



JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

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Abstract

The circle of friends is often found in the school environment. The existence of a circle of friends can affect students' behavior both socially and academically. This study aims to provide an overview of the friendship structure of junior high school students. More specifically, the focus of this research examines three main things, namely the reasons for the formation of friendship circles among students, the impact of friendships on social and academic behavior, and the psychosocial values that develop in the circle. The research method used is qualitative with a case study approach. Data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation, with as many subjects as students as possible who are members of a circle of friends. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman model, with stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The results of the study show that friendship circles are formed through social interaction in completing group tasks, as well as the existence of common hobbies and interests, so that a circle is formed. The existence of a circle has an impact on increasing the spirit of learning, the courage to appear in front of the class, and increasing academic achievement. In addition, psychosocial values that grow in the circle include mutual respect, mutual trust, openness, and solidarity.

Keywords: Circle of Friends; Junior High School Students; Adolescent

1. Introduction

In essence, humans are always in a social environment. This environment affects the way of thinking, the way of behaving, and the characteristics of a person's personality. One of the social environments that has a significant impact on a person's development, especially in adolescence, is school. Teenagers spend most of their time in school, which is a place not only in terms of gaining knowledge but also as the main space for building and developing social relationships. In this process, social relationships are formed with peers, namely friendships.

Friendship is a relationship between two or more people who support each other, want the best for each other, empathy, sympathy, honesty, and mutual understanding (Astuti et al., 2024). This relationship has an important role in shaping character, building self-identity, and supporting a person's social and emotional development. Over time, friendships can develop into small social groups or specific patterns known as friendship circles. Friendship circles are usually formed due to similarities in interests and talents (Astuti et al., 2024). . Some of them also form friendships with the needs of each individual to feel welcome in their friendships.

According to Thomas J. Berndt (1982), friendship in adolescence has its own characteristics that are different from more emotionally intense relationships and have a strong influence on daily attitudes and behaviors. Berndt identifies four main aspects of adolescent friendships: *intimacy*, *support*, *trust*, and *similarity*. Intimacy shows openness in

sharing feelings and thoughts, support provides a sense of security in the face of pressure, trust creates comfort in interacting, and similarities make the relationship feel more suitable and harmonious. These four aspects are the basis for the formation of a *circle of friends* that is formed naturally and survives because of mutual trust and support within the group.

A circle of friends in the school environment can have both positive and negative impacts. On the one hand, a circle of friends can be a support for individual development, but on the other hand, it also has a negative impact that can harm individuals. When adolescents are in unhealthy friendships, they can experience anxiety, depression, decreased self-esteem, and mischievous behavior (Fadhilla & Siregar, 2024). Therefore, it is important to understand the dynamics that occur in adolescent friendships, especially in the context of the school environment.

Recently, social media has been enlivened by cases of bullying committed by a circle of friends consisting of three women. This case occurred in Pontianak. This conflict started from personal problems, which then became violent acts carried out by one circle, such as stabbing, beating, and stripping the victim naked, until the video was spread on social media platforms. This phenomenon shows that when a person is in an unhealthy circle, many negative impacts are experienced by individuals. This case reflects how much influence circles have in shaping individual actions, especially in adolescents who are still in the search for identity and are vulnerable to social pressure from the immediate environment, including the circle of friends they form themselves.

It is interesting to further research how the circle of friends is formed and how the considerations of students consider when building or maintaining their friendship relationships. It becomes important to be researched in a single class that has unique characteristics. This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 20 Malang. This study aims to examine in depth: (1) the reasons for the formation of friendship circles, (2) the impact of friendships on students' social and academic behavior, and (3) psychosocial values that arise in friendship relationships between students. Through a qualitative approach with the type of case study and theory of Thomas J. Berndt as a theoretical foundation, this research is expected to provide a complete understanding of the social dynamics in the circle of friends and its implications for student development in the school environment.

2. Method

The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type to reveal the phenomenon of friendship circles of junior high school students. The research location is at SMPN 20 Malang. The research subjects amounted to 6 students, determined by *purposive sampling*; they were SMPN 20 students and became members of a group in a circle of friends. Data collection was carried out using triangulation methods, which were carried out by comparing data from observation results, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. This data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, with stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Result

3.1.1 The Reason for the Formation of a Circle

Based on the results of the discussion, the author suggests that schools and teachers can facilitate positive social interactions between students, such as group activities and interest-based activities, because it is proven to support the formation of healthy circles of friends and have a positive impact on social and academic development. BK teachers are also expected to be able to accompany more closely the dynamics of iswa friendships, considering that the influence of circles also depends on the character of each individual. Through the right guidance, the circle of friends can become a positive growth space for student development at school.

Apart from duties, the similarity of hobbies is the main glue of this group. Almost all members of the circle mentioned that they had the same hobbies, especially drawing and singing. LA said, "We have almost the same hobbies, singing and drawing" (LA, F.A2), while SA said, "We have the same hobbies, which are drawing and singing" (SA, F.A5). This activity is often carried out together, both at school during break and outside of school, which can strengthen social and emotional relationships between members.

The emotional comfort factor is also very prominent. Some students feel more suitable and free to be themselves when they are in this circle. SY said, "if you are told to choose friends from the beginning, you will still choose them because they are the most normal of all people" (SY, F.A1), while SO said, "one frequency of taste and sanity is the same" (SO, F.A6). However, not all students have the same closeness. Some students feel awkward or need time to feel a good fit, as LA says, "at first it wasn't too close, it's still awkward, but as time goes by I can get close to them" (LA, F.A2).

Based on the results of the interview above, the circle was formed from the initial interaction in group tasks and was strengthened by the similarity of hobbies and emotional comfort. However, the attachment process is not always the same between individuals; there are students who immediately feel suitable and open, and some need time. This shows that the personal character and social style of each student play a big role in the formation of the circle.

3.1.2 The Impact of Friendship on Social and Academic

This cycle has a positive impact on students' enthusiasm for learning and social development. SY said that she felt more enthusiastic about learning and was no longer afraid to ask the teacher, "I'm more active, my English is better, and I'm no longer afraid to ask the teacher" (SY, F.B1). He also added, "My grades have gone up, I ranked 10th last semester" (SY, F.B1). This shows that the circle is an environment that supports academic growth.

LA also felt similar benefits. He said, "Yes, since I was with them, I became enthusiastic about learning because there was no one there who looked at intelligence or

beauty" (LA, F.B2), and "I became more diligent in participating in extracurriculars and studying with them" (LA, F.B2). TS also stated, "I used to be quiet, now I dare to talk to others because I am with them" (TS, F.B4). Some students experience changes in terms of confidence and social involvement at school, both during learning and outside the classroom.

However, not all students experience the same impact. SO actually feels that the circle does not have much influence on the academic side, "there is no influence, at least it is lazy because of technology" (SO, F.B6). Even so, he still felt the social impact "from the unconfident to the confident, my hobby was also supported" (SO, F.B6). This attitude suggests that the benefits of the circle can be perceived differently depending on the needs of the student's character.

Based on the results of the interviews, the results of the circle showed that it had a positive effect on the spirit of learning, confidence, and social courage of Shiva. However, not all students respond to friendship in the same way. Some students undergo major transformations, while others tend to be neutral. This variation is influenced by the personal character, study habits, and emotional needs of each student.

3.1.3 Psychosocial Values in the Circle

The most powerful psychosocial values in this circle are trust, emotional support, and acceptance. SY said, "I fit with them and they feel like they are themselves, if they are not with others" (SY, F.C1), and "yes, they feel valued and cared about" (SY, F.C1). The same thing was also conveyed by La, "if I am with them, they want to listen to my story" (LA, F.C2). This suggests that the circle becomes an emotionally safe place and supports self-expression.

The subject BB said that he could share his personal story with his friend whom he trusted the most, "When it comes to problems, I tell the SO because I can better understand and feel that I can give more solutions" (BB, F.C3). TS also said that he felt safe because he "kept each other's secrets" (TS, F.C4). SA even described his circle as "comfortable, because you are rich in yourself, humble and caring for each other" (SA, F.C5). All of this shows that the values of intimacy and trust are very dominant in their circles.

However, as before, not all students show the same psychosocial intensity. SOs tend to be neutral and introverted emotionally. He said, "When I'm sad, I rarely tell stories" (SO, F.C6), although he still feels that his friend cares. This attitude illustrates that the difference in openness does not mean the absence of comfort, but indicates different social styles in expressing emotions and beliefs.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that this circle builds psychosocial values such as a sense of appreciation, openness, and comfort of being oneself. While most students feel intimacy and support, some members tend to be introverted or neutral. This is a reflection of the uniqueness of students' character in expressing and accepting the social relationships formed.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 The Reason for the Formation of a Circle

The circle of friends in grade VII E students is formed because of social experiences that bring them together in one activity, namely, group assignments. Based on the results of the interviews, almost all students revealed that the social studies group assignment was their initial moment to establish closer interactions. After those interactions, they begin to feel comfortable and move on to a deeper friendship. This is in line with the theory of Thomas J. Berndt (1982), who states that adolescent friendships are often formed through joint activities that strengthen emotional bonds.

In addition to interaction, the common interest factor, such as singing and drawing, is the main reason for the formation of circles. In this case, the aspect of similarity becomes dominant, as Berndt explains that adolescents tend to build close relationships with friends who have similar interests, activities, and values. This similarity creates a sense of "frequency" that becomes the glue between members. This finding is also strengthened by the research of Agustian et al. (2023), who explain that similarities in activities and values are the main foundation of adolescent friendship quality.

Nevertheless, openness to new membership or emotional comfort is not felt evenly. Some students need time to feel fit in and connected. This shows that the formation of circles is not only determined by external factors such as joint activities, but also by internal factors, namely the character and socialization style of each student. Therefore, it can be concluded that the reason for the formation of circles is a combination of intense social interaction, common interests, and emotional comfort, all of which correspond to the four aspects of adolescent friendship according to Berndt.

3.2.2 The Impact of Friendship on Social and Academic

The existence of a circle of friends has a strong impact on the social and academic development of students. The majority of students showed an increase in enthusiasm for learning, courage to ask questions in class, and participation in school activities. In this context, the circle acts as a source of motivation and support, which corresponds to the aspects of support and trust in Berndt's theory. Intermember trust and emotional support allow students to feel safe to thrive academically and socially.

Research by Sari and Anggraeni (2021) shows that peer support can increase students' confidence and courage in expressing opinions at school. This is in line with the results of this study, where previously quiet students began to show initiative to speak and be active in class. Some students experience increased grades and academic achievement. Research by Rahmat (2023) also shows that the quality of healthy friendships greatly contributes to increasing students' motivation and learning performance.

However, the findings also show that the circle impact is not uniform. One of the students showed a neutral attitude towards the influence of the circle in learning and felt more comfortable learning on their own. This shows that the influence of circles cannot

be generalized. Students' character, learning style, and social needs are determining factors in how much friendship affects their development. So, circles can provide positive encouragement, but they still have to consider the uniqueness of each individual so as not to cause unconscious social pressure.

3.2.3 Psychosocial Values in the Circle

The circle of friends studied showed strong psychosocial values such as trust, sense of appreciation, empathy, and comfort of being yourself. This shows that the circle is not only a gathering place, but also a space for the members to grow. The trust and intimacy aspects of Berndt's theory are very evident in this circle, where students feel safe to share personal stories and feel understood by their peers. This creates an emotional climate that supports the students' personality and social development.

Yustiningsih (2024) explained that friendships based on empathy and openness create emotionally healthy relationships, while preventing deviant behaviors such as bullying or withdrawal. In the observed circle, even when there is a difference of opinion, students tend to choose to solve it through discussion or voting. This shows that they not only care about each other but also learn to resolve conflicts in a mature and equal manner. This circle is also a place to learn to understand other people's perspectives and form social skills that are important for teenagers.

However, not all students show the same intensity of psychosocial values. Some members show a closed attitude, don't talk much, or choose to be neutral towards the circle. This suggests that despite being in the same group, emotional expression and social acceptance are not the same between individuals. It is important to understand that healthy friendships do not mean that every individual should be completely open, but that they are able to create a safe space that still respects personal boundaries. Thus, this circle of friends shows characteristics that support the formation of positive psychosocial values, as well as showing the importance of respecting personal uniqueness in adolescent social relationships.

Based on the results and discussions that have been described earlier, it can be concluded that the circle of friendship in grade VII E students is formed through a natural but gradual social process. The initial interactions that occur in group tasks become the starting point of their closeness, which is then strengthened by the similarity of hobbies, frequency of communication, and emotional comfort between members. This circle was formed not only by chance, but also because of the sense of fit, openness, and socially agreed-upon values among its members.

This circle also has a real impact on the social and academic development of students. The majority of circle members showed an increase in enthusiasm for learning, courage to speak, and social skills. This friendship environment is a place that provides emotional encouragement and academic motivation. However, there are differences in experience between individuals, where some students do not feel the circle influences their achievements or emotions as much. This shows that the impact of circles is relative, depending on the character, needs, and interaction style of each student.

In addition, this circle forms positive psychosocial values such as mutual trust, openness in storytelling, emotional support, and the ability to resolve conflicts maturely. The friendship environment they build creates a sense of security and comfort to be themselves. Although there are members who tend to be more introverted, the group still respects differences and creates an inclusive social space. Thus, this circle is not only a place of friendship, but also a place for significant social and emotional growth and development for its members.

4. Conclusion

Based on the discussion of this study, it can be concluded that the circle of friends at SMP Negeri 20 Malang is formed through several gradual processes, through the process of social interaction starting with group work activities to the formation of a friendship environment with similar interests (similarity) such as the similarity of hobbies accompanied by emotional comfort (intimacy) felt by the group members. The existence of a circle of friends has a positive impact on students of grade VII E SMP Negeri 20 Malang, especially in aspects of students' social and academic development. The majority of members of this circle showed an increase in their enthusiasm for learning, courage in speaking in class, and an improvement in their academic achievement. Socially, friendship circles can help students develop confidence, communication skills, and the ability to resolve conflict. Even so, the influence of this circle of gardening has varied results depending on the character of each student. In addition, the circle of friends makes a contribution to forming positive psychosocial values such as trust, mutual support, respect, and the courage to be yourself. The four aspects of friendship put forward by Thomas J. Berndt are proven to be present in the dynamics of student friendship and are the basis for the formation of a healthy circle.

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