Relationship Between Strong Functioning Friendships, Perceived Choice And Interpersonal Dependency Among Females

Mariyam Saeed
Amity Institute of Behavioral and Allied Sciences
M A clinical psychology

Dr. Soni Kewalramani
Assistant Professor
Amity Institute of Behavioral and Allied Sciences
Amity University Lucknow
29 March, 2024

Abstract

The study was aiming to investigate the relationship among functional friendships, interpersonal dependency and perceived choice among young adult females aged 18-24. Utilizing a sample of 150 participants, the research employed ex post facto methodology and statistical analyses including correlation and simple linear regression. Valid and reliable measures, including the Mcgill Friendship Questionnaire (FF) which has 6 sub domains stimulating companionship (F1), help (F2), intimacy (F3), reliable alliance (F4), self validation (F5), emotional security (F6). Perceived choice and awareness of self scale (PCASS) with two domains Perceived Choice (PC1) and Awareness of Self (PC2) and Interpersonal Dependency inventory-6 items version (idi-6) containing Emotional dependency (ID1) and Functional dependency (ID2) , were utilized. Results revealed weak correlations among functional friendship domains, interpersonal dependency domains, and awareness of self. The findings suggest that friendships may influence individuals' perceptions of themselves and their emotional management. This study highlights a gap in research on adult friendships, emphasizing the significance of further exploration in this area, particularly given the increasing reliance on friendships in adulthood. Additionally, the variable of perceived choice also identified as autonomy warrants further investigation beyond its association with medical health decisions.

Keywords: Friendship, functional friendship, interpersonal dependency, emotional dependency, females, perceived choice.

1. Introduction

In the intricate tapestry of human relationships, friendships emerge as profound threads weaving through the fabric of our lives. Among these, the dynamics of female friendships have gained increasing recognition for their unique impact on individual well-being and personal development. This dissertation seeks to delve into a compelling aspect of these connections—specifically, the influence of strong female friendships on an individual's emotional dependency and autonomy. Understanding the nuanced interplay between emotional bonds and individual autonomy within the context of female friendships is critical, as it promises insights into the complex mechanisms shaping our emotional landscapes.

1.1 Friendship

Friendship stands as a significant and enduring social bond that shapes an individual's well-being throughout their lifetime, fostering a foundation for a healthy life. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), friendships are characterized as a voluntary and enduring connection among two or more individuals, marked by a genuine concern for meeting each other's needs and interests, while also satisfying one's own desires. Unlike relationships with clear timelines and boundaries, such as marriage or parenthood, friendships lack formal beginnings or ends, and they lack biological definitions. These connections, unlike those sanctioned by religious or state institutions, are uniquely defined by the individuals who inhabit them. Ann friedman (2015) aptly notes that friendships, without official recognition, offer fulfillment and empowerment, particularly for women historically marginalized by government and family burdens.

In historical contexts, friendships have played an integral role, with biblical accounts showcasing stories of men forging social constructs with their counterparts. The hypothesis emerged that women's historical disconnection from public life might have led to their forming friendships primarily within their own sex, often centered around familial ties, as highlighted in Ann Friedman's article in the new york times. In the book "The social sex: A history of female friendship," 2015 Marilyn Yalom and Theresa Donovan Brown delve into this aspect, shedding light on the evolution of female friendships.

Contemporary discussions on women's friendships, as explored in the essays of 'navigating women's friendships into the twenty-first century,' 2022, emphasize that in the 21st century, these relationships have matured into meaningful bonds contributing significantly to female identity development and political coalitions.

Amid the backdrop of feminism, where women fervently support their fellow group members, the importance of strong female friendships comes into focus. Questions arise about the impact of such friendships on an individual's psychosocial dimensions and their overall support system. As women actively engage in supporting each other within the context of feminism, it becomes essential to explore the significance of robust female friendships and their potential influence on various facets of an individual's life. Friendship entails mutual investment in a relationship which is characterized by voluntary reliance and emotionally driven concern for each other. This investment involves dedicating time, their own resources, and individualized attention, resulting in tangible benefits such as affirmation, support, stimulation, or practical assistance (1978).

The strength of a friendship is contingent on its functionality in an individual's life (Mendelson, M. J. & Aboud, F (2012). The functionality of a friendship encompasses various aspects:

1. Stimulating companionship: Engaging in enjoyable and exciting activities together.
2. Help: Establishing a non-reciprocal relationship involving both offering and receiving assistance, coupled with providing support, emotional security, and self-validation.
3. Intimacy: Creating a secure space for the expression and acceptance of emotions.
4. Reliable alliance: Upholding the adage "A friend in need is a friend indeed," Signifying a friend's constant availability and reliability during both favorable and challenging times.
5. Self-validation: Involving the contribution of reassurance, agreeableness, encouragement, and other elements that assist in one's perception of oneself as capable and valuable.
6. Emotional security: Providing a sense of comfort and confidence in the face of challenging situations.

1.2 Perceived Choice

Perceived choice refers to the subjective experience or belief that an individual has the ability to make decisions and choose from various options in a given situation.

According Ryan and Deci 'an individual has a drive to achieve autonomy, belonging and competence based on his/her intrinsic or extrinsic needs' (Mendelson, M. J. & Aboud, f 2012) this is self determination theory (SDT). It takes into consideration an individual's social influences and differences which leads them to make choices to satisfy the three basic needs (Edward l. Deci, Richard M. Ryan, 2015)

In intrinsically motivated behaviour one can feel more autonomous and increase in these behaviours will lead to an individual's perception of choice (e.l. Deci 2017)

Self-determination theory (SDT) is a framework which was developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan. It concentrates on understanding what motivate human behavior and the factors which can contribute to the fulfillment of primitive psychological needs. SDT suggests that individuals have intrinsic drive for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and when they are gratified, individuals may experience an optimal well-being and motivation overall.

The three basic psychological needs in self-determination theory are:

1. Autonomy: This refers to the necessity of feeling control on one's own actions and decisions. Individuals with an exceeding sense of autonomy are more likely to engage in activities willingly and find intrinsic motivation.

2. Competence: This involves the need to feel capable and effective in one's interactions with the environment. When individuals see themselves as efficient, they are more intrinsically motivated to pursue challenges, show resilience when faced with obstacles, and feel great sense of accomplishment.

3. Relatedness: This pertains to the social connections and positive relationships an individual effectively make with others. Experiencing connection to others and having a sense of belonging contributes to overall well-being.

Self-determination theory also explains different types of motivation:

1. Intrinsic motivation: participation in those activities which brings inherent enjoyment or satisfaction.

2. Extrinsic motivation: participation in activities which brings external rewards or to avoid punishment.

SDT suggests that a motivation which is intrinsic is more favourable in sustenance of well-being and personal development. The theory has been broadly applied in various fields, such as education, workplace motivation, sports and health, to understand and promote optimal functioning and satisfaction of individuals' psychological needs.

1.3 Interpersonal Dependency

Dependency refers to a condition of reliance on others, wherein an individual consistently seeks support, guidance, nurturing, and protection, even when autonomous functioning is necessary. The quest for independence holds significant importance in enhancing an individual's overall life satisfaction. Certain relationships, however, can foster dependency, as seen in instances where parents maintain authoritative control over their adult children's lives and decisions.

Theorists have explored interpersonal dependency through various frameworks. According to Anna Freud's object relations theory 1946, early interactions with caregivers shape internalized object representations, potentially giving rise to dependency patterns rooted in unmet needs or disruptions in early attachment relationships. Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory, (1969-82) proposes that insecure attachment styles, for example anxious or ambivalent attachment, may contribute to interpersonal dependency, with individuals seeking excessive reassurance and support from others (R.M. Pasco Fearon, Glenn I Roisman, 2017)

Heinz Kohut's self psychology 1959 suggests that healthy development involves the presence of empathetic self-objects, and a lack of such support may result in an over-reliance on others for self-validation and affirmation (Baker HS, Baker M N. Heinz Kohut 1987). Additionally, Interpersonal theory by Sullivan in 1953 underscores the importance of interpersonal relatedness in development, highlighting how dependency patterns can emerge as a strategy to manage anxiety within relationships. Sullivan's theory emphasizes the function of interpersonal dynamics in the development of anxiety and personality disorders (Evans, F.B (2020).

1.4 Objective

This study is exploring relationships between females having a strong functional friendship with other females and that having an effect on their interpersonal dependency and perceived choice.

1. To find that having a strong functional friendship between females have some relationship with a female's perceived choice.

2. To find that having a strong functional friendship between females have some relationship with their interpersonal dependency.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Research design

Ex post facto research is the selected method for this specific study. The researcher aimed to investigate how robust friendships influence a female's perceived choice and interpersonal dependency (sharma 2019). As the researcher had no control over how well functioning female friendships are among the participants of this study this method was best suited.

2.2 Participants

The research focused on young adult females aged between 18 and 24 years old.

2.3 Sampling method

Simple random sampling method is used in this study.

Inclusion criteria: This study focused on females aged between 18 to 24 years who possessed a minimum level of formal schooling.

Exclusion criteria: Participants outside the specified age range (below 18 or above 24) and individuals identifying as male were excluded from the study. Additionally, individuals lacking any educational background were also excluded from participation.

2.4 Sampling size

Sampling size included 150 young females from lucknow who filled the questionnaire.

2.5 Variables

This study evaluates the following variables:-

Predictors: Strength of functional friendships among females. Functional friendships (manchanda, t.; stein, a.; fazel, m. 2023) are characterized by their practicality and effectiveness in meeting specific needs or goals. These friendships involve supportive interactions aimed at achieving particular objectives or addressing practical concerns.

Dependent variable (criterion): Perceived choice and interpersonal dependency.

Perceived choice: Perceived choice is an individual's personal interpretation of the availability of options and their capacity to make decisions. It includes their sense of autonomy and control over their actions and situations. (steckermeier, l.c 2021)

Interpersonal dependency: Interpersonal dependency is a psychological concept where individuals depend on others for emotional support, validation, and a sense of identity. They prioritize relationships and seek affirmation and approval from others. (Mcclintock, A.S., Mccarrick, S.M. 2020) high levels of interpersonal dependency can hinder independent decision-making, expression of needs, and coping with stress without external validation. This reliance on others for emotional fulfillment can affect various aspects of relationships, self-esteem, and overall well-being.

2.6 Tools used

Mcgill Friendship Questionnaire-FFs (Mendelson, Morton & Aboud, Frances. 1999) is used in this study to assess the strength of friendship based it on functionality. This questionnaire evaluates the degree to which a friend fulfills friendship functions such as: Stimulating companionship (F1), providing help (F2), intimacy (F3), self-validation (F4), offering a reliable alliance (F5), and emotional security (F6). Each item in the questionnaire presents as a positive statement as an achievement of a friendship function. Respondents indicate how typically their friend demonstrates the behavior described in each item on a 9-point scale ranging from 0 to 8, with five points labeled (0 = never, 2 = rarely, 4 = once in a while, 6 = fairly often, and 8 = always). The mfq-ff comprises 30 items, exhibiting a cronbach's alpha coefficient of .927. All corrected item-total correlations surpassed .2, with the exception of items 9 and 13. However, these items were retained for analysis as their respective item validity values of .191 and .194 were deemed acceptable and not significantly lower than the minimum validity threshold.(saraswati, k., suleeman, j. 2017)

Perceived choice and awareness of self scale (PCASS) (Sheldon, K.M., Ryan, R.M., & Reis, H. 1996) is used to measure the construct of perceived choice, formerly known as the self-determination scale (SDS). The PCASS evaluates differences among individuals in their perceived choice and awareness of self at a trait level. It consists of two five item subscales: Perceived choice in that individual's actions and awareness of oneself of that individual. Perceived choice reflects the belief in having options regarding one's behavior, while awareness of self means being mindful of one's emotions and identity. To compute scores on the pcass, items 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 are reverse-scored. The perceived choice and awareness of self scale has demonstrated strong reliability, as evidenced by a cronbach's alpha of .80 reported by elliot and mcgregor (2001), and a reliability score of .81 reported by thrash and elliot (2002).

Interpersonal dependency inventory the six item version (IDI-6) (Mcclintock, A.S., Mccarrick, et al 2017) is used to assess interpersonal dependency using . This inventory measures interpersonal dependency using two factors: Emotional and functional dependency, each consisting of three items. Respondents are instructed to rate each item on a likert-type scale, typically ranging from 1 to 4 or 1 to 5, where higher scores indicate increased levels of interpersonal dependency.

2.7 Administration

A self-rating questionnaire was compiled, including the three aforementioned tools, and distributed to participants to gauge their perceptions of friendship strength, perceived choice, and interpersonal dependency. The tools were preserved in their original form to uphold their reliability and validity. A consent form was appended at the start of the questionnaire, affirming the confidentiality of responses and other participant-provided data. The questionnaire required approximately 20 to 25 minutes for completion by participants. Following completion, those participants who expressed interest in understanding the interpretation of their results underwent a debriefing session. During this debriefing, participants' individual results were kept confidential from others.

2.8 Data analysis

The method employed for this study involved utilizing the pearson correlation technique. Pearson correlation is a method which gauges the direction and strength of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. Widely utilized in research, it is particularly valuable for examining associations between variables, uncovering potential connections, and inferring predictions. It is symbolized by "R" and ranges from -1 to 1. A value of -1 signifies a correlation which is perfectly negative, 0 indicates no correlation, and 1 denotes a perfect positive correlation. A positive correlation implies that when one variable rises, the other variable also typically rises, whereas a negative correlation indicates that when one variable increases, the other tends to decrease.

Another method used is of simple linear regression analysis. It is a method used in statistics to model relationship among two variables: Predictor variable and response variable. It seeks to understand how changes in the predictor is associated with changes in the response.

The goal of simple linear regression analysis is to estimate the values change in the variables, that minimize the sum of squared

errors. Once the regression coefficients are estimated, they can be used to make predictions about the response variable based on values of the predictor variable.. Additionally, hypothesis tests can be conducted to determine whether the relationship between pv and rv is statistically significant.

3. Results & Discussion

Table 3.1 Correlation between various variables (n=150)

Correlations

Measures		Functional friendship 1(stimulating companionship)	Functional friendship 2(help)	Functional friendship 3(intimacy)	Functional friendship 4(reliable alliance)	Functional friendship 5(social validation)	Functional friendship 6(emotional security)	Interpersonal dependency-1(emotional dependency)	Interpersonal dependency-2(functional dependency)	Perceived choice-1(perceived choice)	Perceived choice-2(awareness of self)
Functional friendship 1(stimulating companionship)	Pearson correlation	1	.835**	.836**	.877**	.869**	.875**	.169**	-0.075	-0.024	.176*
Functional friendship 2(help)	Pearson correlation	.835**	1	.851**	.864**	.854**	.893**	0.105	-0.084	-0.097	0.125
Functional friendship 3(intimacy)	Pearson correlation	.836**	.851**		.825**	.788**	.856**	0.137	-0.082	0.011	.180*
Functional friendship 4(reliable alliance)	Pearson correlation	.877**	.864**	.825**	1	.866**	.864**	0.121	-0.147	0.004	.187*

Functional friendship 5(social validation)	Pearson correlation	.869**	.854**	.788**	.866**	1	.872**	0.122	-0.086	-0.089	0.142
Functional friendship 6(emotional security)	Pearson correlation	.875**	.893**	.856**	.864**	.872**	1	0.078	-0.133	0.001	.245**
Interpersonal dependency-1(emotional dependency)	Pearson correlation	.169*	0.105	0.137	0.121	0.122	0.078	1	.234**	-0.043	-.173*
Interpersonal dependency-2(functional dependency)	Pearson correlation	-0.075	-0.084	-0.082	-0.147	-0.086	-0.133	.234**	1	-0.056	-.232**
Perceived choice-1(percieved choice)	Pearson correlation	-0.024	-0.097	0.011	0.004	-0.089	0.001	-0.043	-0.056	1	.251**
Perceived choice-2(awareness of self)	Pearson correlation	.176*	0.125	.180*	.187*	0.142	.245**	-.173*	-.232**	.251**	1

Significance level at 0.01** and 0.05*

The table 3.1 indicates that f1 (stimulating companionship) shows a very weak positive correlation with id 1 (emotional dependency) with an r of 0.169 and with a p-value of 0.038<.0.05.the analysis reveals several weak positive correlations between different factors and pc2, denoting an individual's awareness of self. Firstly, there exists a very weak positive correlation between f1, representing stimulating companionship, and pc2, with an r-value of 0.176 and a p-value of 0.031, which is significant at the 0.05 level. Similarly, f3, indicating intimacy, shows a very weak positive correlation with pc2, exhibiting an r-value of 0.180 and a p-value of 0.027, also significant at the 0.05 level. Moreover, the relationship between f4 and pc2 is identified as weak, demonstrating an r-value of 0.187 and a p-value of 0.022, again significant at the 0.05 level. Additionally, there is a weak positive correlation between f6 and pc2, with an r-value of 0.245 and a p-value of 0.003, significant at the 0.01 level. These findings collectively suggest subtle associations between factors such as stimulating companionship, intimacy, and other psychological constructs with an individual's awareness of self.

The fact that the researcher has taken correlation coefficient at the 0.05 and 0.01 both indicates that these relationships are unlikely due to chance. It's crucial to highlight that although there is a clear relationship between these two variables, it would be inaccurate to infer that one variable directly causes the other. This is because correlation alone does not establish causation.

This study is exploring the relationship between functional friendship, interpersonal dependency and perceived choice among females. Based on the statistical analysis researcher found out positive correlations between some domains of the variables taken. There were very weak positive correlation between stimulating companionship and emotional dependency and awareness of self. This study also found out a very weak positive correlation between intimacy which was a domain in Mcgill FQ-FF with awareness of self which was a domain in PCASS. This study has also established a weak positive relationship between emotional security (f6) and awareness of self (PC2). There were no relationship found among the domains of friendship such as help, reliable alliance, social validation, functional dependency and perceived choice. Based on a study by Perzikianidis, Galanaki et al, 2023 found a positive correlation between friendship and an individual's well-being. Here the research suggests that engaging in stimulating companionship within friendships can result in a certain degree of emotional dependency, contributing to emotional well-being. As there are limited studies exploring these psychological variables, it falls upon the researcher's subjective interpretation to understand the correlation observed. The positive correlation observed between the predictor, stimulating companionship, and the response, emotional dependency, is likely attributed to the adventurous and exploring environment provided within a stimulating companionship. Friends are inclined to comprehend and exploring individual's emotional state, which can lead to the development of emotional dependency.

In a 2023 study by Majolo, M., Gomes, W. B., Decastro, T. G., a positive correlation between self-consciousness and self-awareness was found. The researchers propose that individuals tend to be more self-conscious when they are in a stimulating environment, and being engaged in stimulating companionship enhances this self-consciousness, thus influencing self-awareness. The positive correlation observed between stimulating companionship, characterized by participating in enjoyable and exciting activities together, and self-realization of one's preferences suggests a potential relationship with an individual's awareness of self. Same can be explained for the relationship between intimacy and self awareness.

The researcher encountered a lack of existing studies regarding the psychological variable of a reliable alliance in friendship and its connection to self-awareness. However, it is within the researcher's purview to suggest a potential correlation. They propose that a dependable bond among friends can foster a secure environment wherein individuals feel comfortable being vulnerable, leading to a deeper understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and thereby enhancing self-awareness.

A study carried out in 2023 by Yang, F., Oshio, A. Proposed that individuals with anxious attachment styles might exhibit a lack of awareness regarding their own behavior. Contrarily, this study revealed a positive correlation between the emotional security offered within a friendship and self-awareness. The findings suggest that as individuals experience greater emotional security in their relationships, their self-awareness tends to increase.

Surprisingly, the researcher discovered non significant correlation among various aspects of functional friendship, such as help and social validation, with functional dependency and perceived choice. Conventionally, a relationship between help and functional dependency would be expected, given that help involves both giving and receiving assistance, whereas functional dependency entails consistent reliance on others for guidance, support, reassurance, and emotional regulation. Notably, functional dependency is typically explored within the context of Database Management Systems (DBMS) and not as a psychological variable, making it challenging to draw correlations with functional friendship. These conflicting findings may be attributed to individuals' responses stemming from their conceptualized self rather than their authentic selves. Additionally, the researcher anticipated discovering a connection between perceived choice and friendship, yet the results contradicted this expectation.

There were non significant correlation found between social validation from friendship scale with any other domain of interpersonal dependency and perceived choice and awareness of self. This could be explained by the researcher on the basis of social media usage among young generations and how they can seek validation virtually from various platforms instead from reality.

Table 3.2 regression analysis between functional friendship domains f1, f2, f3, f4, f5, f6 with id 1(emotional dependency)

Model	R	R square	Adjusted r square	Std error of estimate
1	0.234	0.055	0.015	2.220

Here it indicates a 15% of change in id1 is due to f. The significant difference in this table shows no significance with a value of 0.227>0.05.

Table 3.3 regression analysis between functional friendship domains f1, f2, f3, f4, f5, f6 with id 2 (functional dependency).

Model	R	R square	Adjusted r square	Std error of estimate
1	0.234	0.055	0.015	2.233

Here it is indicating only 15% relationship between the predictor (f) and the response(id2). The significant difference here is 0.225>0.05 showing no significance.

Table 3.4 regression analysis between functional friendship domains f1, f2, f3, f4, f5, f6 with pc1 (perceived choice).

Model	R	R square	Adjusted r square	Std error of estimate
1	0.307	0.094	0.056	4.801

This table is indicating a 5.6% relationship between the variables with a significance of).026<0.05.

Table 3.5 table 4.2 indicates regression analysis between functional friendship domains f1, f2, f3, f4, f5, f6 with id 2(awareness of self).

Model	R	R square	Adjusted r square	Std error of estimate
1	0.341	0.116	0.079	4.505

This table is indicating a strong relationship between the variables f and id2(awareness of self) with a significance of 0.007<0.05.

In the regression analysis, the researcher observed that only 1.5% of the variance in emotional dependency (ID 1) and functional dependency (ID 2) could be explained by the predictor functional friendship, encompassing all its domains. This modest percentage suggests that the relationship between these two variables is not particularly strong. Friendship has been extensively studied in relation to adolescence, but there is a significant gap in understanding its impact on adults' overall well-being. A study conducted in 2023 by Manchanda, T., et al, demonstrated the positive effects of friendship on the mental health outcomes in adolescents, which aligns with the slight relation found in this study. This underscores the importance of further research into the role of friendship in adulthood and its implications for holistic well-being.

The relationship between functional friendship and perceived choice revealed a very weak connection, accounting for only 5.6% of the variance in the latter. This finding came as a surprise to the researcher, as some level of relationship between these variables was expected.

On the other hand, the relationship between functional friendship and awareness of self was unexpectedly strong, contrary to the researcher's predictions or the study's intended focus. In a study conducted by Anthony, Amanda & Mccabe, Janice in 2015, they discovered a connection between how individuals shape their self-definitions through friendships. Their findings suggest that discussions about friendships can influence how individuals perceive themselves, which resonates with the results of this study.

Conclusion

This study has yielded some unexpected findings compared to the researcher's initial expectations, while also confirming some of the anticipated predictions. The relationships observed among functional friendship, interpersonal dependency, perceived choice, and awareness of self have demonstrated varying degrees of significance. The researcher noted a notable lack of emphasis on friendships in adulthood, highlighting the need for further exploration in this area.

Limitations

There is a considerable need for further investigation into the domain of friendship, particularly within the context of adulthood, and specifically among females. The study focused on college-going females, suggesting that results might differ across different age groups and professions. There is significant gap in the literature concerning the variables examined in this study, which underscores the necessity for more research to address this gap. Future studies could delve deeper into understanding female friendship patterns and the impact of friendships on various psychological domains.

Future suggestions

This study can be done in the future incorporating the impact of social media on individual or friendship.

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