equal number of positive and negative statements, with 20 of each. Negative items were reverse-coded for analysis. The reliability score of this scale was 0.78.

The following table indicates the score range for adolescents' attitudes towards gender roles.

Gender Role Attitude	Score range
Traditional	40-079
Transitional	80-120
Modern	121-160

Peer Influence Questionnaire by Pant and Vig (2023) was used to evaluate the impact that peers had on adolescents' attitudes towards gender roles. Total 16 items were in the questionnaire. It contained 13 negative and 3 positive statements. The reliability score of this questionnaire was 0.81.

The following table indicates the score range for the evaluation of peer influence on adolescents' attitudes towards gender roles.

Level of peer influence	Score range
Low	16-37
Medium	38-58
High	59-80

Pretesting

Both Punjabi and English versions of the questionnaires were pretested on 40 non-sampled adolescents. The pre-testing was conducted in the Government Model Senior Secondary School in Patel Nagar, Civil Lines, Ludhiana. This pretesting included 20 boys and 20 girls from the 11th and 12th class. According to the respondents, every statement from both questionnaires was simple to understand.

Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS version 23 software. Frequency, percentage, Z-test and Chi square were employed to get the results from the collected data.

Procedure

To obtain the desired sample size, only adolescents with working mothers were included in the study. A total of 400 adolescents were selected, ensuring equal representation of boys and girls. Before filling out the questionnaires, the adolescents were provided important instructions such as types of statements and guided about how the questionnaires were to be filled. After that a demographic information sheet was distributed to the participants. The questionnaires were handed over to the students, and any necessary assistance was provided to the adolescents throughout the data collection process. The collected data was filled on the Ms-excel sheet and was analysed with help of SPSS 23 software.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 represents the overall per cent distribution of adolescents

across different gender role attitudes. The findings showed that the majority of adolescents (82%) exhibited transitional gender role attitudes, while 17% were found under the modern category. Only 1 per cent of adolescents exhibited traditional gender role attitudes. These findings align with Pant (2023) who also found that most adolescents were in a transitional phase regarding gender role attitudes. The adolescents appeared to be moving towards more modern perspectives, such as viewing homemaking as a shared responsibility between men and women.

Table 1

Overall Per Cent Distribution of Adolescents across Different Gender Role Attitudes

Gender Role Attitude	Overall (n=400)	
	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Traditional	4	1.00
Transitional	328	82.00
Modern	68	17.00

Figure 1

Overall Per Cent Distribution of Adolescents across Different Levels of Gender Role Attitude

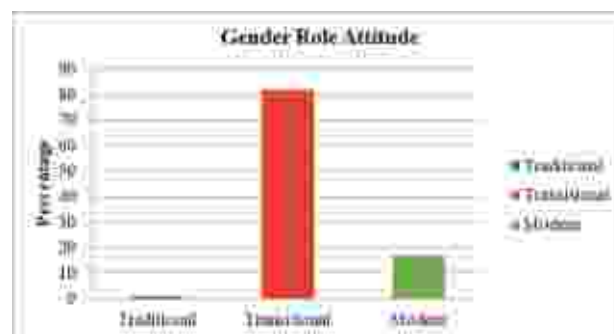


Table 2

Overall Per Cent Distribution of Adolescents across Different Levels of Peer Pressure

Variable		Overall (n=400)	
		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Peer Pressure	Low	54	13.50
	Medium	299	74.75
	High	47	11.75

Table 2 describes the overall per cent distribution of adolescents across different levels of peer pressure. The results indicated that 74.75 per cent of the adolescents were experiencing medium peer pressure followed by low peer pressure (13.50%). Only 11.75 per cent of the adolescents were under high peer pressure. This suggests that the gender role attitude of the adolescents appeared to have been medium to low influenced by their peers.

Table 3 describes the gender differentials in gender role attitudes among adolescents. The data showed that significant differences were found between the boys and girls in all three categories of gender role attitude. Only 2 per cent of the boys and none of the girls were experiencing traditional gender role attitudes. In the transitional category, significantly more number of boys (87.50%) were found than girls (76.50%). Moreover, significantly more girls

(23.50%) had modern gender role attitudes than boys (10.50%). Kharouf and Daoud (2019) indicated that girls had an egalitarian attitude as compared to boys. The girls often experience gender inequality first hand, motivating them to challenge traditional roles. Additionally, societal shifts towards gender equality resonate more strongly with girls, leading them to embrace more progressive views. Boys, as members of a higher-status group, tend to possess greater social power and may strive to preserve their standing within society (Leer et al., 2021).

Figure 2

Overall Per Cent Distribution of Adolescents across Various Levels of Peer Pressure

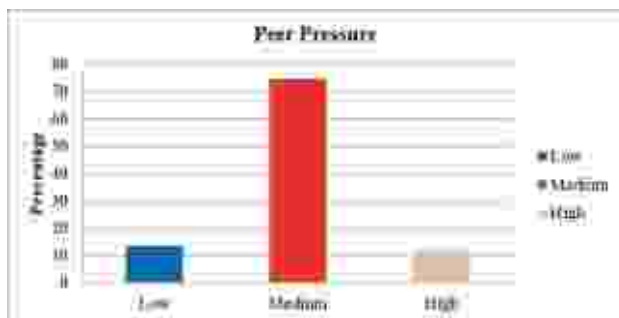


Table 3

Gender Differentials in Gender Role Attitudes among Adolescents

Gender Role Attitude	Boys (n _b =200)		Girls (n _g =200)		Z
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	
Traditional	4	2.00	0	0.00	2.01*
Transitional	175	87.50	153	76.50	2.86**
Modern	21	10.50	47	23.50	3.46**

Note. *Significant at the 0.05 level, **Significant at the 0.01 level

Figure 3

Gender Differentials in Gender Role Attitudes among Adolescents

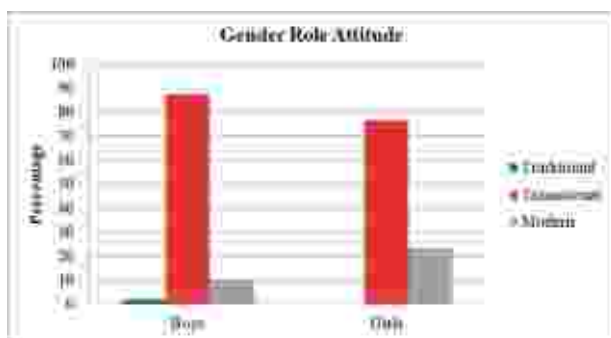


Table 4

Gender Differentials in Peer Pressure among Adolescents

Gender Role Attitude	Boys (n _b =200)		Girls (n _g =200)		Z
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)	
Peer Pressure Low	45	22.50	9	4.50	5.27**
Peer Pressure Medium	134	67.00	165	82.50	3.57**
Peer Pressure High	21	10.50	26	13.00	0.78

Table 4 indicates gender differentials in peer pressure among adolescents. A significant difference was found between boys and

girls in both the low and medium categories of peer pressure. Significantly more boys (22.5%) were experiencing low levels of peer pressure than girls (4.5%). Whereas, significantly more girls (82.5%) were experiencing medium levels of peer pressure than boys (67%). The present study is in line with McMillan et al. (2018) highlighted that girls were experiencing more peer pressure as compared to boys. Girls are often socialized to prioritize relationships and social harmony, which makes them more sensitive to peer influence. The desire to maintain friendships and avoid conflict might lead girls to adopt or uphold gender role attitudes that align with their peers' expectations.

Figure 4

Gender Differentials in Peer Pressure among Adolescents

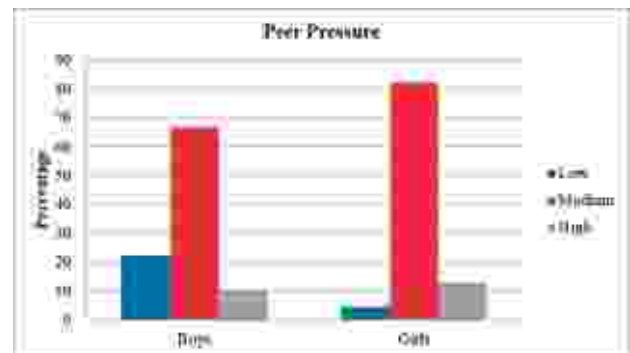


Table 5

Relationship of Gender role Attitude with Peer Pressure

Variable		Peer Pressure			
		Low	Medium	High	
Gender Role Attitude	Traditional	f 3	1	0	X ² =33.13**
		% .8	.3	0.0	
Transitional	f 50	248	30		
	% 12.5	62.0	7.5		
Modern	f 1	50	17		
	% .3	12.5	4.3		

Note. **Significant at the 0.01 level

Table 5 represents the relationship between gender role attitude with peer pressure. The results showed that a significant relationship ($X^2=33.13, p < 0.01$) was reported between gender role attitude and peer pressure. This suggests the importance of peers in shaping gender role attitudes among adolescents. The adolescents have not fully adopted modern gender role attitudes, they encounter a substantial amount of peer pressure with 12.5 per cent at the low level, 62 per cent at the medium level and 7.5 per cent at the high level in their transitional level of gender role attitude.

In the traditional category of gender role attitude, 0.8 per cent of the adolescents experienced a low level of peer pressure while 0.3 per cent of adolescents experienced a medium level of peer pressure and no one experienced a high level of peer pressure. In the modern category of gender role attitude, 0.3 per cent of adolescents experienced a low level of peer pressure, 12.5 per cent of adolescents experienced the medium level of peer pressure and 4.3 per cent of adolescents fell under a high level of peer pressure. It indicates more was peer pressure, more was the modern gender role attitudes. Patel et al. (2021) highlighted that peer group plays an important role in shaping the gender role attitudes of adolescents. Greater peer

influence was associated with a stronger shift towards transitional gender role attitudes (Pant, 2023). The desire to fit in and gain acceptance from their peer group can drive adolescents to adopt the gender role attitudes that are common among their peers.

Conclusion

The findings of the current study indicated a significant association between gender role attitudes and peer pressure, with higher peer pressure leading to more transitional gender role attitudes. This highlights the influential role of peer groups on adolescents' gender attitudes, underscoring the need for interventions that target not only individuals but also their peer groups. The data of the present study would be useful for researchers, human development experts, and educationists in understanding how gender role attitudes evolve among adolescents. The information can be helpful in the creation of gender-neutral programs and interventions for adolescents.

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