

College Students' Friendship Quality

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Abstract:- The significance of friend support in the lives of individual's has been evidenced by psychological research across different age groups. Having friends was correlated with a sense of well-being across one's life span and that the developmental outcome depended on the quality of the friendship. This study was aimed at identifying quality of friendship among some selected college students using the friendship quality scale. Samples of 401 college students were selected using proportionate sampling techniques from four colleges in Ethiopia and standardized Friendship Quality Scale (FQS) was administered to the samples. Finally, the data was analysed via descriptive statistics (mode). The analysis showed weak quality friendship among college students in its entirety. However, among the four dimensions, separately the help dimension merely contributed higher percentage (69.3%) to the relationship of college students followed by acceptance (47.1%). With respect to the remaining two dimensions (safety and closeness), the friendship is weaker and accounted for 40.6% and 48.6% respectively. Therefore, this study showed that cooperation and support given among college students were mostly academic type. In non-academic spheres of life, these students are not interested to cooperative each other due to lack of both trust and attachment (i.e. closeness).

Keywords: *Friendship quality scale, Safety, closeness, Acceptance, Help*

I. INTRODUCTION

The term friendship is used to describe the co-operative, supportive and caring behaviour between two or more people. A friendship is a type of committed relationship which involves shared awareness, esteem and affection (Foster, 2005^[1]). Friends welcome each other's company and exhibit loyalty towards each other in a selfless manner. Research suggests that the nature of friendships in adulthood is often a critical determinant of personal happiness, hopefulness, self-esteem and self-image (Foster, 2005^[1]). Psychological research has provided abundant evidence for the significance of friend support in the lives of individuals. Hartup and Stevens (1999^[2]) found that having friends was correlated with a sense of well-being across one's life span and that the developmental outcome depended on the quality of the friendship. Research has found that as social creatures, human beings are motivated to be affiliated with others and have a sense of belongingness in meaningful relationships outside that of family and that a lack of these interpersonal relationships has a significant negative impact on psychological, emotional, and physical health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hill, 1987^[3]). Better social networks are associated with more favourable health outcomes (Cohen, 2004^[4]), better coping with life stressors (Thoits, 1995^[5]), and increases in positive subjective experiences (Larson, Mannell, & Zuzanek, 1986^[6]). Close and meaningful relationships may even be necessary in order to achieve the experience of high well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2002^[7]). In this paper we were very much interested to see the status of friendship among college students using the friendship quality scale. As discussed by scholars, it is believed that high quality relationship has a direct consequence on once well being. Certainly, adolescent friendships can contribute positively to adolescent development (they improve social skills and self-esteem). Absence of high quality friendships is bad for health, spirits, productivity, and longevity, Tom Rath, 2006. William et al. (1992) found that individuals who were isolated or unmarried or did not have a friend were up to three times more likely to die of coronary artery disease within five years.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted on college students of health and sport science departments, Nekemte city, Ethiopia, to identify the quality of their friendship. Thus descriptive survey study design was employed for conducting this investigation. In these departments, there are a total of 2700 students (1,604 male and 1,096 females), and a total of 401 college students were taken using proportionate stratified sampling technique. Friendship quality scale (Thien, L. et. al.; 2012) was employed to measure quality of relationship among college students. The reliability of the instrument was already checked by different researchers as acceptable. The scale

was developed and validated using the scale development and validation procedures suggested by MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Podsakoff (2011^[8]) in behavioural research integrated with Thien, Nordin, and Hazri (2011^[9]). The developers, at school-level, assured to use it as a survey instrument to assess quality of school life based from the perspective of students' friendship quality. The four dimensions were conceptualized and operationally defined while validating as shown in the table below.

Table-1: Conceptualization of the dimensions of Friendship

Dimension	Conceptualization	Operationalization
Safety	The level of confidence or trust relied on friend(s).	To what extent is a student's confidence and trusts relied on his or her friend(s).
Closeness	The level of attachment by friend(s).	To what extent is a student attach to his or her friend(s).
Acceptance	The level of a student's acceptance by school friends either socially or emotionally.	To what extent is a student accepted by his or her school friend(s) either socially or emotionally.
Help	The mutual help offered by the participant in sustaining a friendship.	The extent to which a student will offer his or her mutual help to friend(s) who are having school related problems.

Source: Thien, L. M., Razak, N. A., & Jamil, H. (2012)

The Cronbach's Alpha for Safety, Closeness, Acceptance, and Help were .88, .83, .84, and .81 respectively. The results revealed that the reliability of the scale was warranted.

III. RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of College students

The mean age of the participants was 22.8 years (SD=3.58), with 57.4% of the participants being male (male=230, female=171). In terms of college affiliation, 57.5% of the students were from sport science while the rest 42.5% from health science.

Friendship quality of college students

The four dimensions of friendship where separately analysed and the results are as follows:

Descriptive Statistics (N=401)

Dimension	Safety	Closeness	Acceptance	Help
Mode	2.00	2.00	1.00	1.00

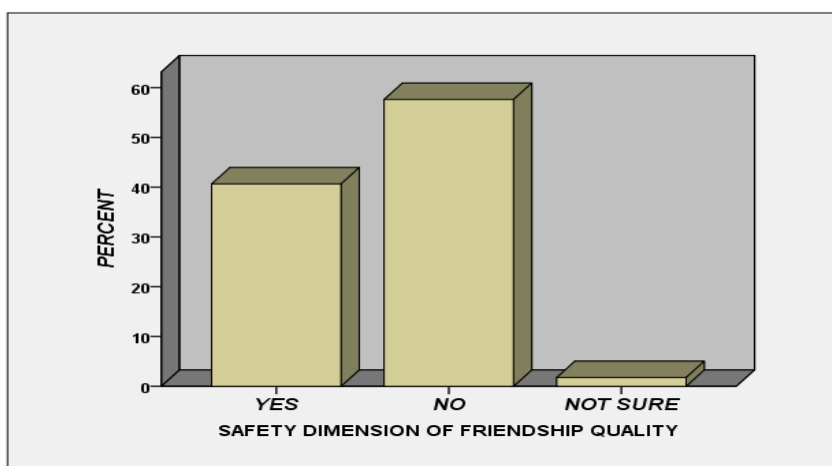
Note: 1= Yes, 2= No, 3= Not Sure

Safety dimension

For items related with "to what extent is a student's confidence and trusts relied on his or her college friend(s)", 57.6 % of them have no confidence as well as trust on their college friends. The student's did not believe all the information given by their friends, their friends break promise, friends leaked secret, lie, not always listen to their advice, feel not safe when precious belongings are kept with them, and not feel safe when accompanied by them. 163 out of 401 college students have confidence and trust on their college friends. Thus, this dimension by itself shows lack of quality relation even though it is difficult to generalize.

Frequency table for Safety

Alternatives	Frequency(mode)	Percent
Yes	163	40.6
No	231	57.6
Not Sure	7	1.7
Total	401	100.0

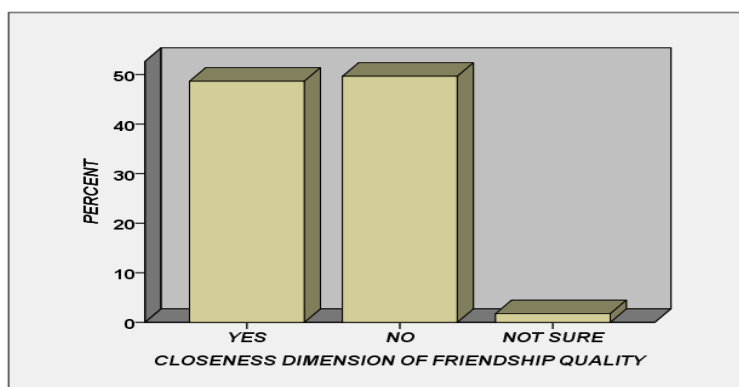


IV. CLOSENESS DIMENSION

The level of college students attachment to each other was examined and brought almost half (49.5%) of the college students not always joke with their college friends, do not understand their mood, do not always chat with each other, do not share their life experiences, do not understand background of each other, and feel shy when performing something humorous in front of each other. Thus, the closeness dimension is not in a position to add value to the friendship quality. It has a negative contribution on quality of friendship.

Frequency Table for Closeness

Alternatives	Frequency	Percent
Yes	195	48.6
No	199	49.6
Not Sure	7	1.7
Total	401	100.0

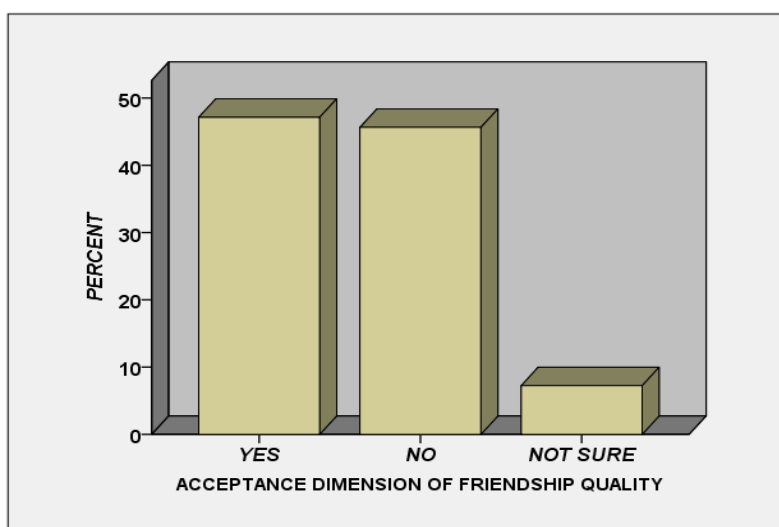


Acceptance

Socially and emotionally acceptance of students by each other is almost good when compared with the other two mentioned above. Here, there is slight difference between students in favour of and against acceptance dimension of friendship; 47.1% of the students got forgiveness easily from their friends, overcome differences in opinion soon, and treat each other, their relationship looks like brother and sister, while 45.6% did not. However, this dimension counts below average and also showed low quality friendship among these students.

Frequency Table for Acceptance

Alternatives	Frequency	Percent
Yes	189	47.1
No	183	45.6
Not Sure	29	7.2
Total	401	100.0

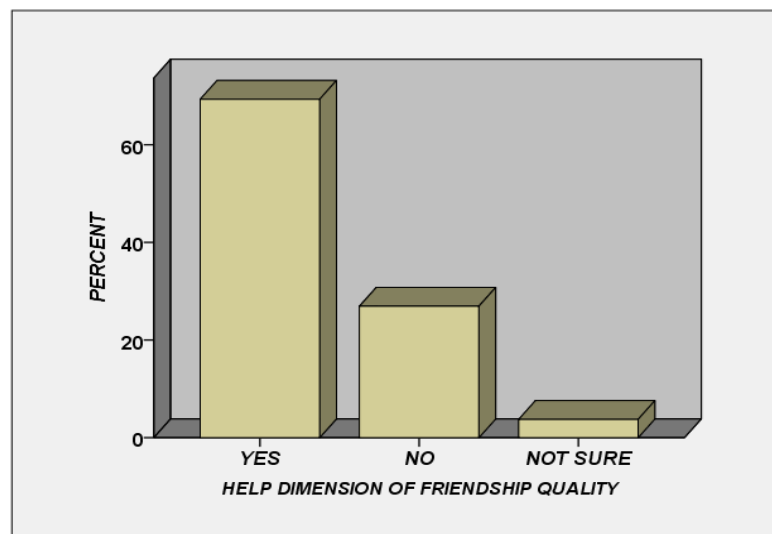


Help

The help dimension of friendship showed greater variability over the three dimensions. The extent to which college students offer mutual help to friend(s) who are having school related problems is almost high.; 69.3% of the students were in a position of helping each other as observed from; correcting mistakes and help to finish academic activities such as home works, assignments and problem solving. College friends are helping each other on academic problems rather than non-academic problems.

Frequency Table for Help

Alternatives	Frequency	Percent
Yes	278	69.3
No	108	26.9
Not Sure	15	3.7
Total	401	100.0



V. DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to identify quality of friendship among college students. The benefits of having a close and supportive social network are profound. Individuals with strong social support networks tend to have better psychological gains, better outlooks on life, and even improvements in career and life experiences. Students who perceive a strong social support network tend to perform better academically, better-developed psychologically, and even healthier, William et al, 1992. However, absence of high friendship quality was associated with bad health, spirits, productivity, and longevity, Tom Rath, 2006. The current study showed that (i.e. descriptive statistic table) safety and closeness dimensions were found as not contributing to college students' friendship quality while the acceptance and help contributed. This shows that, the college students' friendship quality in its totality is very poor, and it is difficult to conclude that there is quality relationship between these students simply because of they are cooperating in academic activities. For the quality of friendship among college students, in general, there is a weak friendship. The kind of relationship observed in this study was giving assistance on academic related issues. College students' academic cooperation was observed boldly in academics when compared with non-academic activities. Across life span, beginning from early school years through tertiary education and life after graduation, high friendship quality was correlated positively with academic achievement and success in life, Pettit et al, 2011, and Roisman et al., 2004. Social connectedness was strongly linked to well-being and happiness, lower levels of depression and higher levels of cognition, greater confidence in asking for help; both material and non-material, Fiori Jager, 2011. Therefore, as the results showed, friendship quality was good among these college students only in terms of mutual help offered between them (help) while the remaining three dimensions did not contributed. As a result, it was difficult to conclude that the kind of friendship among the students is strong; rather further investigation is compulsory for identifying reasons why they were not good at the rest of the dimensions as well as looking ways to enhance overall quality among these students.

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