How Do High School Adolescents Define a Good Friend versus a Bad Friend?

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Abstract. This qualitative study aimed to examine the perceptions of adolescents at high schools about "good friends" and "bad friends", and to classify their perceptions under inclusive themes. Data were collected from 126 high school students. As a result of the inductive thematic analyses of the interviews, three major binary themes emerged: "Reliable versus Unreliable", "Foul-weather friend" versus "Fair-weather friend", and "Empathetic versus Callous". Based on the results of the analysis, it was asserted that a good friend is characterized by reliability in not lying to you and keeping you away from dangers, a sound support when you are in need, and finally a feeling of emotional intimacy. A bad friend is characterized by unreliability in lying to you and a potential risk of endangering you, no support when you are in need, and a feeling of emotional distance from you. Practical suggestions were given to practitioners within the framework of the findings.
Keywords: Good friend, Bad friend, Friendships, Adolescence, High school students, Thematic analysis.

Introduction

Establishing friendship is an important developmental task affecting the social and emotional development of the individual during adolescence period (Greco, Holmes and McKenzie, 2015; Poulin and Chan, 2010; Rubin, Bukowski and Parker, 2006; Savin-Williams and Berndt, 1990). Hartup (1989) argues that friendship is a form of relationship that is voluntary, mutual, and interdependent among individuals who see themselves equal. Hays (1988) defined friendship as a qualitative relationship between two people with the intention to cover socio-emotional goals, love, intimacy and mutual aid, expressing the voluntary commitment of individuals.

Previous studies have emphasized that having friends is associated with the psychological well-being of an individual from childhood to old age (Akın and Akın, 2015; Bukowski, Laursen and Hoza, 2010; Hartup and Stevens, 1997; Lemerise and Arsenio, 2000; Sullivan, 1953). However, the permanent contribution of friendship to mental health is more significant during adolescence (Chow, 2008; Sullivan, 1953). Friendship contributes to an individual's development of problem solving skills and perspective-taking (Agnor, 2009; Berndt, 1989; Heiman, 2000, McGuire and Weisz, 1982), helps the him/her feel accepted and understood (Erdley, Nagle, Newman and Carpenter, 2001) especially considering that romantic relationships generally develop in adolescents (Cohen, 2008; Connolly and Johnson, 1996; Epstein, 1986, Hartup, 1996), provides him/her with the opportunity to receive and give assistance (Asher and Parker, 1988; Berndt, 1989; Erdley et al., 2001; Marion, 2008), facilitates adaptation to chronic stress and difficult life events (Baril, Julien, Chartrand and Dube, 2009; Berndt, 1992; Hartup and Stevens, 1997; Thoits, 1995), ensures that one feels emotionally safe in case of a threat (Asher and Parker, 1988), offers a protective effect against bullying (Agnor, 2009), fosters self-caring and self-confidence (Hartup and Stevens, 1997), stimulates learning (Bukowski, 2001), and affects school performance (Diehl, Lemerise, Caverly, Ramsay and Roberts, 1998). Considering these functions of friendship, friends can be said to play a critical role in providing the social support adolescents need, which cannot be replaced by families anymore (Richey and Richey, 1980).

The characteristics of a good friend have been well-documented in the relevant literature. For example, Büyükşahin Çevik and Atıcı (2008) reported that high school students believe good friends are confident, reliable, successful, and have favorable personality traits. Similarly, Niebrzydowski (1995) reported that the characteristics like sharing secrets, providing mutual support, mutual trust, and sincerity were the characteristics of good friends among Polish adolescents. Other studies on different age groups revealed many common depicters attributed to a good friend including trust (Burgess, Wojslawowicz, Rubin, Rose-Krasnor and Booth-LaForce, 2006; McLeod, 2002; Roberts-Griffin, 2011; Yager, 2010), honesty (Gündoğdu, 2003; McLeod, 2002; Roberts-Griffin, 2011; Yager, 2010), loyalty (Berndt, 2002; McLeod, 2002), keeping secrets (Heiman, 2000; Yager, 2010), supportive (Berndt, 2002; Heiman, 2000; Roberts-Griffin, 2011; Rubin, Wojslawowicz, Rose-Krasnor, Booth-LaForce and Burgess, 2006; Selfhout et al., 2010), helpful (Berndt, 2002; Heiman, 2000; Selfhout et al., 2010), spending good time together (Heiman, 2000; Stephanou and Balkamou, 2011), empathic characteristics (Rubin et al., 2006; Selfhout et al., 2010; Yager, 2010), and sincerity (Berndt, 2002; Burgess et al., 2006; Heiman, 2000; Roberts-Griffin, 2011; Rubin et al., 2006).

Negative effects of bad experiences in friendship, on the other hand, have led the researchers to examine the characteristics of a bad friend, as well. It is emphasized that negative experiences in close relationships might affect the developmental processes of individuals even more strongly compared to the positive effects of good friendship experiences (Burk and Laursen, 2005; Schuster, Kessler and Aseltin, 1990). Aggressive, demanding, and non-supportive relationships involving intense conflicts dramatically decrease individuals' well-being and health (Schuster et al., 1990). Berndt and Keefe (1995) found that adolescents who suffer negative experiences like "conflict" and "competition" in their friendships have lower levels of involvement at school, are indifferent in classroom activities,

cause discipline problems at school, and have low levels of self-confidence. In another study, Jose (2015) claimed that putting pressure on friends causes young people to start smoking, get involved in small crimes, and have early sexual experiences. The characteristics of a bad friend have also been well-documented. Previous studies showed that one of the most common characteristics of a bad friend is being "unreliable" (Berndt, 1999; Stephanou and Balkamou, 2011). Other common traits used to identify bad friends include unreliable, failure to keep secrets (Adams and Plaut, 2003; Berndt, 1999; Yager, 2010) and betrayer (Dickson, Marion and Laursen, 2018; Weiss and Smith, 1999; Yager, 2010), unhelpful (Stephanou and Balkamou, 2011), jealous (Parker, Low, Walker and Gamm, 2005), arrogant (Berndt, 2002; Marion, 2008), making fun of others (Savin-Williams and Berndt, 1990), and boring (Stephanou and Balkamou, 2011).

Though it is important during all development periods, friendship is of critical importance during adolescence (Sullivan, 1953). This is because an individual makes a great effort to succeed in interpersonal relationships during adolescence (Giffin and Patton, 1997). The fact that friendship relationships are an important part of identity development (Yavuzer, 1996) and that friendships during adolescence affects an individual's mental health throughout his or her life (Sullivan, 1953) makes friendship relationships more important during adolescence. Turkey is classified as a country where interpersonal relations among family, relatives and close friends are important (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1984). Friendship relations between the two individuals bring with other relationships formed through various social networks. Therefore, the culture lived in is seen as one of the determinants of the friendship relationships (Bayhan and Işıtan, 2010). In addition, friendship is an important merit in Turkish culture (Dilmaç, 1999). Therefore, in Turkish culture, it is important to establish and maintain friendship relationships which play an important role in the integration of children into the social life (Bayhan and Işıtan, 2010).

In addition, friendship relationships are subject to a dynamic process that occurs over time, and can change according to time and generation. Today, besides cultural differences, rapid advances in technology also affect friendship relations. Especially, we know that social media and the internet are frequently used by adolescents. This may have changed the criteria for good and bad friends in friendship relationships. In this respect, this research will contribute and update to findings of the previous research.

As stated earlier, the characteristics of a good and bad friend have been well-documented in the literature, with a special emphasis on the quality friendship or the causes of conflicts among friends. However, in the present study, we tried to explore the adolescents' perceptions of a good friend and a bad friend together to set out general descriptive characteristics in a comparative manner. The main reason for following a comparative approach was because one of the best ways to describe a good friend is to define the bad friend. Thus, this present study intended to contribute to relevant literature by attempting to analyze the perceptions regarding good versus bad friends as a whole.

The findings of this study may also provide useful information for parents of adolescents, professionals providing assistance to adolescents, teachers -school counsellors in particular- working at high schools. It is highly expected that families interfere with their children's friendship relationships. Therefore, when families comprehend correctly the "characteristics of a good and bad friend", i.e. when some awareness is raised on this issue, families can intervene in their children's friendship relations more accurately. In this context, the findings of this study can be potentially used by school counselors and teachers especially in parent conferences, seminars and individual interviews at schools. In addition to these, considering the findings of the present study, the characteristics that adolescents expect and value in their friendship relationships can be highlighted in classroom counseling activities about "interpersonal relationships". In addition to the counseling activities, school counselors can plan the group process using the results of this study in developing the content (e.g.

being reliable versus unreliable, foul-weather friend versus fair-weather friend, and empathetic versus callous) of the psycho-education programs aimed at improving the friendship relations of students who have problems in starting or maintaining relations. Thus, this qualitative study aimed to explore the perceptions of high school adolescents aged between 14 and 18 about "good friends" and "bad friends", and to classify their perceptions under inclusive themes. Based on this purpose, our research question is "How do high school adolescents define a good friend versus a bad friend?

Method

Research design

This qualitative study aims to examine the perceptions of high school adolescents about "good friends" and "bad friends", and to classify their perceptions under inclusive themes. This research was designed as a qualitative phenomenological research. Phenomenological research describes the meaning of lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon for individuals (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology aims to gain a deep understanding of the meaning or nature of our daily experiences. To Patton (2002), the central phenomenon of a phenomenological research can be such feelings as loneliness, envy and anger, or marriage, working or relationship. The central phenomenon investigated in the present research is being a "good friend" and a "bad friend" from the perspectives of high school students.

Participants

In this study, maximum variation sampling method, which is a frequently used purposeful sampling method in qualitative research (Patton, 2002), was employed to collect in-depth and rich data on adolescents' perceptions of good friends and bad friends. To achieve maximum variety in the sample, 126 adolescents having different socio-demographical characteristics (e.g. age, class, school, gender, socio-economic level) were selected to collect detailed data about their perceptions regarding the features of a good friend and a bad friend. Perceptions regarding "good friend" and "bad friend" are multidimensional affected by many different variables. For these reasons, we worked with a group of 126 adolescents to control the effects of many variables affecting the friendship perceptions. Participants came from 11 different high schools located in Malatya, a metropolitan city in the eastern Anatolian region of Turkey with a population of 772,904. There is no official information or system available to classify the schools in Turkey in terms of socio-economic status. For this reason, the socio-economic status of the schools involved in this study was assessed based on the regions of the city and the evaluations made by the school counsellor and the principal in these schools. These schools were selected from different regions with different socio-economic status. Half of the participating high school students were girls (n = 63) and the other half were boys (n = 63). They were aged between 14-18 (*mean* = 16.44; *SD* = 1.008). They were students from all grade levels: 9th Grade (n = 27; 21%), 10th Grade (n = 34; 27%), 11th Grade (n = 46; 37%), and 12th Grade (n = 19; 15%).

Data Collection and Procedure

The study data were collected in 2017 and 2018. In the first stage, before interviewing the students, both school administrators and school counsellors in all 11 schools were informed about the purpose of the study. In the second stage, school counsellors informed students about the study in classrooms, and volunteer students who wanted to participate in the research were asked to submit to the guidance service to give their names and contact information. In the third stage, the researchers contacted the students using this information about the students obtained from the school counsellors and scheduled the day and time of the interviews. Then, the interviews were conducted by the

researchers on the specified day and time. While selecting the participating students, such preconditions as experiencing problems in friendship relations were not taken into consideration. In this study, data was collected from a group of volunteer students with maximum variation to cover variables such as gender, age, class, and socio-economic status in general, rather than reaching people who had specific problems with their friends or had a certain number of friends for a certain time. The number of participants was kept equal in terms of gender, which is one of the important variables affecting the friendship perceptions. The first and second authors of the study, who lectures at the Department of Guidance and Counselling, mentor prospective teachers at teaching practicum courses at schools affiliated with National Education. During the practicum courses, they conducted the semi-structured interviews according to the suitability of the volunteer students. The majority of the interviews took place in the guidance and counselling office according to a schedule. When the guidance room was not available, the interviews were made in an appropriate and quiet place at the school (e.g. in available classrooms or laboratories).

Instrument

In order to develop the semi-structured interview questions to be used in the research, an initial pilot study was conducted with three students. These three students were interviewed as a pilot study before the final interview questions were developed. In this interview, an unstructured interview questions were used instead of structured questions in order to decide on the best questions to determine the characteristics of good and bad friends. Interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview form, which was developed to understand the perceptions of high school students about a good friend and a bad friend. The form consisted of two main parts. The first part included questions about the characteristics of a good friend (i.e. "What do you think are the characteristics of a good friend?", "What characteristics of your good friends distinguish them from other people around you?"). The second part asked about the characteristics of a bad friend (i.e. "What do you think are the characteristics of a bad friend?", "What characteristics of bad friends around you distinguish them from other friends?"). During the interviews, which lasted about 10-25 minutes, the voices of the participants were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Possible information that could reveal the identity of the participants was concealed during the transcription procedure, and the anonymity of the participants was ensured. The names cited in the research are not the real names of the participants, but the nicknames designated by the researchers. Necessary ethics committee approval was obtained for the research (07/10-2020/ E. 65428).

Researcher Role

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the first and second authors of the research. These interviewers conducted individual counselling courses for many years at the Department of Counselling and Guidance. The content of this course includes such interviewing principles and techniques as empathy, content reflection, reflection and concretization. These techniques enable the participants to express themselves easily in qualitative researches and provide significant advantages in learning about the participants' experiences in depth. In the interviews, the participants were able to easily express their own experiences within the framework of empathic attitude and unconditional acceptance principles. All three researchers, who conducted the data analysis talked about their own friendship experiences during the analysis process, shared their views on how these experiences affect data analysis and tried to minimize their effects on data analysis.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis program NVivo11 since it facilitates managing, organizing and visualizing data (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). When analyzing

the data, an inductive thematic analysis procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed. Accordingly, first the authors became familiar with the data by reading the transcripts together without making any encoding. Then, 96 common initial codes were formed by the researchers independently while re-reading the dataset, which indicated the perceptions of students about a good and bad friend. Next, these initial codes were refined by combining the similar ones and were gathered under three major pairs of themes as accompanied by the procedures defined in the validity and reliability subheading.

Beside the thematic analysis procedure, the nature of the research question actually required the researchers to follow a versus coding approach. Saldanâ (2015, p. 298) defines versus coding as identifying "in dichotomous or binary terms the individuals, groups, social systems, organizations, phenomena, processes, concepts, etc. in direct conflict with each other, a duality that manifests itself as an x versus y code." Since the entire analysis procedure was conducted in accordance with versus coding approach, themes were organized and presented in the form of contrasts, e.g. "Reliable versus Unreliable", "Foul-weather friend" versus "Fair-weather friend", and "Empathetic versus Callous".

Trustworthiness

Creswell (2013) suggests using the concept of trustworthiness in qualitative studies instead of validity and reliability. Triangulation, thick descriptions, and methods to reduce research bias were used in this study to ensure trustworthiness. Peer checking or intercoder reliability is often difficult to perform in qualitative research, as it is not always possible for different researchers to look at the same data from the same perspective due to the nature of thematic analysis (Joffe and Yardley, 2004). Therefore, consistency between codes was checked constantly in the analysis process. Throughout the coding procedure, the data were analysed independently, with regular comparisons by three researchers to ensure researcher triangulation to ensure intercoder reliability. Throughout the coding procedure, the data were analysed independently, compared and contrasted regularly by all three researchers to achieve intercoder reliability. For the purpose of member check (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) initial codes and contents of the data (participant statements) were checked by five doctorate students who successfully completed the "Qualitative Data Analysis" course. Doctorate students examined these codes and the contents to confirm or identify alternative themes. Each doctorate student presented their evaluations during the lesson. Then, the researchers and doctoral students negotiated on the codes to be deleted, revised, or added. After the whole group had a consensus on the code and content consistency, then the same procedure was followed to negotiate about the themes. Next, the researchers re-checked the entire dataset (i.e. the encoded extracts) comparing the contents coded under major themes. Rich and thick descriptions enable readers to make decisions about transferability, since the author describes the participants and the setting in detail (Creswell, 2013). In this context, data extracts representing the perceptions of the participants were included in the study. Finally, the authors shared their own friendship experiences and perceptions about them, especially in the data analysis process, in order to reduce the researcher's biases throughout the research.

Results

As presented in figure 1 and table 1, the thematic analysis of the research data revealed three contrasting themes about the characteristics of a good friend versus a bad friend: "Reliable versus Unreliable", "Foul-weather friend" versus "Fair-weather friend", and "Empathetic versus Callous."
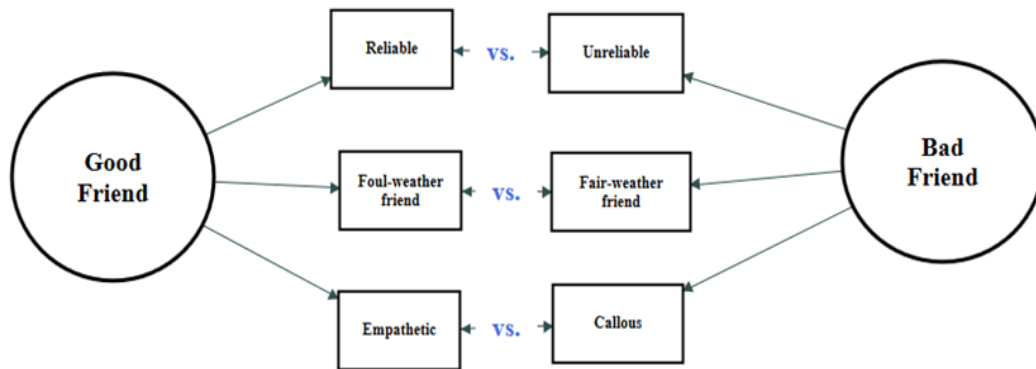
Figure 1. Thematic map showing three main themes (represented by circles) and six sub-themes (represented by squares).

Table 1.
Themes and Sub-themes Derived from the Study Data

Themes 1: Good Friend Sub-themes and codes		Themes 1: Bad Friend Sub-themes and codes	
	n		n
Reliable		*Unreliable*	
keeping secret	46	having bad habits	33
Honest	30	hypocrite	29
not lying	14	not keeping secrets	21
Loyal	8	gossiping	19
Foul-weather friend		traitor	8
Helpful	25	slanderer	5
altruistic	7	sneaky	3
not jealous	4	dangerous	3
Empathetic		*Fair-weather friend*	
being able to share emotions	20	selfish	31
Sincere	15	jealous	19
being a good listener	13	manipulative	16
Close	9	*Callous*	
Respectful	8	not listening	13
good to chat	7	making fun	11
understanding	5	speaking idly	6
Tolerant	2	not understanding	4
having no prejudices	2	cold	2
compassionate	2	stubborn	2
Polite	2	uninterested	2
		insensitive	2
		judgmental	2

Reliable versus Unreliable

For the participants, the most precise criterion when defining a good friend was "reliability". "To be reliable" was the answer of almost half of the participants to the question "What do you think are the characteristics of a good friend? When asked to further define what they mean with "reliability", the participants often used such adjectives as "keeping secret", "honest", "not lying", "loyal", "safe". This shows that "Being reliable" is a characteristic that includes these definitions. For the participants, a reliable friend is the one who keeps what is secret, private or confidential about his/her friends, and not shares it with others. Helin (female, aged 18) believed that being reliable and keeping secrets were the same, saying *"A good friend must be reliable. When I say 'reliable', I mean, when I tell him/her a secret about myself, s/he has to keep it, protect me, and not share it with anyone else"*. According to the participants, a reliable friend is also "honest" and "not lying". Kerem (male, aged 17) explained these characteristics of a good friend as follows:

> *"The best characteristics of my best friend is that s/he is "honest". S/he must be natural, not fake. Not fake at all, s/he must not pretend and lie to people to make himself/herself loved. S/he shows everyone what s/he really is." "My best friend and I love each other very much, and we get along well. We do not get bored, we are together every day, and we always share some things. But most important than these, of course, we have a common understanding. If I can tell her something, she must also be able to tell me something."*

On the other hand, a total of 36 participants said that the most typical characteristic of a bad friend was "unreliable". They also used the terms "having bad habits", "hypocrite", "not keeping secrets", "gossiping", "traitor", "slanderer", "sneaky", and "dangerous" to define a bad friend. Based on these definitions, it was understood that, for the participating adolescent students, a bad friend does not behave sincerely and does not protect the secrets of his/her friend or even tell the secrets to someone else to harm his/her friend. Kübra (female, aged 17), who used the terms "hypocritical" and "liar" describe a bad friend, said, *"A bad friend is hypocritical. Let me explain this a little. S/he is one who smiles at you and then turns his/her back on you; s/he looks nice to you, but stabs you in the back. S/h is someone who tells lies".* Likewise, Elif (female, aged 18) said *"If you witness a person lying, I think s/he is the worst person. Just lying. For example, I have a friend who lies his family saying 'I am at school', when she is not actually. I know she is lying. I think she is a bad friend."*

Many participants also defined bad friends as "the people with bad habits", which, again, referred to smoking, alcohol and drug use. Bahadır (male, aged 17) defined a bad friend as follows:

> *"I think a bad friend is one who drags his/her friend into the swamp where s/he had already bogged down. For example; good friend won't make you smoke. But a bad friend might intend to start you smoking so that he can benefit from your package. It can not only be cigarettes, but also alcohol and drugs".*

Foul-weather friend versus Fair-weather friend

According to the participating adolescents, a good friend was the one who "stand by them and support them on their bad days, and a bad friend is one who is indifferent and stands by you only on good days". A good friend is a friend who is there when you have difficult times, when you need them. A total of 50 participants identified a good friend as a "bad day friend", and 31 identified a bad friend as a "friend on good days." A friend in need is a friend indeed is also "helpful", "altruistic", and "not jealous". Bad friends who are "fair-weather friends" are "manipulative", "selfish" and "jealous". Helping when your friend is in trouble, giving him/her financial support when s/he has no money was

defined as the characteristics of a good friend by the participants. Oğuzhan (male, aged 16), who said that his friend was with him at difficult times, and helped him without thinking when he had no money, saying *"My friend is a helpful person. Whenever I am in a trouble, he helps me immediately. Meets my needs. Helpfulness. One day we were outside, and I had no money. It was an urgent situation. So, I asked for some money from him. God bless him, he gave me the money".* Sevda (female, age: 18) said that her good friend was more than a sister and added that she was constantly supported by her good friend at difficult times, and added:

> *"I think the best friend is one who is always there for you. She is like a family friend or sibling. You tell him/her the things you do not tell your brother/sister or to your family. It is a person with whom you share your happiness or your hard times. What I mean with hard days is when for example, you have bad days, when you are upset with your family, or for example, when you are depressed. As always, she is the best friend of the person who will not leave her whatever she does."*

Unlike a good friend, a bad friend was defined by many participants as one who stands by you on good days but not when you are in need. Leyla (female, aged 17), who admitted being very upset because of the indifferent behaviors of her friend when she needed her support on tough times, described a bad friend as follows:

> *"My friends knew that I was having really bad times on those days. I was expecting the support of my friend, because I thought that she was a real friend. At least I expected something from her. She should have come to me, called me, asked about me, but instead she talked about things concerning her life. I was upset, but she did not even ask what I was going through. I felt very bad that day, instead of being by me, she was still telling about her own life. I felt she did not care about me."*

Similarly, Arda (male, aged 17) said that his friend, who seemed to be by him when he had money, was not there when things turned upside down: *"Bad friends can be greedier. For example, if you have money, okay, you are a number ten, five stars friend for them. But if you do not have money, you are finished for him. If you are good, he is also good, and if you are in a bad condition, he is also bad".*

Empathetic versus Callous

According to the participants, a good friend is a person whom one feels close enough to share feelings, or open himself/herself easily; however, a bad friend is a person with who one cannot share because you feel distant or s/he does not look at the world through the same window. A total of 20 participants stated that the characteristics of a good friend were "being able to share emotions", followed by "sincere", "being a good listener", "empathic", "close", "respectful", "good to chat", "understanding", "tolerant", "having no prejudices", "compassionate", and "polite". On the other hand, 13 participants described a bad friend as "not listening to his/her friend" and "making fun of him/her". In addition to these definitions, the participants described a bad friend "speaking idly", "not understanding", "cold", "stubborn", "uninterested", "insensitive", and "judgmental". When the definitions of the participants were examined in general, it was interpreted that a good friend is someone whom you feel pleased to chat, who listens to you empathically, and whom you feel emotional intimacy. Gizem (female, aged 16), who described her good friend as someone with whom she could share her griefs and happiness, said *"Let me give an example from my friends. I share my happiness, my life and my joy with my friends. The school life is not simple. We spend almost 60% of our day at school together. I can say that I see my friends more than I see my mother. For this reason,*

my good friends are those with whom I can share things, who can understand me." Leyla (female, aged 17), who described her good friend as the one with whom she spends time together for a long time without being bored because of their common characteristics and sharing, said:

> *"My best friend and I love each other very much, and we get along well. We do not get bored, we are together every day, and we always share some things. But most important than these, of course, we have a common understanding. If I can tell her something, she must also be able to tell me something."*

Unlike a good friend, a bad friend is someone who is judgmental, makes fun of his/her friends and whom one cannot share his/her feelings. Papatya (female, aged 17), who described her bad friend as someone who expressed himself/herself ignoring the thoughts of the other person, said *"The characteristic of my bad friend is that she never listens to me. S/he always talks about himself/herself during a chat. S/he makes fun of my bad qualities."* Derya (female, aged 17) described her bad friend as *"In my opinion, a bad friend is selfish, insensitive, does not like to help, and has poor communication with other people."* Another participant, Berna (female, aged 15) defined a bad friend as a selfish person who thought only about himself/herself and ignored the feelings and thoughts of others, and said:

> *"My bad friend had no tender thoughts. He would not remember my birthday, actually, I remember his birthday every year. He did not remember mine, when I asked about it, he said, 'I did not remember deliberately, I did not, and I do not have to'. So, as I said, he just wanted to be at the centre of everything. I think the sharpest and the most accurate comment about him would be that he was selfish and only thought about himself."*

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to explore the perceptions of high school adolescents about "a good friend" versus "a bad friend", and to combine these perceptions under inclusive themes. When the findings are examined in general, it was asserted that while a good friend is reliable because s/he does not lie to you and is safe for you, a bad friend is characterized by unreliability in lying to you and putting you in danger because of his/her bad habits; while a good friend gives you a sound support when you are in need, a bad friend does not; and finally while a good friend shows a feeling of emotional intimacy to you, a bad friend shows a feeling of emotional distance from you. This study contrasted many descriptive characteristics of a good friend versus a bad friend under three major themes, and contributed to the understanding of friendship, expectations and conflicts for adolescent students.

Similar to the findings of this study, several studies on friendship (Bukowski and Hoza, 1989; Burgess et al., 2006; Büyükşahin Çevik and Atıcı, 2008; Ladd, Konchenderfer and Colomen, 1996; McLeod, 2002; Niebrzydowski, 1995; Yager, 2010) found that "sharing secrets" and "trust" and "honesty" are among the common characteristics of a good friend. According to the present study, the most distinctive criterion of a good friend versus a bad friend is "reliability". According to the participants, a reliable friend is the one who "keeps secrets", is "honest", "does not lie", "loyal" and "safe". Adolescence is a period when individuals experience intensive search for identity (Erikson, 1968) and relational interactions with their peers (McNelles and Connoly, 1999). In this period, adolescents experience conflicts with their families more and gradually separate from their parents (Hortaçsu, 1997; Yavuzer, 1996). Although adolescents care about their relations with their parents, they experience an intense relationship with their friends emphasizing proximity and confidentiality

(McNelles and Connoly, 1999). In the interviews, it was determined that adolescents described their best friends as those who were reliable and did not share their secrets with others. The participants also identified a good friend as "safe", while a bad friend was defined as the one who had bad habits perceived as risky by families and the society, including alcohol use, smoking and drug abuse. Studies show that the risk of substance use like smoking, drugs or alcohol is high in adolescence (Gürol and Uzman, 2008), and bad friends are the main factors causing an adolescent to suffer them (Erdem, Eke, Ögel and Taner, 2006). Values of trust and honesty, considered important in Turkish culture (Dilmaç, 1999), are also critical in friendship relations. In Turkish culture, alcohol use is one of the main criteria for determining good and bad friends by conservative and more traditional families, who predominantly call themselves Muslim. These families think that people who use alcohol can also easily commit many other sins such as gambling, drugs, and adultery, which are considered as major crimes in Islamic belief. These major sins are central criteria in determining whether a friend is a good or bad friend in Turkish Culture.

Another theme of the study was "foul-weather friend versus fair-weather friend." According to the participants, a good friend is "the one who is with you on bad days", "helpful", "altruistic" and "not jealous". On the contrary, a bad friend is "a good day friend", "self-seeker" and "not helpful". In this theme, the main emphasis of the participants was on whether or not their friends supported them in all circumstances. The participants want to be supported by their friends when they are in need, for example when they need money in financial crises, help in discussions/quarrels/fights, or someone to listen to their emotional problems. The most important sources of social support are family members, friends and relatives (House, 1981). However, friends are preferred more than family members for support, closeness and cooperation during adolescence (Doğan, Karaman, Çoban and Çok, 2012). Adolescents with supportive friends generally open themselves more, exhibit more prosocial behaviours, and receive more emotional support from their friends (Berndt and Savin-Williams, 1993). Similarly, previous research showed that characteristics like "support" and "being helpful" are among the main determinants of a good friend (Berndt, 1999; Furman and Robbins, 1985; Hays, 1988; Heiman, 2000; Ladd at al., 1996; Parker and Asher, 1993; Stephanou and Balkamou, 2011). Adolescence is one of the periods when friendships are experienced most intensely (Toytok, Eren and Gezen, 2019). Adolescents expect their friends to support and help them against possible problems they face during the hard times (Berndt, 1989).

The last theme of the study is "empathetic versus callous". According to Rubin et al. (2006), good friends listen to each other, encourage and advise each other, and sincerely open themselves. Other similar studies show that especially "sincerity" and "empathy" are among the main characteristics of a good friend (Buhrmester, 1990; Heiman, 2000; Ladd et al., 1996; Niebrzydowski, 1995; Selfhout et al., 2010; Weiss and Smith, 1999; Yager, 2010). However, competition and striving for superiority (Berndt, 2002; Marion, 2008), making fun of others (Savin-Williams and Berndt, 1990), feeling jealous (Parker et al., 2005), and differences in opinions (Büyükşahin-Çevik and Atıcı, 2008) cause conflicts between friends, and decreases emotional sharing. Similarly, in this study, the participants defined an empathetic good friend using some attributes like "sincere", "kind", "empathetic", "close", "understanding", "good to chat", which indicated emotional proximity. On the contrary, they defined a callous bad friend using expressions like "not close, "idle speaking", "not understanding", "cold", "stubborn", "uninterested", "insensitive" and "judgmental." It is a common experience for adolescents to share their emotions with friends and chat with them for a long time (Boneva, Quinn, Kraut, Kiesler and Shklovski, 2006). This experience of emotional self-disclosure is highly critical during adolescence. Since sharing potential conflicts with the family might get difficult (McKinney and Renk, 2011), sharing worries and private issues with the closest friends allows adolescents to feel relaxed (Cohen, 2008; Erdley et al., 2001; Turner, 1999).

This study contributed to the literature in understanding the perceptions of high school adolescents about a good friend versus a bad friend in a comparative manner. In addition to the changes in personal relationships, rapid advances in technology also affect friendship relationships. Friendships also transform depending on the development of technology. The type of friendship we call e-friendship has emerged with this transformation. It is seen that friendship relations developed over the Internet are characterized by such features as providing the opportunity to communicate with people from different geographies without any time limitations, and being useful for those who cannot be successful in face-to-face communication (Tan, 2019). In addition, the increased rate of divorces, the decrease in the rate of having children, the increase in the number of children out of wedlock, the increase in the number of single parents, and the increase in the number of people living alone are considered as indicators of the change in personal relationships (Budgeon, 2006). All these show that the family structure has changed and with these changes, the family has lost its importance and replaced by friendship. Therefore, it is seen that there are changes in the form and importance of friendship over time. In addition to these although adolescents try to behave in accordance with the values of the society they live in, they may experience conflicts in terms of some cultural elements with the effect of modernization (Avcı, 2006; Kulaksızoğlu, 2014). In recent years, it has been observed that many values have changed with the influence of social media, even in societies where traditional values are strong. Although previous researches provide valuable information about the characteristics of good and bad friends, social values are known to be dynamic. We think that this study will contribute to an up-to-date understanding of what changes in the criteria of good and bad friends for adolescents. Despite the many changes mentioned above, the findings of this study also imply that the characteristics sought in friendship relations are similar in every period. However, there are some limitations to this research that should be taken into account. First, this study was conducted with 126 adolescent high school students who were selected using purposeful sampling method. Although this number is adequate for qualitative studies, the findings obtained consisted of the students who were studying in Malatya province located in the East of Turkey. It must be kept in mind that the findings of this study are affected by the cultural background of this local setting. For this reason, it must be considered that the findings obtained in this study may be different in regions with different socio-cultural settings. Second, the present study attempted to understand and identify the characteristics of good and bad friends based on adolescents' perceptions. However, friendship formation is known to be a dynamic process, which should be investigated through long-term observations in addition to interviews. In this way, the nature of starting, sustaining and ending friendship relationships on the basis of good and bad friend characteristics could be understood in more.

Implications

It is very important for adolescents to establish quality peer relations in terms of their developmental stages. Previous researches show that quality friendship has a positive effect on adolescents, and report that potential conflicts between friends have a detrimental effect. We believe that this study provides useful information on the perceptions of high school adolescents about good friends and bad friends. In this study, it was explored that being reliable, supporting and empathetic were the main characteristics of a good friend, while being unreliable, not supportive, and callous were the main characteristics of a bad friend. These criteria can be used in improving the quality of friendship among adolescents at schools and to reduce possible conflicts. When evaluated in general, behaviours of bully students seem to be similar to the attributes of bad friends defined in the present study. Thus, possible psycho-education programs planned towards non-compliant and bullying students can be constructed to overcome these attributes of a bad friend among them, and provide them with those of a good friend, e.g. reliable, empathetic, understanding, supportive, etc. The properties of a good friend defined in the present study can also be used in peer-help practices. Adolescents who possess the characteristics of a good friend can offer peer support to individuals who have problems in their friendship relationships in their schools. In addition to these, friendship

relationships and expectations in these relationships are among the problems frequently experienced by students during adolescence. Ideal friend characteristics in adolescents' minds can cause conflicts in the relationship. The findings of this study will enable school counsellors to better understand what expectations of adolescents are, and to use this information more effectively during the counselling process. This information can also be used to understand the quality of adolescents' existing friendships. In addition, some of the adolescents have no problem in establishing and maintaining friendship relationships, while others may have serious problems in this regard. School counsellors can also use the findings obtained from this research to better understand the good friend expectations of the adolescents who have problems in establishing and maintaining friendship relationships.

Some suggestions can be made based on the findings of the present study. First of all, this study was conducted with the high school students living in a metropolitan city in the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey. The relevant literature suggests that different cultures affect individuals' perceptions of friendship in different ways. Therefore, in future studies, the effect of culture on friendship perceptions in adolescents living in different geographies can be examined comparatively. Secondly, since friendship relationships start and develop in a course of time, it will be useful to examine the changes in friendship relationships through long-term longitudinal studies to explain the mechanism of the process better. Lastly, since friendship is important in almost every period of life and studies on adults are limited, it is recommended that future studies are carried out on the characteristics of friendship relationships among adults and their expectations from friendship. These future studies will both contribute to the literature on this subject and will enable us to understand whether there is a change in the friendship relationships of adults.

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