

## A Correlational Study of Friendship-Quality, Self-Esteem, and Happiness among Adolescents

Bhabana Sharma<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Asma Parveen<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Supportive social interactions have an important influence on adolescents' happiness, self-regard, and well-being. The current research study investigated the association of Friendship-quality, Self-esteem, and Happiness of Adolescents. The sample of the study consisted of 100 adolescents (50 girls and 50 boys) studying in Aligarh. Convenient sampling was used for collecting the data. Independent samples t-test was used to find out gender differences on variables: Friendship Quality, Self-esteem, and Happiness. Pearson Product Moment was carried out to find associations among Friendship Quality and its dimensions (safety, closeness, acceptance and help), Self-esteem, and Happiness. The results showed gender differences in friendship quality and happiness, but there were no gender differences in self-esteem. Positive intercorrelations were found among friendship quality and its dimensions (safety, closeness, acceptance, and help) and self-esteem. Friendships that are comfortable and close aid in the development of a person's sense of happiness and self-esteem.

**Keywords:** *Friendship Quality, Happiness, Self-esteem, Adolescents*

Adolescence is a stage when social relationships and good interactions are vital. Because of the rapid and critical nature of development at the adolescence stage, adolescents' relations with their friends may form self-esteem and well-being. Various findings have found that friendship and good social interactions are a significant part of psychological health and well-being (Smetana, 2006).

### **Friendship-quality:**

Friendship has always been one of the closest relationships that have been regarded as a key source of support throughout life. Friendship's defining features include the availability or absence of friendship, as well as the amount and quality of friendships. (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989; Vaughn & Erlbaum 1999). According to Berndt (2002), high levels of positive social conduct, closeness, as well as other good characteristics along with low levels of disputes, competition, and other negative characteristics, describe high-quality friendships. As Argyle (2001) found that friendships are significant causes of happiness in the life of individuals. Ladd et al. (1996) conducted a study to create a framework for measuring children's

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of Psychology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

\*Corresponding Author

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## **A Correlational Study of Friendship-Quality, Self-Esteem, and Happiness among Adolescents**

impressions regarding their class friendships and evaluated if particular experiences were correlated with their adaptation through the transition to high school. The study results revealed that the social characteristics of children's class friendships give rise to psychological advantages or losses, which, in turn, influence their growth and adaptation.

### ***Self-esteem:***

Self-esteem is characterized as an inclination to value oneself, resulting in either positive or negative evaluations. Self-esteem is a term that relates to a person's overall positive view of themselves (Gecas, 1982). It expresses how much we believe we are valued by ourselves and also by others. It is preposterous to think that self-esteem can be taught since it affects pleasure and contentment in life and is shaped by experiences of a person's life (Blascovich et al., 1991). Gauze et al. (1996) have revealed correlations of friendship- quality and personal self-worth in adolescence. Keefe and Berndt (1996) conducted a study to find the long-term relationships between friendship- quality and adolescents' self-esteem. The outcome revealed that the quality as well as durability of teenagers' friendships is not only connected to overall self-esteem but also vary in particular areas of self-esteem throughout time. Friendships of high quality have been proven to positively impact children, including boosting self-esteem, enhancing societal adjustment, and enhancing their capability to get through adversities (Hartup & Stevens, 1999).

### ***Happiness:***

Happiness has a significant place in positive psychology. It is currently a much-attended concept in literature. The definition of happiness is not fixed, it varies from person to person; the meaning of happiness changes according to one's age and it holds cultural variations (Oishi et al., 2013). Happiness consists of emotional, noncognitive, subjective and cognitive appraisals of one's life. Happiness can be understood as a multifunctional part of the conscious, cognitive and stimuli process that are particular to how individuals are deciphered and acknowledged by others (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). An investigation done on happiness on the sample of college students indicated that students holds a view that that strong self-esteem, self-confidence, social factors, familial aspects, and business aspects are all important components of happiness (Crossley & Langdridge, 2005).

### ***Objectives:***

There are following objectives of the present research study:

1. To explore the gender differences in terms of Friendship-quality, self-esteem and happiness.
2. To examine relationship among Friendship quality, its dimensions (Safety, Closeness, Acceptance, Help), Self-esteem and happiness among adolescents.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Sample***

The sample of the study was comprised of 100 adolescents. Participants were drawn randomly from the senior secondary schools of Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India.

### ***Inclusion Criteria***

- Adolescents between the age range of 16 to 19 years old.
- Both adolescent girls and boys were comprised in the study.

## A Correlational Study of Friendship-Quality, Self-Esteem, and Happiness among Adolescents

### Exclusion Criteria

- Religion of the participators was not included.
- Socioeconomic status was excluded.

### Instruments:

Following instruments were employed in the study:

1. **Friendship Quality Scale:** This scale was constructed by Lei Mee Thien, Hazri Jamil and Nordin Abd Razak in 2012. Scale consists of 21 items (six point likert scale) ranging from 1= high strongly disagree to 6=high strongly agree.
2. **Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale:** Morris Rosenberg gave this instrument in 1965. Scale consists of 10 items in total ranging from 3 (strongly agree) to 0 (strongly disagree).
3. **Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ):** Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was constructed by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills in year 2002. QHQ comprised of 29. It is a 6 point likert scale ranging from score “1= strongly disagree” to”6= strongly agree”.

### Procedure

100 adolescent students studying in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India participated in the study. All participants were instructed and informed about the goal of the study then rapport was build. They were told that all of the data would be considered confidential and will be used only for research purpose. Friendship Quality scale, self-esteem scale and oxford happiness questionnaire were administered. Participants were then thanked for their participation and cooperation.

### Data Analysis

To get a relevant conclusion in this study Statistical Package for The Social Sciences (SPSS), (version 24) was used to study the data. Independent samples t-test was conducted for comparing the mean of two groups (Adolescents boys and adolescent girls)” and “Pearson Product Moment of Correlation” to find out correlation among variables.

## RESULTS

*Table1: displays the mean, standard deviation, and t-value for Friendship-quality, self-esteem and Happiness of adolescent boys and girls.*

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Friendship Quality	Boys	50	80.76	14.71	-3.812	.000
	Girls	50	95.66	23.39		
Self-esteem	Boys	50	25.36	4.60	-1.232	.221
	Girls	50	26.56	5.11		
Happiness	Boys	50	3.73	.688	-2.7	.008
	Girls	50	4.08	.587		

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

An independent samples t-test was carried out to identify gender variations in the friendship-quality, self-esteem and happiness of adolescent girls and boys. As we can see in table 1, the adolescent boys scored lower than the girls in terms of Friendship Quality, and the difference was statistically significant ( $t = -3.812$ ,  $p = < .005$ ) in the scores with mean score for adolescent boys ( $M = 80.76, SD = 14.71$ ) was lower than the adolescent girls ( $M = 95.66, SD = 23.39$ ). On the variable, Self-esteem, we see that the mean score for the adolescent girls ( $M = 26.56, SD = 5.11$ ) was slightly higher than the mean for the boys ( $M =$

## A Correlational Study of Friendship-Quality, Self-Esteem, and Happiness among Adolescents

25.36,  $SD=4.60$ ) which is statistically insignificant ( $t = -1.232, p > .05$ ). Further in context of Happiness, there were significant differences ( $t = -2.71, p < .005$ ) in the scores with mean score for adolescent boys ( $M = 3.73, SD = .688$ ) was below than the adolescent girls ( $M = 4.08, SD = .587$ ).

**Table-2: Showing correlations between Friendship -Quality, its dimensions, Self-esteem and Happiness of adolescents.**

	Variables	Mean	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Friendship Quality	88.50	18.79	-						
2	Safety	30.68	7.50	.620**	-					
3	Closeness	26.94	5.73	.717**	.524**	-				
4	Acceptance	18.09	5.33	.696**	.380**	.526**	-			
5	Help	13.59	4.32	.659**	.334**	.436**	.738**	-		
6	Self-esteem	26.72	5.19	.116	.078	.229*	.184	.256*	-	
7	Happiness	5.08	11.12	.322**	.223*	.475**	.330**	.269**	.585**	-

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < .05$ .

From the Correlation table 2, it can be observed Friendship Quality was found to be positively associated with its dimensions; Safety( $r = .620, p < 0.01$ ), Closeness( $r = .717, p < 0.01$ ), Acceptance ( $r = .696, p < 0.01$ ), Help( $r = .659, p < 0.01$ ) and Happiness( $r = .322, p < 0.01$ ). Safety was positively associated with closeness( $r = .524, p < 0.01$ ), acceptance ( $r = .380, p < 0.01$ ), help ( $r = .334, p < 0.01$ ), and happiness( $r = .223, p < 0.01$ ), except self-esteem ( $r = .078, p > 0.01$ ), which was insignificant. Closeness was found to be positively linked with acceptance( $r = .526, p < 0.01$ ), help ( $r = .436, p < 0.01$ ), self-esteem ( $r = .229, p < 0.01$ ), and happiness ( $r = .475, p < 0.01$ ). Acceptance was positively correlated with help ( $r = .738, p < 0.01$ ), and happiness( $r = .330, p < 0.01$ ), but non-significantly related to self-esteem( $r = .184, p < 0.01$ ). The outcome revealed that Help was positively associated with self-esteem( $r = .250, p < 0.01$ ) and happiness ( $r = .269, p < 0.01$ ). Further, it was found that self-esteem was insignificantly correlated to Friendship quality( $r = .116, p > 0.01$ ), Safety ( $r = .078$ ). Additionally, Self esteem was positively correlated with Closeness ( $r = .229, p < 0.05$ ), Acceptance ( $r = .184, p > 0.05$ ), and help ( $r = .256, p < 0.01$ ), dimensions of the friendship Quality. Self-esteem was significantly correlated with happiness ( $r = .585, p < 0.01$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Present investigation analyzed differences among girls and boys in terms of Friendship-Quality, Self-esteem and happiness of adolescents and explored relationship among Friendship Quality, its dimensions (Safety, Closeness, Acceptance and Help), Self-esteem and happiness.

Present study found significant gender differences on Friendship Quality which shows that adolescent boys and girls differ in their friendship quality. The reason for this could be related to that female are more inclined to find a social and emotional support system. According to previous studies of Bowker, (2004); Rose & Rudolph, (2006) girls have superior quality relations in compare to boys, specifically girls emphasizes closeness, emotional intimacy, self-disclosure, validation and improvement of self-worth, dispute settlement, and helpful actions. Further there was insignificant gender difference in terms of self -esteem which shows that girls and boys do not vary in their self-esteem. In recent times both sexes equally encounter similar problems and opportunities related to this developmental stage (adolescence) thus indicating no sex differences in this area. Women and men are evenly content with their individuality in terms of beauty, overall fitness,

## **A Correlational Study of Friendship-Quality, Self-Esteem, and Happiness among Adolescents**

intellect, abilities, and so forth. Therefore, there are equal chances for men and women, which allow them to become financially, socially, and emotionally independent, pushing them to define and achieve their respective personal and professional objectives (Marcic & Grum, 2011). Further there were significant gender differences in terms of happiness. It demonstrates that girls have a higher happiness perception than boys. This is consistent with earlier results of Hasnain et al. (2014) who found gender differences in happiness.

This study found strong positive correlation among Friendship Quality and its dimensions: Safety, closeness, acceptance and help among adolescents which implies that adolescents in developing stage are tend to make bonds and form new relationships other than family. It is also evidenced by previous studies that as children get older their connections usually focus more on friendships rather than familial contacts (Waldrip et al., 2008). Bauminger et al. (2008) conducted a research to study closest friendships of 12–15-year-old adolescents and the results indicated an association between teenagers' feelings of safety and their capacity to develop close connections with their friends.

Friendship Quality and self-esteem showed a non significant correlation. This is congruent with a previous study in which Vernberg (1990) examined adolescents' perceptions of social acceptance and positive aspects of friendship at six months intervals. The findings revealed that evaluations of favorable characteristics did not predict changes in adolescents' perceived social acceptability over time. Due to the changing needs, necessities, and difficulty to manage time, most of the closest friendships fail as they evolve throughout time. According to a study roughly half of adolescent closest friendships remain steady over one school year (Değirmencioglu et al., 1998).

A significant coefficient of correlation was found between overall Friendship quality and Happiness and it is congruent with previous study in which an association between friendship and happiness was investigated by researchers Demir and Weitekamp (2007). They showed that Friendship quality was found to be a good predictor of happiness. So we can assume that adolescents are happier with their friends in comparison to other familial relationships. A possible explanation of this assumption we find in the study of Levitt (1991) who demonstrated that when people go through regular developmental changes in their lives, it is possible that the importance of different relationships in one's happiness varies.

In the present study, dimensions of friendship quality: safety, Closeness, and help were associated with self-esteem and happiness. The explanation for this inference can be attributed to the company of good friend providing a sense of joy, a feeling of protection, affirmation from friends, and well-being and happiness. Researchers also established a link between aspects of friendship qualities and their benefits (Demir & Weitekamp 2007; Lyubomirsky et al., 2006; Hartup, & Stevens, 1999; Berndt, 2002). Lyubomirsky et al. (2006) reported that Closeness and contentment with a companion were linked to happiness. Additionally, a significant positive association between self-esteem and happiness was reported. Those who have friends who evaluate them in positive ways might lead to a state of happiness. These findings are in line with those of previous studies (Argyle & Crossland, 1987; Sheldon & Houser, 2001).

All dimensions (Safety, Closeness, Acceptance and Help) of Friendship-quality were intercorrelated. This is in line with previous results that adolescents gradually shift to their friends for support, closeness, and acceptance (Steinberg & Silverberg 1986; Larson & Richards, 1991). Correlation between acceptance and self-esteem was non-significantly

## A Correlational Study of Friendship-Quality, Self-Esteem, and Happiness among Adolescents

correlated. This shows that there are chances when acceptance from friends does not affect one's evaluation of him/her. Wagner et al. (2018) employed an average of liking ratings and found that peer acceptability was not associated to change in self-esteem.

### *Limitations and Suggestions*

The limited sample size of the respondents in this study is one of its drawbacks, limiting the generalization of the result to the total population of adolescents as the respondents were from Aligarh region in UP, India. In this regard, additional extensive research with a larger sample size and a broader scope is advised. There can be more helpful information obtained after taking positive psychology variables (e.g., character strength, and values) concerning the present study variables.

## CONCLUSION

Gender differences were noticed on friendship quality and happiness between adolescent boys and girls but there was no gender difference was found in terms of self-esteem. There was a positive relationship between friendship quality and its dimensions. Friendships are a salient part of one's development which provides a sense of acceptance and self-regard. Conclusively we can say that a sense of happiness and self-regard can be cultivated through loyal and close friendships with a deliberate endeavor.

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## A Correlational Study of Friendship-Quality, Self-Esteem, and Happiness among Adolescents

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## **A Correlational Study of Friendship-Quality, Self-Esteem, and Happiness among Adolescents**

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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