
Peer Group Relationships in Child Development- A Socio-Psychological Perspective

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Abstract-

In the beginning before the child comes to school. He is a member of a family group and so continues till he goes to his school. Joining a school peer group adds a new social dimension to his group life. During his school period from, the young person undergoes a psychological weaning from the limited family contacts and being led towards the broader social relationship of adulthood.

Key words- Peer Group, Child Development and Socio-Psychological Perspective

Introduction

As a matter of fact most of the children substantially supplement their controlled group living in home and school with comparatively freedom oriented membership in peer- groups outside. It's clear that peer groups offer children a unique environment within which they learn about themselves and others. Peer group membership provides children the opportunity to learn about the common goals, normative behaviors and the complexity of maintaining the relationship. But surprisingly the relative freedom from control is often considered a serious problem by their although peer group relationships provides an opportunity to many children to be free from that education by blocking personal defects through the rough and tumble responses of a peer group.

In recent years a number of influential investigators like- Jean Piaget, George Herbert Mead etc wrote about the significance of the per group relationship in the children. These investigators developed noble methodologies to evaluate development and individual differences in the sphere of sociability, aggression, altruism, group dynamics, and group acceptance. It will be worth-while if we develop a clear concept about the formation and

structure of the peer group. A peer group formation has a tetra-dimensional structure. The first is the **‘why’** aspect based on goal or purpose. The second is **‘when’** aspect deals with membership continuity. The third is the **‘with whom’** aspect determined by the acceptable status of the members and the fourth one is **‘up to when’** dimension which deals with the duration of the membership in the group. This analysis will help to understand the children’s relationship with peer and with adults.

The relationships with adults could be considered as being complementary, asymmetrical and falling along a vertical plain of dominance and power-assertion. It is observed that children normally accept adult rule not necessarily because they understand them but rather because obedience is required there.

The similar age peer group relationship holds a vice-versa position. The children’s peer relationships are balanced egalitarian and falling along a more or less horizontal plain of power assertion and dominance, in peer group the children experiences opportunities to examine conflict in ideas and explanations, to negotiate and discuss numerous perspectives and to decide to accept, comparison or to reject the notion held by peers. These peer interactive experiences are positioned to result in positive and adaptative developmental outcomes for children in future life.

Another important impact of peer group relationship on child development can be traced in social interaction experiences. Participation in rule-governed games and activities with peers can lead children to understand and co-ordinate the perspective of others with relation to self. Thus, perspective taking experiences led to the conceptualization of the concept of discipline which in turn led to the emergence of an organized disciplined sense of self. Mead holds that **‘Children learn about their social worlds and how to behave within these contacts through, direct peer tutelage and indirect observation of peers’** in action. From this perspective peers are viewed as behavior control agents and behavior change agents for each other. This way the children will learn to punish or ignore non-normative social

behavior and reward or reinforce those behaviors which look as culturally appropriate and competent to them.

Generally it is observed that members of peer groups develop a sense of belonging and a group identity. These affective components of group structure often result in competition with other group. Competition increases group solidarity and cohesion and adherence to norms in intra group relationship.

In a democratic country like India leadership plays an important role. Peer group relationships in early age provide an insight into the aspect. Normally the leader plays critical role in determine norms for the group. Dominance holds a central place. Dominance means a symmetrical balance of power between two individuals in a social group. It is an essential traits required for a Leader.

Interestingly conflicts are not uncommon between the members of peer group. They not only engage in more positive interaction but they also quarrel and engage in active (assert and threat) and reactive (refusals and resistance) interactions. Hostility interaction within the peer group is more frequent than non peer group. Most likely this seemingly contradictory finding can be attributed to the fact that peer group members spend much more time actually interacting with each other than non-peer-group individuals, but interestingly peer group resolve their conflicts differently than non-peer-group individuals. Peer groups as compare to non-peer-group have less intense conflicts and their conflicts are resolved more quickly. Peer groups are more likely to have equitable resolution. Following conflicts-finally following conflict resolution peer groups are more likely than non-peer-group associate to stay in physical proximity and continue to interact. This provides a base for future adaptability in life.

The intensity of the impact of conflict within the peer group and the non-peer-group possess a significant difference. It is observed that the impact is more intense in peer group conflict than the non-peer-group. The same is with the duration and status of compromise or

forgiveness in future but I personally observed that a slight nitch always exists even the member pretends to be normal.

I fondly remember a couplet composed by the famous Indian social reformer Rahim. It says-

रहिमन धागा प्रेम का, मत तोड़ो चटकाय ।
टूटे से फिर ना जुड़े, जुड़े गाँठ पड़ जायं ।।

To me it seems that this couplet possess a beautiful expression of relationship in peer group management. Clearly the peer group in which child is raised has great implications for the child's well groomed development as it provides a foundation for the acquisition of future positive social skills and competence which will make the child a socially adopted, adjusted and competent citizen.

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