

DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF FRIENDSHIP AMONG ADOLESCENTS WITH AUTISM

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is characterized by heightened interest in social interaction. Relationship becomes the central theme of adolescence. For persons with autism, their major limitation is in interacting and forming relationship such as friendship. It is for this purpose that this study was conducted to know how adolescents with autism develop and maintain friendship. The research was qualitative-quantitative study. This study gathered data from 30 adolescents with autism aged 10-19 years old. The required characteristics of the sample were being verbal, being able to comprehend and answer yes-no questions and questions that require information. This research used two questionnaires for the adolescents with autism and interview schedules for the adolescents with autism, their parents and teachers. Results showed that adolescents with autism develop and maintain their friendship by using the easiest means which is disclosing information about them. Respondents develop friendship mainly by helping, introducing self, calling through phone, sharing things/toys and playing together. In general, they maintain their friendship by talking to friends face to face. It is recommended that adolescents with autism should be taught the proper expression of themselves since the chief way of development and maintaining friendship involves disclosing of oneself. Moreover, they should be taught the proper way of talking about themselves and of interpreting non-verbal cues.

Keywords: friendship development, friendship maintenance, adolescents with autism,

INTRODUCTION

Relationship becomes the central theme of adolescence. Cotterell (1996) cited that relations with others lie at the heart of the adolescent experience. Adolescents turn to other people to ask for advice, to self-disclose, to seek company and to gain approval.

Friendship is believed to be very important in adolescence. It is essential because of the countless benefits and improvements it contributes to one's physical, cognitive and socio-emotional concerns.

Friendship is also significant to persons with disabilities. In Kanner, Rodriguez, & Ashenden and Schopler & Mesibov work (in Tse, Strulovitch, Tagalakakis, Meng & Fombonne, 2007), as individuals with autism spectrum disorders enter adolescence and adulthood, their interest in social interactions often increases. Stainback, Stainback and Wilkinson (in Searcy & Meadows, 1994) stressed that the development of peer support and friendships is seen by parents and educators as a major key to successful integration of students with disabilities into general education settings. They believe that individuals with disabilities need to learn how to socialize and befriend regular students in order for them to easily adapt and to "fit in".

A relationship is already considered a friendship if it manifests the primary characteristics of friendship such as companionship, affection and intimacy and help and support. Friendship

develops implementation of different means. When friendship has been developed, it should also be maintained in order for the relationship to be satisfying and beneficial. According to Duck (in Fehr, 1996), relationship maintenance is the huge area where relationships continue to exist between the point of their initial development and their possible decline.

With the known importance and benefits of friendship, it is imperative to study how friendship is developed and maintained for its formation and preservation will result to an improved and holistic adolescent.

Ways of Developing Friendship

Different means should be done for the friendship to finally develop. Duck (1991) expressed that friendships do not start until people do friendly things in friendly places: they are not created merely by friendly talk. In fact, relationships start when people do something sociable, like inviting a new acquaintance or new neighbor for a meal or coffee or a drink, suggesting going for a meal, visiting the local shops together or going to a film.

Gottman (in Bukowski, Newcomb & Hartup, 1996) identified six elements in the process of friendship formation: connected communication, information exchange, establishing common ground, self-disclosure of feelings, extending and elaborating each other's activities and conflict resolution. Connected communication and information exchange are done by interacting using different modes of communication such as telephone, cellphone, email and the internet. By doing preferred activities, a common ground is established and each other's activities are further structured. Revealing one's self manifests trust that is essential in friendship formation.

Telephone, cellphone, letter, email, social networking site can be the easiest means of developing friendship. By using these means, individuals can exchange information about themselves and this information can be a reference if someone can be a friend or not. Eventually these individuals will be phone pals, text mates, pen pals, chat mates and friends in social networking sites signifying that they already developed a friendship.

Joining different activities and organizations can also be a way in forming friendship. Leisure groups like tennis clubs, religious organizations and dancing classes are a very important source of friends (Argyle). Different organizations in school such as Math Club, Choir Group, Journalism Group, etc can also be a source of friends. In joining, individuals are more exposed to different kinds of people who they can interact more with in the future because of the activities that are regularly done in the said organizations.

Self-disclosure is also used in forming friendships. Miell and Duck (in Hays, 2008) explained that self-disclosure is often offered and elicited purposively as a means of gathering information about a potential friend or strategically channeling the flow of communication to intensify or restrict the growth of a friendship. Self-disclosure usually begins by introducing oneself and telling basic information about self. Then it progresses by disclosing personal and sensitive issues.

Third parties can also be a means in the formation of friendship. According to Parks (in Gopuansuy, Tee & Tiu, 2006), network members or third parties directly influence the formation of relationships by acting as passive reference points and "third-party helpers". Friends can be a connection to befriend their friends. Befriending the friends of friends is easier since they have the common link and their characteristics may somehow be similar to own friends that are the same with theirs.

Parents, specifically the mother, also serve as third party in the development of friendship. Adolescents with autism were more likely to participate in social and recreational activities if

their mother reported that she herself participated in similar activities (Orsmond, Kross & Seltzer, 2004). The more participative the mother is in social activities, the more chances of adolescent with autism to form friendship.

Teachers can also be an essential third-party instrument in friendship formation in the classroom. Stainback et al. (in Searcy & Meadows, 1994) wrote about the effect of teachers' encouragement on friendship formation and described how teachers can structure classes that foster friendships. How frequently teachers allow students to interact, the types of interactions allowed (structured vs. free choice of activities), the types of group activities and group products expected, as well as how groups are formed (students choosing their own group member vs. teacher assigned groups) are all important considerations when attempting to create classroom structures that encourage peer interactions and friendship formation. More frequent interactions among students will promote friendship development. Free choice of activities will allow friendship since this gives the students chance to mingle with classmates of the same interest. This also encourages self-expression, thus they have the opportunity to know their classmates better. Group activities that require group effort such as skit, panel discussion, games, etc will enhance friendship development. The less complicated the group product that is expected, the more the students can relax and interact with classmates. Letting the students to choose their group members will intensify their liking to those who have the same characteristics as theirs and eventually leads to friendship. Teacher-assigned groups will expose the students to different personalities. More exposure will allow them to have more choices on who to befriend.

Different teaching strategies also support friendship formation as well. Peer tutoring, buddy systems, cooperative learning, various group reward systems, coaching and social skills instruction groups have all been used to encourage students to make friends (Searcy & Meadows, 1994).

But still, classroom structures alone are not sufficient. Some students still require direct instruction of friendship-making (Searcy & Meadows, 1994). Teaching the proper methods and ways on how to develop friendship will equip the students enough knowledge in the development of friendship in real-life setting.

Given the different ways of friendship development, it can be said that the degree of opportunities for interaction is important in the formation and development of relationships. (Gopuansuy, et al., 2006) The impact of these ways on individuals' life will still determine whether a friendship can be developed or not. If these means will greatly influence an individual to reach out and interact, then it can be expected that friendship will form.

Ways of Maintaining Friendship

An individual should carry out the different maintenance activities in order to strengthen the friendship. Psychology Today's friendship survey (in Hays, 2008) of over 40,000 respondents found that activities most frequently engaged in with friends are: having an intimate talk, helping each other, eating a meal together, attending a movie or sports event, shopping and playing sports. This is a proof that friends are not confined in just one kind of strategy in maintaining their relationship.

Canary and his colleagues (in Johnson, 2001) enumerated the ten categories of maintenance strategies. They are the following: positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, sharing tasks, joint activities, cards, letters and calls, avoidance, antisocial and humor. He also defined the previous strategies and pointed out their manifestations.

Positivity and avoidance are related. Positivity is defined as attempts to make interactions pleasant and avoidance is evasion of partner or issues. Friends avoid having an argument

with each other. They usually want their contacts to be enjoyable. If friends do not agree on something, it is either one goes with the flow or he/she remains silent and avoids his/her partner to keep the friendship going smooth.

Openness pertains to direct discussions, offering and listening to one another. Duck (in Fehr, 1996) argued that everyday talk is the essence of relationship maintenance. Talk provides a vision or image of what the relationship is and will be. Talk is the vehicle for sharing one another's worlds of experience, and serves to sustain or reinforce reality for the partners. By talking, friends are able to discuss different topics that are essential in their lives. Aries and Johnson study (in Hays, 2008) showed that the most common topics of conversation were daily activities, community affairs, family activities, family problems, reminiscences and work. Davidson and Duberman (in Hays, 2008) examined reports of conversations between best friends and found that women's conversations included a broader range of topics, particularly with regard to personal and relationship-oriented issues, than the men's conversations, which emphasized external topics.

Assurances can be described as covertly and overtly assuring each other. By showing appreciation for friends and telling them their worth, friendships will continue to flourish. If a friendship is considered worthy, it is valuable to maintain it.

Social networks can be classified as relying on friends. By asking for support from a friend, an individual realizes how important he/she is as a friend. By supporting each other, friendship is further flourished and appreciated.

Performing routine tasks and chores in a relationship is considered the sharing task. In a friendship, each has their own roles and obligations. According to Duck and Canary & Stafford (in Fehr, 1996), there are two elements to relationship maintenance: one is strategic planning for the continuation of the relationship; the other is the breezy allowance of the relationship to continue by means of routine everyday interactions and conversations that make the relationship what it is. If these roles are performed efficiently each will benefit from friendship and thus each yearns for the preservation of friendship.

Joint activities can be described as how interactants choose to spend time with one another to maintain their relationship. Fehr, Caldwell & Peplau, Waker and Hays (in Gopuansuy, et al., 2006) stated that friendships among male focused on shared activities and the enjoyment of a friend's company while female friends emphasized personal self-disclosure as means to achieve intimacy. Female friends usually prefer activities that will allow them to express themselves such as drinking in a café, talking face-to-face, talking over the phone, etc. Male friends like playing sports, watching movie, etc. Some kinds of leisure activity produce particularly close friendships (Argyle). In his study in 1994, Argyle found that belonging to churches and to voluntary work groups often produces close friendships, with many people saying that these are 'closer than my other friendships'. In Orsmond et al. study (2004) on peer relationships and social and recreational activities among adolescents with autism, results showed that only 20% of the subjects participated weekly in varied, informal socializing activities with friends.

Cards, letters and calls are the various channels to keep contact in relationships. Humor defined as jokes and sarcasm can also get along with these channels. By using these mediums, friends know what happen to their partner's life. These are also used in simply keeping in touch with friends. Antisocial strategy is a behavior which seems unfriendly. Behaviors which are not pleasing may cause conflict. Conflicts can be taken positively in a relationship in a way that they spice up the friendship. They break the monotony of friendship of having pleasant experiences only. Conflicts also tests the importance placed on

the friendship. If conflicts are resolved, any difficulties will be believed to be overcome and friendship is further strengthened.

There may be a lot of selections on how to maintain friendship but still, it is not the number of maintenance activities itself that predicts whether a relationship is satisfactory, but the types or quality of behaviors that are enacted. (Johnson, 2001) The quality of maintenance activities will determine if a friendship will be maintained or not.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research was qualitative-quantitative. The information gathered from the questionnaire comprised the quantitative data while the responses for the interview schedule provided the qualitative data. It was also descriptive in discussing the means of development and maintenance of friendship among adolescents with autism.

Sample

The sample consisted of 30 adolescents aged 10-19 years old in Metro Manila. From the 30 respondents, 10 were interviewed. The teachers and one of the parents of the 10 adolescents were also interviewed. There was no specification on adolescents' with autism current grade level as well as the kind of schooling/service they receive. There was no provision as well on their socioeconomic status and parents' background. The subjects were verbal and could comprehend and answer yes-no questions and Wh-questions.

From the 30 respondents, fifteen were from public schools and the other 15 from public schools. Twenty-seven were male and only three were females.

Table 1. Respondents' Age Frequency

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
10	4	13.33
11	1	3.33
12	2	6.66
13	5	16.66
14	5	16.66
15	8	26.66
16	2	6.66
17	2	6.66
19	1	3.33
Mean Age	13.83	

Majority of the age of the respondents are 15 years old. The age which has the lowest percentage are 11 and 19 years old. Figure 1 shows the distribution of 30 respondents according to grade/year level.

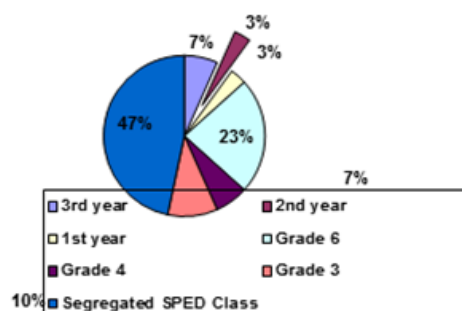


Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents According to Grade/Year Level

When it comes to school placement, two were 3rd year high school, one 2nd year, one 1st year high school, seven Grade VI, two Grade IV and three Grade III. Fourteen were in segregated SPED class.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of 30 respondents according to type of education placement.

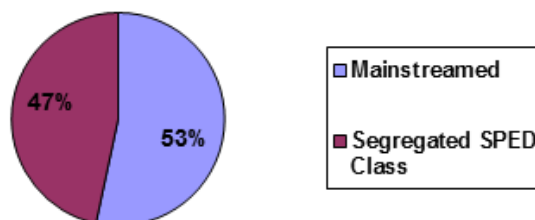


Figure 2. Distribution of Respondents According to Type of Education Placement

Sixteen of the samples were mainstreamed, 14 were in the segregated SPED class.

For the 10 samples interviewed, 9 were male and 1 female. Five came from public school and five from private school.

Instruments Used

Two kinds of instruments were used in this study; questionnaire and interview schedule.

Two sets of questionnaires were used in the study. The first one was made by the researcher. It was composed of 11 questions, content-validated by three special education experts and one research and guidance counseling expert. The second questionnaire was adapted from a standardized instrument made by Simon-Baron Cohen and Sally Wheelwright called Friendship Questionnaire (FQ). It was designed to be short, easy to use and easy to score. It comprised 35 questions. Approximately half the items were worded to produce a “disagree” response and half to produce an “agree” response for the high FQ response. Items were randomized with respect to the expected response from a high-scorer. The FQ had a forced choice format, can be self-administered, and is straightforward to score as it did not depend on any interpretation. The FQ had good construct validity as the questionnaire had a high alpha coefficient (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2003). It dealt primarily with the ways of development and maintenance of friendship.

Interview schedule were also constructed. The interview questions were content-validated by the same experts who validated the researcher-made instrument. The interview schedules for adolescents and parents were also translated in Filipino by language specialist.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher inquired first through phone to schools to know whether they have students with autism aged 10-19 years old who are verbal and can comprehend and answer yes-no and Wh-questions. A request letter was given to schools that have such students. Upon approval, the schedule for the visit to the school was arranged. For the public schools, request letter was sent first to the Superintendent’s office. Upon approval, the researcher talked with the Principal then to the SPED Head regarding the schedule for data gathering.

Administration of the questionnaire and interview was done by the researcher on one-on-one basis. Before respondents were asked to answer, directions were clearly explained and respondents were encouraged to ask questions whenever they did not understand something. Even if all of the respondents could read, the researcher still assisted the respondents in

reading and answering the questions. Interview was recorded. Probing questions were asked when necessary.

Data Analysis

The answers in the researcher-made instrument and FQ were tabulated. Summary of frequency and percentage analysis were done.

From the recorded interviews, answers were transcribed and content organized. Then answers for each question were categorized under similar concepts. After categorizing, frequency count and percentage analysis were done.

Items in researcher-made instrument, FQ and interview were classified according to, ways of development and maintenance of friendship. Upon classification, results in the three instruments were compared. Lastly, a summary on the comparison of results in the three instruments used was made.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ways of Developing Friendship

Twenty four or 80% of the 30 adolescents liked to be close to people, while 6 or 20% said otherwise. Even persons with autism generally prefer to be alone, they still long for social interaction. This strengthened the claim of Sigmund and Mundy (in Dy, 1991) that children with autism can become interested in social interaction as they become adolescents.

In line with this, 12 or 40% of 30 respondents considered making new friends easy; and eight or 26.67% regarded this as very easy. On the other hand, six or 20% thought that making new friends is difficult and four or 13.33% believed that it is very difficult.

Furthermore, 18 or 60% of the 30 adolescents preferred to make new friends than keep their old friends if they change residence.

Despite of their impairments, adolescents with autism thought that making friends is not difficult. In adolescence, the persons with autism are more equipped with social knowledge and abilities they learn through experience and exposure than they were just children. Thus, they become more capable of forming friendship. Moreover, they wanted to make new friends than to keep their old friends. Maintaining friendship is more difficult for them since it involves more consideration of general condition and characteristics of a friend than developing friendship. This was proven by Cesaroni and Garber (in Howard, B., Cohn, E. & Orsmond, G., 2006) as he described an adolescent with autism whose difficulty with empathy impacted his maintenance of friendships.

Table 2 exhibits the responses of 30 samples in the items in the Friendship Questionnaire that corresponds to ways of developing friendship.

Table 2. Responses in the Friendship Questionnaire (FQ) on the Ways of Developing Friendship

Item	Frequency	Percentage
17. How easy it is to tell your feelings to a person you don't know?		
Easy.	4	13.33
Very easy	2	6.67
Difficult	16	53.33
Very difficult	8	26.67

6. a. I think of things to do and then somebody to do it with.	12	40.00
6.b. I meet with somebody then think of something to do.	12	40.00
6. c. I don't think of something to do with somebody.	6	20
21. How important is it to you what persons you don't know think of you?		
Not important	13	43.33
A little important	4	13.33
Important	7	23.33
Very important	6	20.00
27. When you are in a group, e.g. at school, church, etc., how important is it for you to know the secrets?		
Not important	6	20.00
A little important	2	6.67
Important	11	36.67
Very important	11	36.67

(N = 30)*Multiple responses

As shown in Table 2, 53.33% of the respondents found it difficult to tell their feelings to a person they do not know. It is difficult because one does not know what will happen or what will be the reaction of the stranger to the sensitive information disclosed. In line with this, the respondents generally perceived not important what persons they do not know think of them. It is not important because strangers only see the outside characteristics; they will not be able to see the real attributes inside a person. Hence, strangers' judgment may not be true at all times. Moreover, they talk about hobbies and interests as well as studies with someone they just met. These two topics are not so sensitive issues so they are easier to share. Furthermore, discussion of these topics might lead to discovery of similarity or differences of each other. Thinking of things to do then somebody to do it with and meeting somebody then thinking of things to do both had the mass of respondents. Doing things with somebody heighten the liking and eventually the formation of friendship. This confirmed the assertion of Duck (1991) that friendship starts upon doing friendly things in friendly places. The respondents generally considered important and very important knowing the secrets in a group. Knowing the secrets manifests that they know the members of the group very well and they belong in the group.

Table 3 presents the ways on how the 30 adolescents make new friends.

Table 3. Ways of Making Friends

Ways	Frequency	Percentage
Help someone in need	28	24.77
Introduce self	26	23.00
Befriend the friends of friends	21	18.58
Text, call, write letter and email	19	16.81
Join Friendster, Facebook, Twitter, etc	13	11.50
Join different activities/organizations	6	5.30

* Multiple responses

It shows that majority of the respondents (24.77%) help someone in need and introduce self in order to make friends.

Table 4 shows the different ways of making friends of as enumerated by the adolescents, their parents and teachers.

Table 4. Ways of Making Friends

Ways	Adolescents		Parents		Teachers	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Introduce self	10	26.54			1	5
Help someone in need	9	23.07	1	2.56	3	15
Befriend the friends of friends	7	17.94				
Join organization	4	10.25				
Call through phone	4	10.25	6	15.38		
Use Friendster, Facebook	3	7.69	2	5.12		
Play with others	2	5.12	6	15.38	3	15
Greet people			2	5.12	1	5
Tell jokes			1	2.56	1	5
Go to party			1	2.56		
Do things together like singing			1	2.56		
Offer service like facial, cutex			1	2.56		
Be polite			1	2.56		
Respond when asked			1	2.56	4	20
Visit other's house			3	7.69		
Entertain visitors			2	5.12		
Share toys/things			6	15.38	1	5
Converse with others			5	12.82	5	25
Goes near to classmate who has a new school supply					1	5

The top two ways of making friends among the 30 respondents were helping and introducing self. Introducing self becomes the common choice since it is the easiest to do. A person just has to state the basic information about himself/herself. Adolescent 5 stated, "I introduce myself to make friends by saying my name." Adolescent 4 also expressed, "To make friends, I introduce myself. When I introduce myself I say, my name is _____. I'm from the Bicol region, particularly in Virac, Catanduanes. This finding also substantiated the importance given by Miell and Duck (in Hays, 2008) to self-disclosure in the formation of friendship. Helping is also adolescents' with autism way in making friends as gratitude to those who help them when they needed them. Adolescent 6 declared that he helps his classmates whenever they do not know what to do.

For the parents interviewed, the most common ways their adolescents use in making friends were calling through phone, playing together and sharing toys/things. Through calling, the adolescents share information of each other which will be used in deciding whether one can be a friend or not. The parent of Adolescent 5 declared, "He also calls over the phone; he gets the number of his classmates. They talk about school and television shows.". Playing is still a great part of adolescent's life. Sharing is incorporated in playing, as the parent of Adolescent 7 shares "He gives all his food. Whenever some asks for some food, he gives readily. Just so he can have playmate and friend." Through playing, they are exposed to possible friends. The parent of Adolescent 6 imparted that her adolescent brings out toys and then the children approach him.

For teachers, the most common way of developing friendship of adolescents was through talking. Since class hours do not allow activities not related to learning, talking is the simplest way of sharing information to a prospect friend. The teacher of Adolescent 7 conveyed that Adolescent 7 is the one who interacts and the most talkative. He does these things in order to seek attention.

Ways of Maintaining Friendship

Twelve or 40% of 30 respondents said that they will keep their old friends than make new friends if they change residence. For some, it is easier to continue a friendship than start all over again. Making new friends requires more effort than maintaining friendship.

Furthermore, 23 or 76.67 % of 30 adolescents had 3 or more friends. Four or 13.33% had one or two friends. Lastly, 2 or 6.67% stated that they do not have a friend. Since majority of them have friends, the statement of Giordano (2003) that relationships become increasingly important during adolescence was considered very much true.

Eighteen or 60% of the 30 respondents put more time in studying than keeping their friends. Eight or 26.67% put equal time in studying and keeping their friends. Four or 13.33% put more time in keeping their friendship than studying. Studying is more prioritized because it is believed that this will give good future such as good-paying job.

In maintaining their friendship, 13 or 43.33% of 30 adolescents stated that it is important what their friends think of them. While 11 or 36.67% believed that it is very important what their friends think of them. The statements "Not important" and "A little important" both had three or 10%. Therefore, the respondents generally perceived important what their friends think of them. Friends can specify the real characteristics of a person. The Kon and Losenkov (1978) study on friendship of adolescents manifested that a friend knows everything about a person. Therefore, the judgment of a friend to a person is considered true and matters a lot. Because of this, adolescents are becoming aware what they should and should not do in friendship since their actions will greatly affect their relationship.

Table 5 presents the answers of the 30 respondents on the items in the FQ pertaining to maintenance of friendship.

Table 5. Responses in the FQ on Ways of Maintaining Friendship

Item	Frequency	Percentage
3.b. I phone my friends to talk about some things	13	43.33
7. a. I like doing things with a friend e.g. going to cinema, playing sports	23	76.67
10. b. If a friend has a problem, I will help him/her to solve his/her problem.	16	53.33
11. b. If a friend has a problem, I will ask him/her to tell me about it.	19	63.33
12. a. I solve my own problem.	11	36.67
13. b. If I have to say something bad to a friend, I say it directly.	17	56.67
14. When I had a fight with a friend and I think I didn't do anything wrong, I		
a. do anything to fix the friendship	15	50.00
15. When I'm doing something		

c. I want two or more friends with me.	17	56.67
16. How easy it is to tell your feelings to your friends?		
Easy	12	40.00
22. How easy it is to tell your friends that you are wrong?		
Very easy, easy, very difficult	8	26.67
23. How easy it is to tell your friend about your weaknesses and failures?		
Difficult	11	36.67
24. How easy it is to tell your friend your success?		
Very easy	14	46.67
25. How interested are you in the studies, family, what's currently going on to your best friends' lives?		
Interested and very interested	13	43.33
(N = 30)		

From Table 5, majority of the adolescents (53.33%) were interested and very interested in the studies, families and what is happening to their friends' lives. Friends are usually concerned with the situation of each other. In addition, majority of the respondents (43.33%) call their friends to talk about some things. This strengthened the enumeration of maintenance strategies of Canary and his colleagues (in Johnson, 2001) that calls were used in keeping contact in relationships. In addition, talking allows them to catch up on the happening of their friends' lives. The usual topics of their talk were hobbies and interests, studies and personal matters. This validated the finding of Aries of Johnson (in Hays, 2008) on the topics of conversation of friends. Evidently, their most common ways of keeping in touch with friends was through face-to-face contact. Consequently, their most common contact in a day was being near to people. In a week, they needed more than talking to two friends and above. This confirmed the statement of Duck and Canary & Stafford (in Fehr, 1996) that one of the elements of the relationship maintenance is routinary daily interactions and conversations.

On the contrary, adolescents with autism liked more doing an activity with a friend than talking with a friend. They prefer doing activities together since this brings more enjoyment and allows knowing more about a friend. This confirmed the work of Gutstein & Whitney (in Rao, Beidel & Murray, 2008) that youth with high-functioning autism have difficulty sharing affective experience of understanding the perspective of others. Moreover, they wanted two or more friends with them when they are doing something.

If a friend has a problem, the adolescents with autism help in solving friend's problem. This proved the inclusion of Canary and his colleagues (in Johnson, 2001) of social networks and sharing task as maintenance strategies significant. The respondents also asked the friend to tell his problem. When the adolescents had a problem, they solve their own problem or tell it to a friend. Helping a friend who has a problem clearly manifests the essence of support in a friendship. Some adolescents solve their own problem so as not to add burden to a friend. If the adolescents with autism have something bad to say to a friend, they say it directly.

Friendship also instills the value of honesty. Adolescents with autism found it easy to tell their feelings to their friends, their success and to accept that they are wrong. But it was difficult for them to tell to their friend their weaknesses and failures. This confirmed that openness (Canary and et. al in Johnson, 2001) was really considered a maintenance strategy. When the adolescents have a fight with a friend, majority will do anything to fix the

friendship. Friendship entails a lot of consideration of friend's condition in order for the relationship to last.

Table 6 gives the summary of the responses of 30 adolescents in the researcher-made instrument about ways of maintaining friendship.

Table 6. Ways of Maintaining Friendship

Way	Frequency	Percentage
Talk to each other in person	27	18.75
Avoid fighting	27	18.75
Do different activities together like exercise, sports, cooking, playing computer games, going to different places	25	17.36
Help friend	24	16.66
Communicate through cellphone, telephone, email, social networking site letter, etc.	22	15.27
Visit each other in respective houses	19	13.19

*Multiple responses

Majority of the respondents (18.75%) maintained their friendship by talking to their friends and avoid fighting. By talking to friends, they know what is currently happening to their friends' lives. They avoid fighting so that their relationship will go smoothly and that it will not come to an end.

Table 7 enumerates the ways of maintaining of friendship of 10 adolescents interviewed as given by them, their parents and teachers.

Table 7. Ways of Maintaining Friendship

Ways	Adolescent		Parent		Teacher	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Talk to friends	10	23.80	5	15.15	6	27.27
Help friends	8	19.04	2	6.06	4	18.18
Avoid fighting	8	19.04	1	3.03		
Call friends	6	14.28	5	15.15		
Play games	5	11.90	5	15.15	3	13.63
Visit friend in their house	3	7.14	5	15.15		
Use Friendster, Facebook	1	2.38	1	3.03		
Do things together like singing, reading books and art activities	1	2.38	1	3.03		
Visited by friend in own house			1	3.03		
Go to a place together			1	3.03		
Offer service like facial			1	3.03		
Share food/things			3	9.09	4	18.18
School activities			2	6.06		
Greet each other					2	9.09
Want to be seated next to friend					2	9.09
Respond when asked by friend					1	4.54

The adolescents interviewed confirmed that the top way of maintaining friendship is through talking to friends. The parents enumerated talking to friends, calling friends, playing games and visiting friends in their house as means in continuing the friendship of respondents. The teachers also identified talking to friends as the most common way of friendship maintenance.

Therefore, it can be said that the respondents generally maintain their friendship by talking to their friends. Adolescent 1 stated, "I talk to my friends and tell them stories and some other kind." The parent of Adolescent 3 shared that his son talks with friends about games. The teacher of Adolescent 7 expressed that her student often goes to friends' seat to talk with them. These reinforced the statement of Duck (in Fehr, 1996) that talk is the essence of relationship maintenance.

As a summary, respondents develop friendship mainly by helping, introducing self, calling through phone, sharing things/toy and playing together. In general, they maintain their friendship by talking to friends face to face.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Adolescents with autism develop and maintain their friendship by using the easiest means which is disclosing information about them.

Adolescents with autism should be taught the proper expression of themselves since the chief way of development and maintaining friendship involves disclosing of oneself. They should be taught the proper way of talking about themselves and of interpreting non-verbal cues. Moreover, they should be encouraged to join different organizations so as to widen their network and have more possible friends.

Lastly, teachers are encouraged to make use of teaching strategies and activities that require participation of group of students so as to increase interaction and eventually encourage friendship.

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