

Summary

Experience of Friendship and its Behavioural Correlates in Adolescents

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An important factor of adjustment in adolescence is the quality of peer relationships. Despite emphasizing different functions that peer relationships have in personal development, most authors agree that they support growth and development and determine the capacity of adolescents for cooperation and establishment of intimate relationships in later life. The primary objective of this study was therefore to identify some possible cultural and gender differences in the experience of friendship and its behavioural correlates (aggressive and pro-social behaviour) in adolescents.

The study included a total of 1033 adolescents attending all grades of secondary schools across three states: Croatia (N = 390), Bosnia and Herzegovina (N = 353) and Macedonia (N = 290). The following assessment tools were applied: The Quality of Friendship Scale (Clarke, 2005), The Social Loneliness Scale (Čubela-Adorić, 2004) and the modified Scale of Aggressive and Pro-social Behaviour (Žužul, Keresteš, Vlahović-Štetić, 1990).

The results of the Analysis of covariance (the covariates were parents' education and place of residence) indicate the existence of significant differences in the experience of social loneliness and friendship quality in adolescents from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. The highest level of social loneliness was found in adolescents from Macedonia, and the lowest level in assessing the quality of friendship was observed in Croatian adolescents. Pro-social and aggressive behaviour were shown to be significant correlates for the perception of friendship quality and social loneliness. The lowest level of pro-social behaviour and the highest level of aggression were observed among adolescents from Macedonia, while the reverse was true for adolescents from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also, significant differences were obtained in the variables relating to the experience of friendship and the behavioural variables regarding the gender of the subjects. In comparison to male adolescents, the female adolescents showed a lower level of social loneliness, a higher level of assessment of friendship quality, a higher level of pro-social behaviour and a lower level of aggression, while the interaction between gender and cultural background was not significant.

Keywords: peer relations, quality of friendship, social loneliness, aggression, pro-social behaviour.