

Understanding, Dependable, Socializing: The Meaning of Friendship among Adolescents in Jakarta

Fatchiah Kertamuda

Department of Psychology, Paramadina University, Jl Gatot Subroto Kav 97, Jakarta 12790

Abstract

One of the important characters for adolescents in the 21st century is the ability of social and cultural awareness and ability of communication. As adolescents, social awareness is an important factor in building relationships with a friend. The main purpose of the meaning of friendship become very important. This study aimed (1) to categorize about friendship in terms of the meaning of a friend, (2) to categorize a best friend, and (3) to categorize the importance of having friends. Respondents in this research were 160 respondents (female= 104, male=56). Data collection method used is survey method by using open-ended questions. Data were analyzed by using inductive content analysis. The results of this study indicate that the concept of “the meaning of friend” described in four categories: helping (51%), can rely on (23%), appreciation (17%) and embrace (9%). The concept of “a best friend” is expressed in four categories: dependable (43%), understanding (26%), trustworthy (16%), and acceptance (15%). On the other, the concept of “the importance of having friends” is defined in three categories: socializing (76%), helping (19%) and accepting (5%). This research implicates an understanding of the meaning of friendship for adolescents in order to establish a positive relationship which will relate to the importance the role of a friend in multicultural interactions.

Keywords: A best friend, accepting, friendship, helping, trustworthy.

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of adolescents in the 21st century has experienced many different developments from the previous century. Along with the development of this time then the teenagers in this century a variety of skills that need to be owned by teenagers in order to have a quality character in the future. One of the important characters for teenagers in the 21st century is the ability of social and cultural awareness and ability of communication. As a teenager, of course, social awareness is an important factor in building relationships with a friend.

A friend is an important figure at the age of adolescence so that dependency will be a very powerful friend. Loyalty, sacrifice and support of friends become a necessity for adolescents. However, friendship will be broken if one member of their group betrays each other and the communication between them is not created properly. Betrayed by a friend it was very unpleasant and very painful. Especially, it came from a friend who is very trustworthy. Negative feelings will arise that can lead to conflict between their friendship. At the age of adolescence which is a transition period, adolescents undergo physical and psychological changes from childhood to adulthood. Adolescence is a period of change, including emotional body changes, interest and participation on being independent adults, changes in the values espoused, as well as their desire for freedom (Hurlock, 2003).

There are several studies on friendship with various phenomena such as negative and positive friendship quality associated with social anxiety and predict adjustment in adolescents. (La Grace & Harrison, 2005; Demir and Urberg, 2004). In Indonesia, research on adolescents has been studied including Anggraini and Cucuani research (2014) showing the quality of a relationship towards friendship and empathy with forgiveness in the late teens. Another study conducted by Ritianti (2012) showed that peers provide social support to the self-identity in adolescence. Additionally Septuyuni, Budimansyah and Wilodati (2015) in their study found that a group of peers in adolescence positively influence the behavior of bullying. Studies on teens in Indonesia, is inseparable from the values of custom or tradition that is unique in every culture.

One of the stages of social development in adolescents according to Erik Erikson is identity versus role confusion. This stage is the first stage in which the psychosocial development of adolescents is trying to develop a sense of a coherent self – existence, including the role it plays in society. At this stage, it is a big challenge in adolescence where they have to determine who they are, what they would do, and what their expectations in life are. This concept, according to Erikson is a crisis of identity that describes what is referred to as the main conflict in this stage (Travis & Wade, 2007).

Becoming popular among friends is a strong motivation in adolescents. During the adolescence period, friends become very important to fulfil their social needs (Sullivan in Santrock, 2011). At this period, peers are the most important role because they represent the values and style of a generation that include in the adolescent age group, namely the generation in which teenagers will share various experiences as adults later on. The definition of a peer according to Laursen (2005) is a factor that affects the lives of the teenage years. Teens in modern society as it is today spend most of their time together with their peers (Steinberg, 1993).

A study conducted by Cook, Deng, and Morgano (Santrock, 2011) found that most teenagers develop friendships with individuals who are close to their age and become best friends with people younger or older. According to them, the friendship among teenagers becomes an important need to them. As it is said by Rathus (2008) teenagers and their peers have many things in common. They are almost always together with friends who have the same gender. They tend to share certain behaviors that have similarities. Friendship also contributes to positive self-concept and psychological adjustment. Another study from Berndt & Bukowski et al (Rathus, 2008) found that adolescents who had a close friend had higher self-esteem than adolescents who do not. Teenagers who have a close friendship also show a better development of identity.

Buhrmester (Santrock, 2004) found that in adolescence, the closeness of a relationship amongst peers increased dramatically, and at the same time closeness towards adolescent relationships with parents decreased dramatically. In line with the research that was conducted by Buhrmester, Nickerson & Nagle (2005), that communication between an adolescent and their parents is reduced, usually, they turn to peers in order to achieve the need of attachment. Robinson (Papalia, Old, & Feldman, 2008) also concludes that the most important emotional support during a teenager's complex transition, also a source of pressure towards parents, is an increase in involvement of adolescents with their peers.

Friendships in adolescence are different from childhood friendships. Gonzalez et al (Rathus 2008) explain that for one thing, adolescents emphasize more on the importance of acceptance, closeness, self-disclosure, and mutual understanding in their friendship. According to Hartup (Rathus 2008), depicts that most teenagers have one or two best friends and some good friends.

Olson & DeFrain (2006) explains that there are eight essential elements of friendship. The first is enjoyment. In friendship, they tend to enjoy most of their time together, despite disagreements and friction that sometimes occur. The second is acceptance. Friends accept each other whatever the situations are and do not try to change each other. The third is belief. Friends assume that they will act in their best interests and beliefs. Fourth is respect. Friends respect each other. They assume the other has good judgment in making choices in life. The fifth is mutual assistance. Friends help and support one another. They can rely on each other in times of need. The sixth is to speak up. Friends share life experiences and feelings with each other. The seventh is an understanding. Friends know the values of each and understand what is important amongst them. Eighth is spontaneity. Friends feel free to be themselves. They do not feel they have to play a role or withhold their true feelings.

Rose (La Grace & Harrison, 2005) suggests that the role of friendship has a role in understanding the internal distress. Adolescents who have a positive trait in friendship will be less likely to have social anxiety. This shows the quality of friendship that will either serve to protect social anxiety in adolescents. Whereas, the negative traits in friendship are predicted to lead towards depression and social anxiety. According to Berndt (2002) that a sign of a friendship that has high quality is the high levels of pro-social behavior, intimacy, and other positive characteristics, low levels of conflict, competition and other negative traits. According to Parker and Asher (1993), there are six aspects of the quality of friendship, which are validation and caring, companionship and recreation, help and guidance, intimate change, conflict and betrayal, conflict resolution. The objectives of the study are:

- 1). To determine the meaning of a friend
- 2). To categorize best friend
- 3). To categorize the importance of having friends

2.0 Methods

The respondents of this research consist of 160 students aged between 17-22 years old. This research was conducted through the survey. Survey research is classified in the research design for quantitative (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). The method used is surveys with the form of an open questionnaire for respondents about the meaning of a friend, description of "a best friend" and the importance of having friends. An open questionnaire is built on the question of "*what it means to be a friend?*", "*How does one describe a best friend?*" and "*why is it important to have friends?*".

The sampling method that was used is convenience sampling research which is used by taking a non-random sample basis and the willingness of respondents to be the research sample (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Data collected by open questionnaire and analyzed using inductive content analysis. Berelson in Webber (1990) explains content analysis is one of the analyses that can be used with an open questionnaire. According to Kim and Park (2006), the research participant can explore their answers to open questionnaires. Furthermore, the analysis will deliver categorized response based on the coding process of the respondent's answer. The use of inductive content analysis is the researchers' attempt to analyze data through three stages, which are namely open coding, categorization, and creating abstractions (Putri et al, 2012).

3.0 Results

3.1 Meaning of a friend

The meaning of a friend is based on research results obtained using the five response categories: helping, can rely on, appreciation, embrace and other.

Table 1 Meaning of Friend Category

Category	Male	Female	Total
Meaning of Friend	56¹ (33)²	104¹ (67)²	160 (100)
Helping	24 (43)	46 (44)	70 (51)
Can rely on	19 (34)	31(30)	50 (23)
Appreciation	6 (10)	18(17)	24 (17)
Embrace	6 (10)	7 (7)	13 (9)
Other	1(3)	2 (2)	3 (0.1)
Total	56(100)	104(100)	160(100)

Note. ¹Frequency response. ² Percentage within the group

Based on the results of 160 respondents, 4 categories were obtained. The first category is helping. This category is the highest category on the meaning of a friend (51%). The second category in the meaning of a friend is to be relied on (23%). The male category has a higher percentage (30%) than the female category percentage (19%). The third category is appreciation by 17%. The percentage of adolescent females are (21%) higher than adolescent males. The fourth category is embraced by 9%, and 0.1% for the other categories. Here is an expression that describes the meaning of a friend: "someone that could embrace, that can be relied on, can be understanding"; "To help a friend, willing to be a shoulder to cry on, be supportive"; "To share any kind of knowledge or information and to learn from each other."

3.2 A best friend

A best friend is based on research results obtained using the four response categories: understanding, trustworthy, dependable, acceptance.

Table 2 A best Friend Category

Category	Male	Female	Total
A best friend	56¹ (33)²	104¹ (67)²	160 (100)
Understanding	14 (25)	28 (27)	42 (26)
Trustworthy	6 (10)	19 (18)	25 (16)
Dependable	25 (46)	44 (42)	69 (43)
Acceptance	11 (19)	13 (13)	24 (15)
Total	56(100)	104(100)	160(100)

Note. ¹Frequency response. ² Percentage within the group

The description of "a best friend" is based on data from respondents that obtained four categories, namely understanding (26%), trustworthy (16%), Dependable (43%) and Acceptance (15%). Based on these data the highest category is Dependable. This category has the highest percentage compared to the other categories. In the Dependable category and the Acceptance category, male adolescent has a higher percentage compared to female adolescents. While on the category of understanding and trustworthy, female adolescents have a higher percentage than the male adolescent.

Here is a phrase that describes "a best friend": "A best friend is someone who can accept the good and the bad of myself and doesn't judge me by my appearance "; "A best friend will always be there when we need through happiness and sorrow"; "A best friend is someone that's going to accompany us throughout our daily lives through thick or thin even if we necessarily don't meet each other every day."

3.3 The Importance of having friend

The importance of having friend is based on research results obtained using the three response categories: helping, socializing and accepting.

Table 3 The importance of having friend category

Category	Male	Female	Total
The importance of having friend	56¹ (33)²	104¹ (67)²	160 (100)
Helping	17 (30)	35 (33)	52 (19)
Socializing	31 (56)	61 (59)	92 (76)
Accepting	8 (14)	8 (8)	16 (5)
Total	56(100)	104(100)	160(100)

Note. ¹Frequency response. ² Percentage within the group

Based on the results data from respondents about the importance of having friends, three categories were obtained, which are as follow: Helping (19%), socializing (76%) and Accepting (5%). In the socializing category, female adolescents have a higher percentage than a male adolescent. While in the helping category, male adolescents have a higher percentage than female adolescents. Here are a few expressions that describe the

importance of having a friend: "Because we are a social being, we cannot live alone, therefore we have to socialize"; "so that we don't get lonely, therefore we help each other"; "In order to have the ability to always be tolerant, and to understand different personalities".

4. Discussion

4.1 *The meaning of a friend*

The purpose of this research is to define the meaning of friendship, the meaning of "a best friend" and the importance of friends throughout the adolescent years. The result of this research is supported by Papalia, Old & Feldman (2008) which fundamentally states that relationships amongst friends are different from relationship amongst family. Friendship is based on choice and commitment. Adolescents tend to choose friends who are similar to themselves and friends that influence each other to become increasingly similar. In line with research Policarpo (2015) that found the meaning of friends and friendships in adolescents emphasizes the close relationship which undermined trust and openness (self-disclosure).

Furthermore, Bernd & Perry (Papalia, Old & Feldman, 2008) states that the intensity and the importance of friendship, time spent with friends will become more reciprocal. Adolescents begin to rely on more support and intimacy towards friends rather than parents and share their secret more among friends. Papalia, Old & Feldman (2008), states that the increase of intimacy among friendship in adolescent reflects the cognitive and emotional development. Adolescents at this time are able to express personal thoughts and feelings, ready to consider the other people's point of view, and it is easier for them to understand the thoughts and feelings of a friend. Adolescence has been able to reflect their concern for themselves.

Based on the results of 160 respondents about the meaning of a friend, four categories were obtained. This study found that the meaning of a friend is someone who can embrace, help, be supportive and can be relied on. One of the categories with the highest percentage of the meaning of a friend is to help (51%). The role of a friend is very important so that an adolescent does not commit acts that are undesirable. This is expected to prevent their undesirable behavior as proposed in the researches that have been done by Sandri (2015) implying that there is a significant attachment among peers and their self – esteem, and also bullying behavior. The role of peer groups can influence a person's behavior. In line with the research Mawardah and Adiyanti (2014), there is a relationship between peer groups and regulation of emotions with a tendency to become perpetrators of cyberbullying among adolescents. Kurt Lewin (Sarwono, 2013) suggests that there is always the behavior in adolescents that includes conflicts between attitudes, values, ideologies and lifestyles in the form of emotional tension. Friends who can embrace, support and always can be relied on would have a positive influence on adolescence.

4.2 *A best Friend*

The results showed that four categories were obtained relating to "a best friend", which are understanding, trustworthy, dependable and acceptance. Olson & DeFrain (2006) describes eight essential elements of friendship, including acceptance. Acceptance among friends became important if perceived by adolescents in order to accept one another. The role of friendship by Rose (La Grace & Harrison, 2005) is to understand the internal distress.

The results showed that adolescents who accept their relationship with their friends are to share, understand, and be supportive towards others decision. In line with this research, Garcia, Herenia, Soriano, Encarnacion., Arriaza, Gilberto (2014) implied that friends provide positive emotions significantly towards psychological well-being. It can be a positive impact to develop friendly relations among adolescents. A phrase that best describes "a best friend" is as follow "*a friend is someone who can accept the best and the worst of me and doesn't judge me by my appearance*". Similar with Hartup and Stevens (1999), suggested that a friend helps to develop self-esteem and a sense of well-being, and also to support one - self through transitional development and stresses in our lives.

4.3 *The Importance of A Friend*

The results showed three categories were obtained relating to the importance of having friends, which are helping (19%), socializing (76%) and accepting (5%). A friend is the main reference source for adolescence in terms of perceptions and attitudes related to lifestyle (Papalia, 2008). Based on the adolescence development tasks (Sarwono, 2013) it has been included that: accepting a more mature relationship with peers of a different sex, planning a responsible social behavior plan, and reaching a certain value system and ethics to guide their behavior.

This study is consistent with Hartup (Darmayanti, Lestari, Ramadani 2011) implying that peers can influence the behavior of both the positive and negative effects. The positive influence is when people with friends are doing activities that are useful such as a form of study groups that abides by the norm in society, while the negative effects can be a violation of the social norms. Conger (John, 2011) adds that in adolescents, environmental influence is quite intense; adolescents are influenced by pressure amongst peers.

5. Conclusion

This research implicates an understanding of the meaning of friendship for adolescents in order to establish a positive relationship which will relate to the importance the role of a friend in multicultural. A friend is someone who accepts and can be relied on. This study underlines the importance of attitudes and behaviors exhibited by a friend and gives positivity towards adolescents. The concept of a friendship that can be applied through the meaning of a friend itself shows that a friend is someone who can help, be relied on, appreciated, and embraced. This study also confirms that 'a best friend' is described as someone who understands, trustworthy, dependable and accepting. Furthermore, the concept of the importance of having a friend can make an adolescent have the ability to socialize, help, and accept one self and others. In some categories of friendship, they have differences between male and female. Females are higher than male in category of understanding and trustworthy. On the other hand, males are higher than female in category of dependable and acceptance.

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