



Quality of Friendship and Mental Health among College students.

Divita Sharma, Musaddiq Jahan

ABSTRACT-

Friendship is voluntary interdependence of two individuals. Friendship Quality involves affection, companionship, mutual understanding, intimacy, help. Mental Health is an individual subjective well being comprising of (social, emotional and psychological well being). The aim of the present study is to find out the gender differences on Friendship Quality and Mental Health (dimensions) among the college students. The data of 240 (220 males and 20 females) was randomly collected from the college students of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India. Out of which 201 (111 females and 90 males) completed the questionnaire and rest 39 left the questionnaire incomplete were not included in the study. Mean, SD and t test were used to analyse results. The results of the study indicated that male and female students does not differ on the Friendship Quality (dimensions) and Mental Health (dimensions).

Keywords: *Friendship Quality, Mental Health.*

FRIENDSHIP QUALITY- Friends play an important role in the life of every individual at every stage of life i.e from childhood to adulthood to old age. Good friendships have an impact on the individual's personality and well being (Adams & Blieszner, 1995; Pinquart & Sörensen, 2000). Friendships are voluntary and informal peer relationships that rest on the reciprocity, and possess a positive quality (Argyle & Henderson, 1985; Blieszner & Roberto, 2004; Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Friendships are based on mutual goodwill towards one another. Friendship is an in depth relationship that helps one find serenity, comfort while in the company of friends. Individuals of all age groups when accompanied with a friend are more happy than alone or being with family (Larson and Bradney, 1988), and friendships are viewed as source of happiness and joy (Argyle 1987).

In Childhood and adolescence the friendship connection is formed with the same school, class or neighborhood people while young adults expand their circle of friendship with the people of similar interest and likings where they share the part of their daily life together while maintaining their school friendships (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998; Degenne & Lebeaux, 2005). The young and adulthood friendships have replaced their parents as their confidants and they like to spend the leisure time with their friends (Fralely & Davis, 1997; Hartup & Stevens, 1997) as compared to the childhood friendships which solely focused on the play and pleasure (Erdley & Day, Fehr, 1996). Young friendships provide emotional validation, practical support (Fehr, 1996).

Friendship Quality is defined by certain specific qualities that are present in the relationship. Friendship can be specified in two domains which are- Friendship processes and Friendship Provision (Ladd et al, 1996). The conceptualization of Friendship Quality model has come from combining the idea of (Bukowski and Hoza, 1989 and Ladd et al, 1996). Friendship Quality is the individual willingness to interact with others in order to gain benefits purposely or on the basis of the following four dimensions closeness, help, acceptance and safety.

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).

MENTAL HEALTH – According to World Health Organization (WHO) mental health is the state of mental well being that enables individual to cope up with the daily life stressors, realize their abilities, learn and work well and contribute to the community. Mental Health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or mental disabilities. Mental Health refers to the cognitive, behavioral and emotional well being. Many factors in daily life like the Interpersonal connections can lead to the stressful events causing anxiety, tensions and it affects the daily life activities of an individual which affects their mental health.

Mental Health includes the emotional, social and psychological well being. (Keyes, 2002) conceptualizes mental health as the subjective well being that is an individual subjective well being. (Keyes and Simoes, 2012) described the two streams of subjective well being- feeling good, positive and pleasurable (hedonic) and functioning well in life (eudiamonic).

(Keyes, 2012) described mental health on the basis of three dimensions (1)- **Emotional well being**- it is an individual self report of the positive and negative symptoms (Keys, 2000). It is the presence or absence of positive and negative feeling and the balance of positive feelings after the negative experience (Keyes and Waterman, 2003). (2)- **Social well being**- it focuses on the social tasks that an individual encounters in their social communities (Keyes, 2002, 2013) and to what extent they are functioning well and facing the challenges in their social life, institutions, communities (Keyes, 1998, 2013, 2014). (3)- **Psychological well being**- it is an individual

understanding of how they encounter the challenges in their personal life. (Ryff, 1998) and (Keyes, Shmotkin and Ryff, 2002) describes the six dimension of psychological well being- self acceptance, autonomy, positive relation with others, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. Any individual need to have these six qualities for the positive Psychological well being.

Earlier the assessment of well being was done on the basis of the annual income, growth, illness which was later described as incomplete and well being was described as the “complex, multi faceted construct” (Pollard

and Lee in 2013). Well being is a condition of maintaining balance between work and life and is linked with physical, psychological, spiritual and social wellness (Blalock and Blalock, 2002).

Objectives of the study-

- 1- To examine the significant difference on Friendship quality and Mental Health among male and female college students.

Hypotheses of the study-

- 1- There is a significant difference in Friendship Quality (and its dimensions) among the male and female college students.
- 2- There is a significant difference in Mental Health (and its dimensions) among the male and female college students.

METHODOLOGY-

Participants –

The present study consisted of 240 college students of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh out of which 201 completed the questionnaire (90 were males and 111 females) and 39 left the questionnaire incomplete so they were not included in the study, and age ranged from 18-22 years. The questionnaire was randomly distributed by the researcher and the objectives were explained to the subjects and their consent was taken before giving them questionnaire. They were thanked for their participation and cooperation.

Instruments-

1. **Friendship Quality Questionnaire** – The Friendship Quality Scale is developed by Lei Mee Thien, Nordin Abd Razak, Hazri Jamil in 2012. The scale consisted of 21 questions with 4 dimensions safety (1-8), closeness (9-14), acceptance (15-18) and help (19-21). All the items were measured on 6 point Likert scale ranging from 1= high strongly disagree to 6= high strongly agree.
2. **Mental Health Continuum Short form (MHC-SF)** - The Mental Health continuum is used to assess mental health and it was developed by Keyes in 2009. It was derived from the Mental Health Continuum long form (40 items). The Mental Health Continuum Short Form consisted of 14 questions divided in 3 dimensions which are emotional well being (1-4), social well being (5-6) and psychological well being (9-14). In the MHC-SF all the three dimensions have high internal consistency reliability ($< .80$). All the items were rated on a six point Likert scale ranging from never = 1 to everyday = 6.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS-

Statistical analysis was done by using SPSS (28.0) version. The Mean, SD and t test were calculated to assess the Friendship quality and mental health among the male and female students.

RESULTS-**Table no 1-** Showing the mean, SD and t values of male and female college students on Friendship Quality and its dimensions (safety, closeness, acceptance and help).

Variable	Mean (Males)	SD	Mean (Females)	SD	T value	p –
Friendship Quality (Total)	86.99	15.69	89.62	15.58	1.048	0.29
Safety	31.47	6.43	32.71	6.36	0.99	0.32
Closeness	25.46	5.30	26.48	5.08	1.38	0.16
Acceptance	17.47	3.69	17.41	3.71	-0.09	0.92
Help	12.60	3.38	12.91	2.95	0.68	0.49

Table 1- it can be seen that the p values of Friendship Quality Total (0.29) and its dimensions i.e. Safety (0.32), Closeness (0.16), Acceptance (0.92) and Help (0.49) are not significant at 0.05 level ($p > 0.05$)* and it reflects that there exists no significant difference between the male and female students on the Friendship Quality and its all 4 dimensions.

Table no 2- Showing the mean, SD and t values of male and female college students on Mental Health and its dimensions (emotional, social and psychological well being).

Variable	Mean (Males)	SD	Mean (Females)	SD	T	p-value
Mental Health (Total)	49.39	11.55	49.76	11.01	0.54	0.58
Emotional Well Being	14.74	5.07	14.40	4.46	-0.51	0.60
Social Well Being	14.39	4.31	13.22	4.33	-0.93	0.35
Psychological Well Being	20.26	5.18	22.10	5.50	2.42	0.01

Table 2- it is shown that the p values of Mental Health Total (0.58) and its dimensions Emotional Well Being (0.60), Social Well Being (0.35) are not significant at 0.05 level ($p > 0.05$)*, which shows that there is no significant difference among the male and female students on the Mental

Health and its 2 dimensions while the p value of Psychological Well Being (0.01) which is significant at 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$)* shows that the difference exists among the male and female students on this level.

DISCUSSION-

The main objective of the study was to understand the gender differences on the Friendship Quality and Mental Health. Friendship Quality and its dimensions (Safety, Closeness, Acceptance and Help) does not differ among the male and female students which is not consistent with the first hypothesis as the results are insignificant and clearly states that there exists no gender differences. Males and Females are strongly bonded in their relationship as friends and strong friendship provides a lot of emotional support, academic support and social support also Help each other to perform better (William et al, 1992). When the high Friendship Quality is absent it is marked by poor performance, loneliness (Tom Rath, 2006) as contradicted to the findings of this study which shows that high Friendship Quality on Safety, Closeness, Help and Acceptance were found among males and females as they would equally contribute to Help each other, giving each other the academic cooperation (as Friendship Quality is highly correlated with the academic achievement and success in life Pettit et al 2011 and Roisman et al 2004), and would also cooperate and help in the personal life issues and would share a good time together. As the result show Friendship Quality was also high in terms of the mutual Help they offer to each other which makes them trust each other (Fiori Jager, 2011) and they also connect to each other more intimately and closely (Bollmer, 2005 and Hartup et al, 1996).

Mental Health and its dimensions (Emotional well being and Social well being) also does not show the significant differences among the male and female students which is not consistent to our second hypotheses. While for the Psychological well being there exists some difference among the males and females which is similar to the previous study findings which shows that Higher Friendship Quality is linked with the better Psychological well being (Bakalın & Taşdelen-Karçkay, 2016; Akin, Akin & Uğur, 2016). Males and Females are similar in most Psychological traits (Janet Hyde, 2013) but females experience the positive and negative emotions with greater frequency and intensity than males (Ryff and Keyes, 1995) and this could be due to age, culture and roles played by women (Ahrens and Ryff, 2006).

Happiness is a part of Well Being which is also closely associated with the Friendship Quality. Happiness is related with the health and support and spending the time together which creates a “safety net” for the negative thoughts and attributes, also lowers the risk of low self esteem and loneliness providing higher level of happiness which creates the environment in which an individual can maintain his Mental Health, which keeps the balance of individual Emotional and Social Well Being ((Bukowski et al, 2010; Bukowski & Sippola, 2005; Parker & Asher, 1987) and since males and females now days have similar lifestyle, working conditions, access to the education and the more open social environment which provides everyone with the similar opportunities. Hence no difference is seen among the male and female students on the Mental Health and its two dimensions (Emotional Well Being and Social Well Being).

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