

Research Paper :

## Impact of friendship patterns on self-concept of urban adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to assess the impact of friendship patterns on self-concept of urban adolescents (14-17 years). The study was based upon a sample of 200 adolescents (100 boys and 100 girls) drawn equally from four randomly selected schools of Ludhiana city. The results revealed that in males the dimensions of friendship like acceptance and respect were positively significantly correlated to the social domain of self-concept as well as the total self-concept. But, overall friendship was not significantly related to self-concept. In females, overall friendship showed a significant positive correlation with total self-concept. Adolescence is the period of psychological and social transition between childhood and adulthood, when a child moves from dependency to independency in his behaviour. The time is identified with dramatic changes in the body, along with developments in a person's psychology and academic career (Soundar, 2005). Friends in adolescence play a very important role in shaping the behaviour of a person. Teenagers stress on two characteristics of friendship. The first and most important is intimacy. Adolescents seek psychological closeness and mutual understanding from their friends. Secondly, teenagers want their friends to be loyal. A capacity to form close, intimate friendship during adolescence is related to overall social and emotional adjustment and competence. Sharing of confidence and emotional support seem to be more vital to female friendship than to male friendship during adolescence and throughout life (Papalia, 2001). High psycho-socially mature boys are more self-confident, more individualistic; their friendships are more intimate and also show greater empathy towards their parents. On the other hand, psycho-socially mature girls express themselves freely, are less self-conscious and focussed more on discovering who they are (Josselson, 1994).

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Self-concept is the totality of a complex, organised and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinion that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence (Purkey, 1988). The importance of self-concept is that it determines behaviour; it has a selective effect on perceptions. Once established, the self-concept thereafter provides a screen through which everything else is seen, heard, evaluated and understood. Development of self-concept depends on many factors. But some researches put forth experimental evidences which suggest that, "someone's perception, that he or she has a personal identity or 'self' appears to be inherent biological potentialities to the extent that human may share this capacity with other species. However, development of this potentiality depends on a certain amount of social experience with other members of society (Gallup, 1970).

The self-concept plays a critical role in general psychological adjustment among adolescents. With regard to sex differences both girls and boys show very similar patterns of development, however, girls do experience somewhat more intense and prolonged disturbance on the self-concept in early adolescence. The important social

changes in adolescence include increased peer group influence, more mature patterns of social behaviour, new social groupings and social acceptance.

With the arrival of adolescence, several new dimensions of self-concept are added *i.e.* close friendships, romantic appeal and job competence. Furthermore, adolescents rely on parents, teachers and friends for the validation of their self-concept. Adolescents are very pre-occupied with being liked and viewed positively by others. Close friends assist each other in exploring options by providing emotional support and role models of identity development (Josselson, 1994). Therefore, the present study intends to assess the impact of friendship patterns on self-concept of urban adolescents.

### METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted on urban adolescents, drawn from four government Senior Secondary (co-educational) schools randomly selected from Ludhiana city. The sample consisted of 200 adolescents (100 girls and 100 boys) in the age range of 14-17 years from middle socio-economic strata, belonging to nuclear and intact

families. A list of Government Senior Secondary schools was procured from District Education Office, Ludhiana. From this list, four co-educational schools were randomly selected to constitute the sample. A list of all students aged between 14-17 years in selected schools was prepared by ascertaining their date of birth from school records. The sample was evenly distributed over two sexes, 50 boys and 50 girls from two age-groups (14-15.5 years) and (15.5-17 years) were taken to make a sample of 100 boys and 100 girls. The adolescents selected were of Punjabi origin, from middle socio-economic strata and belonging to nuclear and intact families.

Socio-economic Status Scale by Bharadwaj (2001) was used to select adolescents from middle socio-economic strata and Dimensions of Friendship Scale developed by Chandna and Chadha (1986) was administered to assess the friendship patterns among adolescents. Self-concept questionnaire developed by Saraswat (1984) was administered to assess the self-concept among adolescents.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the correlation between different dimensions of friendship patterns and self-concept in males. Data reveal that in males, many dimensions of friendship patterns were non-significantly related to self-concept. The dimensions of enjoyment, trust, mutual assistance, confiding, understanding and spontaneity had no significant relation with any dimension of self-concept. The dimension of acceptance in friendship had a positive relation with total self-concept ( $r=0.1991$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and was also positively related to social aspect of self-concept ( $r=0.1932$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). This is because if an individual is accepted highly in peer groups, it improves his social self-concept and overall feeling of self-worth. The category of respect ( $r=0.2568$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) also had a positive relation

with total self-concept. This states that when an individual gets respect in friendship, it creates a positive self-concept. Respect dimension of friendship was also positively related to moral ( $r=0.2659$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and social self-concept ( $r=0.1965$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). On the whole, friendship was significantly positively related to the social domain of self-concept ( $r=0.2179$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). But, overall friendship had a non-significant positive relation with total self-concept ( $r=0.0555$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) in males. The dimensions of educational ( $r=-0.0808$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and intellectual ( $r=-0.0151$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) self-concept had a negative correlation with friendship, indicating that if boys are too involved in friendship, this affects their educational and intellectual self-concept. Although the relation is non-significant but the direction of relation was negative.

Concluding the above results, although the relation between friendship and self-concept is not significant in males yet the direction of relation is positive. Some dimensions of friendship like acceptance and respect do have a significant positive impact on total self-concept of an individual. Self-concept remains high in majority of males; high intellectual and educational self-concept in them predicts their school achievement and their willingness to try hard at challenging tasks (Marsh *et al.*, 1998). Friendship had no significant role in these dimensions of self-concept for boys but also made clear that if too involved in friendship, then it can have a negative impact on educational and intellectual domains. As adolescents interact with a diversity of peers, their exposure to ideas and values expands. Close friends assist each other in exploring options by providing emotional support and role models of identity development (Josselson, 1994).

Table 2 shows the correlation between different dimensions of friendship patterns with self-concept for females. In females the dimensions of trust, respect,

**Table 1 : Correlation between various dimensions of friendship patterns and self-concept of male adolescents**

Friendship patterns	Dimensions of self-concept						
	Physical	Social	Temperamental	Educational	Moral	Intellectual	Total
Enjoyment	-0.0795	-0.0579	-0.0096	-0.0351	0.0456	-0.1435	0.0087
Acceptance	0.0705	0.1932*	0.0508	0.0238	0.1432	-0.0470	0.1991*
Trust	0.0732	0.0843	0.0846	0.1819	0.0503	0.0452	0.1535
Respect	0.1233	0.1965*	0.1365	0.1191	0.2659**	0.0220	0.2568**
Mutual assistance	0.0289	0.0009	0.0482	0.0626	0.1083	0.0769	0.0501
Confiding	0.0522	0.0662	0.0190	0.1487	0.0660	0.1350	0.1005
Understanding	0.0018	0.0649	0.0791	0.0170	0.0067	0.0862	0.0641
Spontaneity	0.0774	0.2045	-0.0649	-0.2012	0.0109	0.1946*	0.0439
Total	0.0249	0.2179*	0.1136	-0.0808	0.0879	-0.0151	0.0555

\* and \*\* indicate significance of values at  $P=0.05$  and  $0.01$ , respectively

**Table 2 : Correlation between various dimensions of friendship patterns and self-concept of female adolescents**

Friendship patterns	Dimensions of self-concept						
	Physical	Social	Temperamental	Educational	Moral	Intellectual	Total
Enjoyment	0.1164	0.1983*	0.0729	0.0996	0.0603	-0.0158	0.2009*
Acceptance	0.2438*	0.1216	0.1535	0.0259	0.0400	0.0182	0.2294*
Trust	0.0520	0.0225	0.0207	0.0493	0.1252	0.1311	0
Respect	0.0847	0.0450	0.0642	0.0657	0.0495	0.1075	0.0516
Mutual assistance	0.0272	0.0553	0.0482	0.0182	0.0113	0.1533	0.1083
Confiding	-0.0290	-0.1909*	-0.1314	-0.1170	0.0365	-0.0843	-0.1346
Understanding	0.0690	0.0991	0.0442	0.1578	0.0689	0.0735	0.0504
Spontaneity	0.0463	0.0468	0.0357	0.1977*	0.0363	0.1918*	0.2242*
Total	0.1004	0.1953*	0.1284	0.1041	0.0374	0.0449	0.2864**

\* and \*\* indicate significance of values of  $P=0.05$  and  $0.01$ , respectively

mutual assistance, confiding and understanding had non-significant relation with self-concept ( $p<0.05$ ). The dimension of enjoyment had a significant positive correlation with social ( $r=0.1983$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and total ( $r=0.2009$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) self-concept. This states that if females enjoy in the company of their friends, they have a high self-concept. This is because females enjoy more in the company of their friends and attach it to their social well-being. The dimension of acceptance had a significant positive relation with physical ( $r=0.2438$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and overall self-concept ( $r=0.2294$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Females are very concerned about their physical appearance and their physical self-concept is high when they are accepted in their peer group; as they believe more in conforming to peer expectations, in appearance as well as behaviour.

The confiding dimension of friendship had a significant negative relation to social domain of self-concept ( $r=-0.1909$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). It also had a negative but non-significant relation with total self-concept. ( $r=-0.1346$ ). The reason for a negative relation may be because confiding means sharing thoughts and secrets and girls by nature have a habit of disclosing secrets of one to another. This can further lower the self-concept especially social self-concept of the individual concerned. The dimension of spontaneity had a significant positive relation with the total self-concept ( $r=0.2242$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), and also a positive relation with educational ( $r=0.1977$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and intellectual self-concept ( $r=0.1918$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The reason being that spontaneous relations bring stability in one's life and therefore adolescents' learn much about themselves. In total friends-like-parents can serve as a "secure base" as adolescents grapple with possibilities in life.

On the whole, friendship had a significant positive relation with self-concept in girls ( $r=0.2864$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This may be due to the reason that girls rate their friendship

quality more positively and show more positive behaviour in interaction with their friends than do boys. Therefore, friendships in girls play a central role in their identity development (Savin-Williams and Berndt, 1990).

Table 3 represents the differences in the mean scores in different patterns of friendship of male adolescents falling in the top and bottom quartile range of self-concept. The calculated value of bottom quartile was 175 and of top quartile was 193.25. Mean scores of different dimensions of friendship for 25 male adolescents below and above the quartile range showed no significant difference. The total mean score of males in bottom quartile was 35.36 and of males in top quartile was 37.64 with no significant difference ( $t=1.50$ ). The only dimension showing a significant difference was "respect" ( $t=2.21$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) with the mean score of males in top quartile being greater (4.64) than the ones in bottom quartile (3.76). In nearly all the dimensions, the mean score of males in top quartile was higher than the ones in bottom quartile though the difference was not significant. This indicates that in males overall friendship has no impact on self-concept. The results were contradictory to those of Jennifer and Konarski (1994) which indicated that peer network structure and friendship quality were significant predictors of overall self-concept and have a positive impact on self-concept for both males and females.

Table 4 represents the differences in the mean scores of different dimensions of friendship for female adolescents falling in top and bottom quartile of self-concept. The calculated value of bottom quartile was 171.75 and of top quartile was 190.25. Mean scores of different dimensions of friendship for 25 female adolescents below and above the quartile range showed significant differences in some dimensions of friendship. The total mean score of friendship for females in top quartile was greater (46.88) than those in bottom quartile

**Table 3 : Differences in mean scores of male adolescents with bottom and top quartile of self-concept in different patterns of friendship**

Sr. No.	Friendship patterns	Bottom quartile (175)		Top quartile (193.25)		t-value
		Mean	S.D. ( $\pm$ )	Mean	S.D. ( $\pm$ )	
1.	Enjoyment	4.48	1.39	4.68	1.40	0.51
2.	Acceptance	4.32	1.57	4.56	2.00	0.47
3.	Trust	4.36	1.47	5.08	1.44	1.75
4.	Respect	3.76	1.16	4.64	1.60	2.21*
5.	Mutual assistance	5.52	1.26	5.52	1.16	1.00
6.	Confiding	5.36	1.46	4.96	1.48	0.96
7.	Understanding	3.96	1.05	4.32	1.40	1.02
8.	Spontaneity	3.80	1.29	3.60	1.22	0.56
9.	Total	35.36	5.54	37.64	5.15	1.50

\* indicates significance of value at P=0.05

**Table 4 : Differences in mean scores of female adolescents with bottom and top quartile of self-concept in different patterns of friendship**

Sr. No.	Friendship patterns	Bottom quartile (171.75)		Top quartile (190.25)		t-value
		Mean	S.D. ( $\pm$ )	Mean	S.D. ( $\pm$ )	
1.	Enjoyment	5.04	1.43	5.16	0.94	1.83
2.	Acceptance	4.80	1.55	5.60	1.87	2.66**
3.	Trust	4.96	1.13	5.08	1.35	0.34
4.	Respect	5.12	1.09	5.28	1.27	0.48
5.	Mutual assistance	6.40	0.87	6.04	0.97	1.38
6.	Confiding	7.07	0.28	6.83	0.58	1.29
7.	Understanding	5.40	1.26	5.24	1.05	0.49
8.	Spontaneity	3.72	1.65	4.96	1.51	3.85**
9.	Total	41.40	6.56	46.88	4.96	3.05**

\*\* indicates significance of values at P=0.01

(41.40), with a significant difference ( $t=3.05$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). In all the dimensions of friendship, the mean scores of females in top quartile was higher than the ones in bottom quartile. Two dimensions which showed significant differences were acceptance ( $t=2.66$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and spontaneity ( $t=3.85$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The above observations clearly indicate that friendship has a significant positive impact on the self-concept of female adolescents.

Thus, it is concluded that, in boys and girls both, friendship was positively related to self-concept however, in boys the difference is non-significant. So we can state that during adolescence, young people become better at "reading" messages they receive from others and incorporating them into their self-definitions. As they internalize others expectations, they form an ideal-self (what they hope to become) that they use to evaluate their real-self. During adolescence the sources of self-definition becomes selective. Although parents remain influential, peers become more important and overtime, self-concept becomes increasingly vested in feedback

from close friends (Oosterwegel and Oppenheimer, 1993). *Vice versa*, adolescents who have high self-image and self-concept are more likely to be accepted by their peers, particularly if those same children also have high social self-concept. Most adolescents especially girls are afraid of rejection by people on whom they depend for affection and validation of their self-concept (family, friends, teachers). According to the study of Berzonsky (1995), teenagers alienated from family and friends may join cults or other extremist groups, take to alcohol and drugs and may be at a risk of depression and suicide-problems that rise sharply in adolescence.

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