

CORRELATION BETWEEN EMPATHY AND FRIENDSHIP QUALITY AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MUNICIPALITY KLINA IN KOSOVO

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Abstract

In this research were used two questionnaires Empathy Formative questionnaire and Friendship Quality Scale. The aim of this study is to see the relationship between empathy and friendship quality among adolescent, to find out if there are gender differences in empathy and friendship quality, and to see if there are any differences between younger and older students on examined variables. This research was done with 65 high school students. Age of the students were 15 to 17 years old. Results show that there is a correlation between empathy and friendship quality. The results of t test show that there are not significant differences between females and males on variable empathy. Girls and boys have significant difference in friendship quality in Kosovo. There are no significant differences between older students and younger students in the level of empathy and also there are no significant differences between older students and younger students in the level of friendship quality.

Keywords: Empathy, Friendship Quality, High School Students.

INTRODUCTION

Empathy

Empathy is the psychological factor that motivates helping others when they are in distress. Is the ability to imagine or feel other people emotional experiences.

Being empathic affects behavior and the quality of social relationships. Early theorists like Piaget and Frojd said that children where egocentric and did not have the ability to show empathy. Measuring young children empathy, it requires more sophisticated ways other than just giving them questionnaires and asking them to fulfill them because they don't have the ability to talk. So one way that is used by researchers to study empathy in young children in observing them when they see someone in distress (Mc Donald & Messinger, 2010).

In the first 18-72 hours of being born children show distress when they hear some other baby crying and this is called reactive crying. Young infants do not have the ability to differentiate themselves from other people and that is why when other people are in distress young children try to comfort them in this way, they lower the distress they also

feel (Knafo, Zahn-Waxler, Van Hulle, Robinson, & Rhee, 2008). After this there is toddler phase. In the research done by Knafo and his colleagues (Knafo et al., 2008), it was found that toddlers from 14 to 36 month increased levels of empathy. Also, empathy was related to prosocial behaviors which was impacted by environment when child get older.

According to another study done by Zahn-Waxler and colleagues it was found that mothers that are empathic toward their children they develop children that show more empathy (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow & King, 1979). When children reach preschool there is a greater cognitive development of empathy and prosocial behavior which then continues to be stable during time.

Empathy also impacts connectedness through sharing pathways (neuro- pathways), that helps on dissolving barriers between self and others. Also this sharing helps on integrating of cognitive and affective consciousness that helps on building problem solving. Empathy enhances the feeling of being connected through altruistic action. Empathy helps people to be coherent, involved in positive way, and show acceptance of others (Pavlovich & Krahnke, 2012).

The ability to empathize is impacted by neurodevelopmental factors-like mirror neurons and limbic system, facial imitation, parental factor like parent warmth, parent-child synchrony. So there are biological and environmental factor where child lives and the situations it encounters during his/her childhood that impact empathy development (Mc Donald & Messinger, 2010).

Friendship Quality

Friendship quality is seen as high levels of prosocial behavior, support for high confidence, ability to make intimate relationships, loyalty, and time spent with peers and friends. On the other hand, it includes low levels of conflicts or other negative features that one person behaves with his friend and peers. Friendship quality has direct effects on better social development, high self-esteem and better social adjustment.

It also affects attitudes and behaviors of young people. One significant benefit of having high quality friendship is increasing ability to cope with stressors. According to Berndt, in early adolescence having high friendship quality effect on greater school involvement and higher self-esteem (Berndt, 2002). Friendship quality has four dimensions: closeness, companionship, helping and security.

Companionship is the voluntary time that is spent together between children or adolescents. Help is another important part of friendship process that has two components: Aid the mutual help and assistance that friends give each other and protection and victimization- protecting each other to not be victimized by others. Security is the most important feature of friendship quality; it has two features: 1. The impression that their friendships are secure and capable to continue even if there are conflicts or problems and 2. The belief that they can trust and rely on their friends. Closeness is the feeling of acceptance, validation and attachment (Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin, 1994).

One study was done to measure the impact of these friendship quality on prosocial behavior, physical aggression and relational aggression. The research was done with 224 adolescent age 15 to 17 years old, 142 girls and 82 boys. Results showed that prosocial behavior was associated to positive friendship quality perception and low levels of conflict. Aggression on the other hand was associated with low friendship quality perception and high levels of conflict (Cillessen, Jiang, West, & Laszkowski, 2005).

A longitudinal study done with 206 urban adolescents by Way & Greene (2006) was found that boys reported increases of perception of the quality of friendship than girls. But in general, adolescent's perception of friendship quality improved from middle to late adolescent period of life.

In a study done with 146 adolescents of 10 grade by Chow and colleagues (Chow, Ruhl & Buhrmester, 2013) it was found that empathy was positively related to intimacy and conflict management in same gender friendships. Adolescent higher levels of intimacy and high level of conflict management had more friendship closeness. Those who had higher levels of empathy showed higher friendship quality.

Another study by Smith (Smith, 2015) examined the relationship between emotional engagement, empathic distress and empathic joy with friendship quality. Participants (N=300) in this study were 12-18 years old. Results showed that females had higher levels of empathy than boys. Also empathy was found to be significant predictor of friendship quality. So adolescent that had higher level of empathy had more qualitative friendships. Empathy and adolescent friendship are related to each other.

A study done with 1250 adolescent age 10 to 15 years old in this study it was used empathy questionnaire, emotion awareness questionnaire, friendship quality scale and Interpersonal reactivity index. The results of this research showed a positive link of friendship quality to all other three scales. Results of affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and intention to comfort were higher in girls than in boys. Age differences in empathy, results showed an increase in affective empathy and cognitive empathy in girls, and a decrease in affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and intention to comfort in boys when growing up from 10 to 15. Also results showed that higher levels of empathy were related to lower problematic behavior like bullying (Overgaauw, Rieffe, Broekhof, Crone & Guroglu, 2017).

Research Questions

- 1) Is there connection between empathy and quality of friendship among adolescent in high schools in Kosovo?
- 2) Are there gender differences in empathy and friendship quality in adolescent in high schools in Kosovo?
- 3) Are there differences in empathy and friendship quality among younger and older adolescent in high schools in Kosovo?

Hypothesis:

- 1) High level of empathy is connected with high level of friendship quality among students in high schools in Kosovo.
- 2) Girls have higher level of empathy and friendship quality than boys in high schools in Kosovo.
- 3) Older students have higher level of empathy and friendship quality than younger students in high schools in Kosovo.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

In this research it was used convenient sample. Participants was in total 65 students with age from 15-18 years old, from high school "Luigj Gurakuqi" in Klina, Kosovo. In this research participated 35 females and 30 males. In younger group who are 15/16 years old are 31 subjects and older group includes 34 adolescents 17/18.

Instruments for measuring variables

In this research it was used: Empathy Formative questionnaire, and Friendship Quality Scale.

Empathy Formative Questionnaire

The first questionnaire Empathy Formative Questionnaire is designed from Gaumer Erikson, Soukup, Noonan & McGurn (2015) to measure a student's proficiency in the two essential components of empathy: First, make efforts to understand others as their contexts, feelings, and behaviors. And second, *communicate your understanding of someone's personal situation*. It has 15 statements in which the students answer on Likert's scale 1-5 not very like me to very like me. Minimum score on the scale is 15 and maximum score is 75. Reliability of the scale is Cronbach's Alpha = .812.

Friendship Quality Scale

Friendship Quality Scale from Thien, Razak & Jamil, (2012) and it is self - reported questionnaire that measures four dimensions of friendship quality: *safety*, where minimum scores is 8 and maximum score is 40, *closeness* where minimum score is 6, and maximum score is 30, *help* where 3 is minimum score and maximum score is 15, *acceptance* where minimum score is 4 and maximum score is 20. There are 21 items in total. The assessing is on Likert's scale from 1 to 5, where 1 denotes not at all, till 5 I really believe them. Minimum score is 21 and maximum score is 105. Cronbach's alpha is 0.70 to 0.93.

Procedure

Before doing the research, a special permission was taken from school principal. Students were informed for the research if they wanted to participate, they stayed in class if not they could leave. They were told that the data will be used only for the purpose of

the study and they are anonymous. They fulfill the questionnaires for 45 minutes in 2 school classes. The principle and teacher of the students allowed me to do the testing. Students found it interesting and all of them fulfilled the questionnaires without hesitating.

RESULTS

In this research where used two questionnaires Empathy Formative Questionnaire and Friendship Quality Scale. From the descriptive statistics it can be seen that the mean for empathy is 77.839, SD = 9.911, Kurtosis = -0.136, Skewness = -0.462. For friendship quality mean is 69,113, SD = 13,612, Kurtosis = 0,163, Skewness = -0.533, minimum= 29,523 and maximum 92,380.

Table 1: Descriptive statistic

Descriptive statistic total	Friendship quality	Empathy
Mean	69.113	58.37
Standard Deviation	13.613	7.43
Kurtosis	0.169	-0.14
Skewness	-0.533	-0.46
Minimum	29.00	39.00
Maximum	92.380	71.00

From results of descriptive statistic, depending on the value of skewness it is decided to use one tail or two-tail for p value in t-test calculations.

Depending on kurtosis is known if the distribution is more in tails or in normal distribution. To see the relationship between empathy and friendship among students, to find out if there are gender differences in empathy and friendship quality, and to see if there are any differences between younger and older students it was used Pearson correlation and statistic for mean differences t-test.

Table 2: Correlation between empathy and friendship quality

N	65
Correlation	0.306
Df	64
p value	.000

The results show that the hypothesis: High level of empathy is connected with high level of friendship quality among students in high schools in Kosovo, is accepted, or, results show that the adolescents with high level of empathy has more qualitative friendships.

Second hypothesis girls have higher levels of empathy and friendship quality than boys. Results show that females have higher level of empathy than boys, but they have lower levels of friendship than boys. So, the second hypothesis is partially proved.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for females and males

Descriptive Statistics Female/Males	Friendship Quality Females	Empathy Females	Friendship Quality Males	Empathy Males
Mean	65.986	59.2	73.871	57.13
Standard Deviation	14.119	8.079	11.524	6.29
Minimum	29.00	39	50.00	44
Maximum	92.380	71	92.380	68
Kurtosis	0.194	0.09	-0.3626	-0.443
Skewness	-0.432	-0.68	-0.4726	-0.236

Table 4: T-test in friendship quality between females and males

<i>t-test: Female-Males</i>	Friendship Quality
Df	56
t	-2.232
P	.014

Table 5: T-test in empathy between females and males

<i>t-test: Female-Males</i>	Empathy
Df	56
t	1.037
P	.151

The results of t test show that there are not significant differences between females and males on variable empathy. Girls and boys have significant difference in friendship quality in Kosovo.

Based on results there are no significant differences between older students and younger students in the level of empathy and also there are no significant differences between older students and younger students in the level of friendship quality.

Table 6: T-test for *Friendship quality between 15/16 and 16/17 years old adolescents*

<i>t-test: Friendship</i>	for 15/16 years old	for 16/17 years old
Df	44	53
t	-0.809	0.531
P	0.2113	0.299

Table 7: T-test for *Empathy between 15/16 and 16/17 years old adolescents*

<i>t-test: Empathy</i>	for 15/16 years old	for 16/17 years old
Df	44	53
t	0.327	-0.1823
P	0.3727	0.4279

Results show:

T- test for friendship quality between 15/16- and 16/17-years old adolescents results showed value of t-test is -0.809. The value of p is 0.2113 for one-tail. The result is not significant at $p > 0.05$. For 16/17 years old the value of t-test is 0.531. The value of p is 0.299 for one-tail, which means the result is not significant at $p > 0.05$.

T-test for empathy between 15/16- and 16/17-years old adolescent's results are for 15/16 years' value of t-test is 0.327. The value of p is 0.3727. The result is not significant at $p > 0.05$. For 16/17 years old the value of t-test is -0.1823. The value of p is 0.4279, which means the result is not significant at $p > 0.05$.

DISCUSSION

This research was done with 65 high school students where were used two questionnaires one for empathy and the other for friendship quality. Results showed that there is a significant correlation between empathy and friendship quality.

Similar results are found by Chow, Ruhl & Buhrmester (2013) results showed a positive link of friendship quality to all other three scales one of them was empathy. Another study done by Smith (2015) with 300 participants age 12-18 years old showed that empathy and friendship are correlated and that females had higher levels of empathy than boys which are the same as the results of this current research where females have higher level of empathy than boys, but they (females) had lower levels of friendship than boys also there was empathy and friendship quality correlation in high school students in Kosovo.

Results showed that between older students and younger students there are no significant differences in the level of empathy and also there are no significant differences between older students and younger students in the level of friendship quality. Same results were found in the study done by Phillipsen (1999) where there were no age differences in friendship quality. Another longitudinal study done for empathy across life showed that older people scored lower on empathy than younger people but longitudinal analysis showed that with age there are no declining on empathy (Grühn, Rebucal, Diehl, Lumley & Labouvie-Vief, 2008).

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