

## Roles of Achievement, Impulse Control, Gender, and Democratic Parenting as Predictors of Friendship Quality Among Students

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**Objective.** *This research aimed to explore the roles of achievement, impulse control, gender, and democratic parenting in predicting the students' friendship quality.*

**Background.** *The choice of friends of children, especially during their adolescence, greatly affects their social development. For this reason, determining the variables that affect adolescents' choice of friends and regulating their friendships are of great importance.*

**Study design.** *In determining the friendship quality of students, success impulse control, the effect of gender and the role of the democratic family and the order of importance were examined. For this purpose, descriptive statistics and Pearson's Product-Moment coefficient and stepwise regression analysis were used in the research.*

**Participants.** *The research was conducted with 589 students attending three different high schools in Küçükçekmece, İstanbul. Mean age of the students was 16.18 (SD=1,22) and their mean achievement was 74.25 (SD=3,42).*

**Measurements.** *In this study Barratt Impulsiveness Scale, Friendship Quality Scale, and Parenting Style Scale were utilized, and grade points of the students were taken from their school reports of the previous year for their achievement levels.*

**Results.** *According to the results, students' friendship quality scores were positively correlated with impulse control, achievement, democratic parenting style, and gender. The strongest predictors of friendship quality were democratic parenting styles, impulse control, achievement, and gender, respectively.*

**Conclusions.** *In this context, it has been revealed that the democratic family is an important factor in determining the friendship quality, and that families have important responsibilities in the choice of friends of their children.*

**Keywords:** *friendship quality, impulsiveness, democratic parenting style, achievement.*

**For citation:** Erdogdu M.Yu. Roles of Achievement, Impulse Control, Gender, and Democratic Parenting as Predictors of Friendship Quality Among Students. *Sotsial'naya psikhologiya i obshchestvo = Social Psychology and Society*, 2022. Vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 174–188. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17759/sps.2022130111>

## Роль достижений, контроля импульсивности, гендерной принадлежности и демократического стиля воспитания как предикторов качества дружбы среди учащихся

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**Цель.** Исследование направлено на изучение роли достижений, контроля импульсивности, гендерной принадлежности и демократического стиля воспитания в прогнозировании качества дружбы учащихся.

**Контекст и актуальность.** Выбор друзей детьми, особенно в подростковом возрасте, сильно влияет на их социальное развитие, поэтому выявление переменных, влияющих на выбор друзей подростками, и регулирование их дружеских отношений имеют большое значение.

**Дизайн исследования.** Для определения качества студенческой дружбы исследовались контроль импульсивности, успех, влияние гендерной принадлежности и роли демократичности семьи, а также порядок их значимости. Для анализа полученных данных были использованы коэффициент корреляции Пирсона и пошаговый регрессионный анализ.

**Участники.** Исследование было проведено с участием 589 учащихся трех средних школ в Кушуккекмедже, г. Стамбул. Средний возраст студентов составил 16,18 лет ( $SD=1,22$ ), а их средняя успеваемость — 74,25 балла ( $SD=3,42$ ).

**Методы (инструменты).** В исследовании использовались шкала импульсивности Барратта, шкала качества дружбы и шкала стиля воспитания, а оценки учащихся были взяты из их школьных отчетов за предыдущий год, чтобы оценить уровень достижений.

**Результаты.** Согласно полученным результатам, качественные показатели студенческой дружбы положительно коррелировали с контролем импульсивности, достижениями, демократическим стилем воспитания и гендерной принадлежностью учеников. Самыми сильными предикторами качества дружбы выступили демократический стиль воспитания, контроль импульсивности, достижения и гендерная принадлежность.

**Основные выводы.** В данном исследовании было выявлено, что демократический стиль воспитания является важным фактором, определяющим качество дружбы, и что семьи несут ответственность за выбор друзей своих детей.

**Ключевые слова:** качество дружбы, импульсивность, демократический стиль воспитания, достижения.

**Для цитаты:** Эрдогду М.Ю. Роль достижений, контроля импульсивности, гендерной принадлежности и демократического стиля воспитания как предикторов качества дружбы среди учащихся // Социальная психология и общество. 2022. Том 13. № 1. С. 174—188. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17759/sps.2022130111>

## Introduction

The friendship relations of children have a great contribution to the socialization process of human as a social being. Even though the socialization process starts with families, it falls short of producing functioning social individuals without the contribution of friendship. A child's friendship relations affect not only the socialization process but also the psychological attributes such as emotional and personality development. For this reason, friendship relationships have a very important place in a young person's life.

Friendship is a form of relationship in which parties are together of their own free

will, love and in order to meet social and emotional needs [20] and join mutual entertainment and interaction [34]. Friendship is the relationship between two or more people who protect and support each other [37] and can be reached when needed and are reliable [62]. This form of relationship usually develops informally. L. Steinberg [65] states that friend relations are built on intimacy, and involves an emotional link between two people. The sharing attributes inherent in friendships relationship contributes to satisfying socio-emotional needs and requirements of being intimate [28] and also to acquiring a sense of belonging to a group [52]. Friendship is also a process that

improves cooperation and support for each other among individuals [72]. Friendship is an important form of relationship especially for children in terms of developing a desire to get attention and to be respected among individuals [7]. While such relationships are perceived as positive in general, challenging factors such as getting into competition, establishing superiority, conflicting, and peer pressure can harm this process [7; 45]. Friendship quality is also defined as individuals helping other individuals voluntarily (pro-social behavior) without having any expectations [66], being close and loyal, and avoiding conflict whenever possible [6]. However, [8] define the quality of friendship as the qualities of the interactions between individuals, while [54] express the quality of friendship as friends accepting each other. According to [56], what defines intimacy and quality in friendship is to have cognitive maturity that requires looking at things from others' perspectives, to have emotional maturity that demands being competent in empathizing, and to have behavioral maturity that involves respecting others' thoughts and behaving accordingly.

The studies on friendship relations have examined a considerable number of intervening variables. The findings of these studies show that there is a linear relationship between friendship quality and success [79], ability [15], and school life quality [70]. They also show that those who fail to achieve impulse control are with deviant peer groups [29] and rejected by their peers [43], that boys participate in sports activities more than girls [46], that male adolescents have higher dependency on friends than girls [16]. Based on the findings of this research, the present study aims to reveal the relationships between the quality of friendship of adolescents and their achievement, impulse control, gender and family structures.

In this study, the first variable that is assumed to be related to friendship quality and is primarily considered is achievement. Achievement is defined as reaching the desired goal and gaining goals [2]. A relationship is expected between academic achievement and friendship since students show more respect to academically successful students, and try to cooperate with and develop intimacy with them. Studies have shown that there is a linear relationship between peer relationships and academic self-level, and that friendship relationships positively affect academic ability [41].

Another concept of which relationship with friendship quality was studied in the research is impulsiveness. It is observed that those with high friendship quality also have high adaptational and social acceptance levels [54], and those who have inadequate number of friends and lower-quality friendships are inclined to commit crime [61] and exhibit anti-social behaviors [39]. Similarly, research results show that individuals with higher-quality friendships do not behave impulsively. Impulsiveness is recognized as fast, inappropriate, involuntary reactions that usually have harmful outcomes [16; 64] and also addressed as the sum of actions taken consciously without any planning and regardless of their consequences [50]. Individuals who have difficulty establishing the impulse control are observed to take risks easily, be impatient, attempt to take pleasure [33], find it difficult to concentrate, and take actions by playing by ear [55]. It is observed that those who have difficulty in impulse control, experience intense interpersonal conflicts [11] and exhibit more aggressive behaviors [4]. Another important variable affecting friendship relation is gender. Differences are anticipated between genders in terms of friendship relations, choice of friends, and values attached to friendship. In this con-

text, it is assumed that gender factor plays a decisive role in identifying friendship relations; therefore, this factor was taken into consideration in this research. According to [9], gender is an important variable in determining the quality of friendship relationships. Studies show that girls value friendship more than boys [54], are more empathetic and compassionate [12], and are closer and more supportive [3]. Men, on the other hand, are more prone to competition and conflict [40].

The family environment where children's behaviors are shaped and where they learn to socialize, and acquire the skills related to life can also play a decisive role in their friendships. Parents' attitudes toward their child manifest themselves in different ways. In family environments with parents assuming democratic attitudes, emotional problems are solved successfully, and family members establish open, complementary and appropriate communications. Furthermore, roles within such families are usually distinct and family members support each other in delivering these roles. What is more, family members express their own positive or negative feelings explicitly, and parents take personal interest in their children's homework and activities [49; 78]. Democratic parents also attach importance to friendships of their children for their healthy emotional and personality development, guide them in their choice of friends [14; 72] and are aware of the importance of friendships in acquiring value judgments [48]. According to [25], the quality of intra-family communication affects the quality of the relationship between the adolescent's peers. Studies have also shown that children exposed to domestic violence experience more conflict with their friends [47], and that mothers' friendship relationships affect their children's friendship relations [30]. They also show that the quality of

communication between parents and their children plays a determining role in their children's friendship relationships [35].

Friendships are very important especially for adolescents' emotional and social development. In this context, it is important to take the necessary precautions by determining the friendship relationships of adolescents and the reasons that affect these relationships either positively or negatively. Several studies have so far examined the variables that affect friendship relations. However, the fact that the selected variables affecting the quality of friendship will be examined in order of importance makes this study different from the previous research. It is further assumed that the findings of this study will provide important data on how adults regulate their friendship relations. For these purposes, the present study aims to address the following research questions:

1. Is friendship quality correlated with impulse control, democratic parenting style, achievement, and gender?
2. What is the order of significance among impulse control, democratic parenting style, achievement, and gender in predicting the friendship quality?

## Methods

**Research Design.** This research aimed to explore roles of impulse control, democratic parenting style, achievement, and gender which are thought to predict friendship quality. Hence, the research was conducted in the correlational model.

**Population and Sample.** The research population was all high school students in Küçükçekmece district of İstanbul province. With cluster sampling method, schools of lower, moderate and upper socio-economic levels were identified, and three schools were

randomly selected from each level. 589 students of these schools who volunteered for the research were included in the sample. 319 (54%) of the students are girls, and 270 (46%) are boys. Of the students, 126 (21%) were high school first-graders, 105 (18%) were second-graders, 216 (37%) were third-graders, and 142 (24%) were fourth-graders. Mean age of the students was 16.18, and their mean achievement was 74.25.

**Measures.** 1. Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11): Short Form of Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11-SF) was developed by Barratt (1959) to measure impulsiveness and adapted to Turkish by [68]. The five-point Likert scale is composed of 30 items and three subscales. These sub dimensions are; not planning, motor impulsivity, and impulsivity in attention. Lower scores mean higher impulse control. The correlations of the subscales with each other vary between 0,31 and 0,67. 15 items with the highest factor loading were selected from among the factor loadings achieved in the Turkish application of the scale. Next, the exploratory factor analysis was repeated on this 15-item form, the factor loadings were found to be within acceptable limits. According to the results of the exploratory factor analysis performed to determine the construct validity of the Barratt Impulsivity Scale, it was found that the factor loads varied between 0,52 and 0,71 for attention impulsivity, 0,34 and 0,72 for motor impulsivity, and 0,66 and 0,79 for not planning. Finally, internal consistency of the 15-item form and subscales was calculated, and Cronbach's Alphas were found to be 0,82 for the whole scale and to be ranging from 0,64 to 0,80 for the subscales. Scale's total scores were utilized in this research, and Cronbach's Alpha of the scale's total scores was calculated to be 0,78.

2. Friendship Quality Scale: This 21-item scale composed of 4 subscales was developed by [70]. Higher scores in the Likert

scale refer to higher friendship quality [1]. The scale was adapted into Turkish by [1]. Item analysis was conducted to determine the discrimination power of scale items. As a result of the analysis, it was seen that the corrected item total correlation coefficients of the scale ranged from 0,38 to 0,67. Confirmatory factor analysis showed fit indices of the scale to be on acceptable level ( $\chi^2=374.29$ ,  $sd=179$ ,  $RMSEA=0,063$ ,  $CFI=0,92$ ,  $IFI=0,92$ ). Cronbach's Alphas of the subscales range from 0,75 to 0,82, and the internal consistency coefficient of the whole scale is 0,91. Item-total correlation coefficients of the scale vary between 0,38 and 0,67. Cronbach's Alpha of the scale's total scores were recalculated for this research and found to be 0,78.

3. Parenting Style Scale: The scale was developed by [38]. It is composed of three subscales, which are acceptance (democratic), control, and psychological autonomy, and 26 items [77]. The scale was adapted into Turkish by [77]. Reliability values of the test-retest performed on high school students were found to vary between 0,73 and 0,88, and the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficients vary between 0,66 and 0,79. For the validity study of the scale, exploratory factor analysis was performed and the variance explained by the first factor was 13,72, the variance explained by the second factor was 10,91, the variance explained by the third factor was 7,50, and the total variance of the scale was measured as 32,10. The factor loads of the acceptance (democratic) sub-dimension of the scale vary between 0,08 and 0,56, the factor loads of the control sub-dimension between 0,36 and 0,67, and the autonomy sub-dimension factor loads vary between 0,21 and 0,68. In this research, only the acceptance (democratic) subscale was used; therefore, its Cronbach's Alpha was recalculated for this research and found to be 0,82.

For achievement, grade points of the students were taken from their school reports of the previous year in the research, and a questionnaire form was created and applied by the researcher to explore participants' demographics.

**Procedure and Data Analysis.** Before collecting the research data, required ethical and procedural permissions were received from relevant bodies, and the students were informed of the purpose of the research. Then, the measures were applied to the volunteered students. The students were observed to complete the forms in 30 minutes on average. The application was performed with 600 students; since 11 students were found to give random answers, their forms were not included in the analysis.

Normality test was performed on the scores obtained from the measures, and skewness and kurtosis values were found to vary between -1,18 and -1,15 and 1,21 and -0,02 for the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale; between -0,19 and 1,32 and 1,00 and 0,59 for the Friendship Quality Scale; and between 0,32 and -1,00 and 0,87 and -0,91 for the Acceptance (Democratic) Subscale of the Parenting Style Scale, respectively. According to [67], if skewness and kurtosis values achieved in the test are between -1,50 and +1,50, the normality assumption is met. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was utilized to explore the relationship between two variables. Stepwise regression analysis was performed to explore predictiveness levels of indepen-

dent variables used in the research on the dependent variable. In the research, the categorical variable of gender was included in the analysis after having been converted to a dummy variable produced in the amount one less than the number of levels by excluding one of the levels (female-male). In the stepwise regression analysis, variables significantly contributing to the prediction of friendship quality level were identified, and each variable's contribution to the explained total variance in the prediction of friendship quality was determined.

## Results

This section addresses the descriptive statistics, correlation values, and stepwise regression analysis findings of the measures respectively. Descriptive statistics for the scores obtained in the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11-SF), Friendship Quality Scale (FQS) and Parenting (Democratic) Style Scale (PSS) are given in Table 1.

As seen in Table 1, mean and standard deviation values were calculated to be 42,64 and 6,25 for the Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11-SF) scores; 64,36 and 9,43 for the Friendship Quality Scale (FQS) scores; and 21,36 and 4,20 for the Democratic subscale scores of the Parenting Style Scale (PSS), respectively. The correlation coefficients between the variables are given in Table 2.

According to Table 2, students' friendship quality scores were found positively

Table 1  
Descriptive Statistics for The Scores Of Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11-SF), Friendship Quality Scale (FQS) And Parenting (Democratic) Style Scale (PSS)

Measures	Number of items	Mean	Sd
BIS-11-SF	15	42,64	6,25
FQS	21	64,36	9,43
PSS	9	21,36	4,20

Table 2

**Correlations Between the Variables in the Research**

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Friendship Quality	—				
2. Impulse Control	0,35**	—			
3. Democratic Parenting	0,67**	0,32**	—		
4. Achievement	0,52**	0,38**	0,56**	—	
5. Gender (female)	0,25**	0,19*	0,27**	0,30**	--

\*\*p ≤ 0,01, \* p ≤ 0,05

correlated with impulse control scores ( $r=0,35$ ,  $p<0,01$ ), democratic parenting scores ( $r=0,67$ ,  $p<0,01$ ), grade points ( $r=0,52$ ,  $p<0,01$ ), and gender ( $r=0,25$ ,  $p<0,01$ ). Students' impulse control scores were found positively correlated with democratic parenting scores ( $r=0,32$ ,  $p<0,01$ ), grade points ( $r=0,38$ ,  $p<0,01$ ), and gender ( $r=0,19$ ,  $p<0,05$ ). There were also positive correlations between democratic parenting scores and grade points ( $r=0,58$ ,  $p<0,01$ ), and gender ( $r=0,27$ ,  $p<0,01$ ) and between gender and grade points ( $r=0,30$ ,  $p<0,01$ ).

Stepwise regression analysis of the predictors of students' friendship quality levels is shown in Table 3.

The analysis was completed in four steps. Democratic parenting style with the greatest contribution to explained variance of friendship quality by 33% was included in the analysis in the first step. A positive significant relationship was observed between democratic parenting and friendship quality scores of the students. In other words, friendship quality increased as parents were perceived as more democratic. In the second step, impulse control scores

Table 3

**Stepwise Regression Analysis of The Predictors of Friendship Quality Levels**

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	R	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	
1	(Constant)	1,80	0,49		3,68	0,00	0,57	0,32	0,33
	Democratic	0,22	0,02	0,57	11,95	0,00			
2	(Constant)	1,31	0,52		2,52	0,00	0,65	0,43	0,10
	Democratic	0,21	0,02	0,54	11,17	0,00			
	Impulse Control	0,11	0,04	0,13	2,75	0,01			
3	(Constant)	0,53	0,56		1,94	0,00	0,70	0,49	0,06
	Democratic	0,18	0,02	0,47	8,88	0,00			
	Impulse Control	0,09	0,04	0,13	2,07	0,01			
	Achievement	0,21	0,07	0,17	3,21	0,00			
4	(Constant)	0,42	0,46		2,35	0,00	0,71	0,51	0,02
	Democratic	0,10	0,32	0,43	7,54	0,01			
	Impulse Control	0,02	0,20	0,24	4,39	0,00			
	Achievement	0,11	0,08	0,15	3,68	0,03			
	Gender (female)	0,10	0,07	0,16	1,84	0,04			

with a contribution of 10% were included in the analysis, which increased the explained variance to 43%. A positive significant relationship was observed between impulse control and friendship quality scores of the students. That is, friendship quality increased as the students' impulse control increased. Contributing to the variance by 6%, grade points were included in the analysis in the third step, which increased the explained variance to 49%. A positive significant relationship was observed between students' grade points and friendship quality scores. As students' grade points increased, their friendship quality levels increased. In the final step, gender (female) variable with a contribution of 2% was included in the analysis, which increased the explained variance to 51%. A positive significant relationship was found between being a female and friendship quality scores. Accordingly, the girls were observed to have higher friendship quality levels than the boys.

## **Discussion**

It was aimed with this research to explore the roles of impulse control, democratic parenting style, achievement, and gender as the predictors of friendship quality.

Results showed a positive significant relationship between impulse control and friendship quality. Given that impulsiveness is regarded as how individual acts indiscreetly [21] and exhibits angry and aggressive tendencies [5], it is not possible to expect those who act impulsively to establish healthy friendships. Considering that friendship quality means helping each other unselfishly and having the sense of solidarity and commitment, students who can establish impulse control are expected to build higher-quality friendships. It is ob-

served that adolescents who behave impulsively have deteriorated quality of life [50] and act inconsiderately within the group [13]. The study performed by [23] shows that those with impulsive behaviors pose important problems within the social circle. Furthermore, research findings showing that individuals with impulsive behaviors exhibit anti-social behaviors [44; 60] coincide with this finding of the research.

According to the research findings, adolescents whose parents had democratic style tended to establish higher-quality friendships. It is thought that such students establish friendships more consciously and selectively as their parents are supportive of their emotional and social development, contribute to their healthy development, respect their decisions and trust them. It is observed that students who describe their fathers as accepting and affectionate have more healthy peer relations [22]. Studies have shown that adolescents who perceive their parents as authoritarian experience afraid of social exclusion [24].

Results showed a positive significant relationship between students' grade points and friendship quality. It is thought that successful students have higher friendship quality as they are respected within the group, participate in group activities more and are willing to conduct successful activities with the group. Previous research has shown that successful and talented students have better friend relations [73] and students who receive social support from their friends and teachers are academically more successful [17; 42; 75].

A significant relationship was found between students' gender and friendships. Girls were observed to have more positive friendship quality than boys. In other words, girls attach more importance to friendship quality. For reasons such as reaching puberty earlier and sharing their



privacy with their same-sex friends more, one can think that girls care about friendship quality more than boys. G.B. Çevik [18] found boys to have more friends than girls while [69] concluded that girls regarded their relationships with their same-sex friends as more important compared to boys, and girls felt more connected to each other. In another study performed by [36], girls tended to go for older friends compared to boys, which shows that girls attach more importance to friendship quality.

In the analysis performed for the prediction of friendship quality, democratic parenting style was found to be the strongest predictor of friendship quality. Parents' sensitivity and concerns about their children's choice of friends especially during adolescence have been addressed several times to date. This research finding is important as it indicates how valuable parental behaviors are in children's choice of quality friends. In general, it is thought that children raised in democratic families choose higher-quality friends as democratic parents are role models for their children and a sense of warmth and trust is present in the family; in such an environment, young people can express their problems within the family and do believe that they can be understood within the family. Research has shown that adolescents whose family relations are based on respect and love acquire the sense of solidarity and have more healthy friendships [59] and children raised with a bond of trust within the family get into higher-quality friend groups and manage their friendships more successfully [58]. Parents' healthy communication and democratic styles in regard to their children's choice of friends define the quality of friendships and whether friend relations are successful and healthy [26].

The second strongest predictor of friendship was found to be impulse control

in the research. While impulsiveness is accepted as being partly positive, it is also described as a force that paves the way for negative behaviors such as aggression and perpetration especially among adolescents [74]. In addition, due to their inclination to achieve pleasure immediately and satisfy themselves, individuals with impulsive behaviors may exhibit risk-taking behaviors such as suicide [32] and problematic behaviors such as substance abuse [9; 51; 80]. In this sense, individuals with impulsive behaviors may exhibit behaviors which will cause emotional or physical troubles, which can lead to harmful habits such as substance abuse. Thus, it seems difficult for adolescents who fail at ensuring their impulse control to establish quality, coherent and successful friendships. [53] found adolescents with signs of impulsiveness to have problematic relationships and experience behavioral problems. [29] found individuals with impulsive behaviors to have deviant friends, and [57] concluded a negative relationship between the scores of impulsiveness behavior scale and positive social friends and behaviors scale.

The third strongest predictor of friendship was found to be achievement in the research. In other words, successful students had higher-quality friends. It is thought that achievement contributes to the formation of quality friendships since successful students are taken as examples in the classroom, are supported by teachers and other students, and there is an expectation of mutual help among students. According to [76], friendships are highly decisive in feeling competent and successful. In the research carried out by [31], students paid the most attention to properties such as achievement, being good and honest in their choice of friends. Accordingly, findings of previous research coincide with the results of the present research.

The fourth strongest predictor of friendship quality was found to be gender. Girls attached more importance to friendship quality than boys did. It is thought that girls care about friendship quality as they intensively desire to share their private lives with each other, they grow up under more pressure compared to boys in Turkey, and therefore, feel the urge to be understood. [27] found girls to attach more importance to sincerity, supportive behaviors and emotional behaviors in their friendships with each other.

### Conclusion

Today, choice of friends especially during adolescence is a source of great concern for parents. Being the strongest predictor of friendship quality in the research, parents' democratic style is very important when raising their children. Thus, it is important for practitioners working with young people to raise awareness of parents about child rearing and to carry out awareness studies on the importance of democratic attitude and supportive communication in raising their children. It is necessary to identify young people who are insufficient

to provide impulse control, to reveal the causes of behavioral problems, and to provide the necessary psycho-social support. However, it is observed that academically unsuccessful young people are incompetent at establishing healthy friendships. Therefore, studies should be performed for teachers, parents and psychological counselors to explore the reasons for academic failures and to increase the self-confidence of young people about being successful. Friendship quality is of great importance in child's social development. It is therefore deemed important to conduct other studies in friendship quality. The research was performed in the correlational model. It is recommended to carry out qualitative research which will allow for in-depth examination of friendship quality and structural equation modeling studies which will explore the effect of multiple variables. Having determined the order of significant for variables related to friendship quality with a regression analysis is the strength of this research. However, the fact that it was conducted only with three schools in a limited area is one limitation of the research. Hence, it is recommended to take care to generalize these research results and carry out similar studies with different sample groups.

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Получена 12.04.2021

Received 12.04.2021

Принята в печать 28.01.2022

Accepted 28.01.2022