The Company you Keep: The relationship between friendship qualities and mental health

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Introduction

“I have yet to make any true friendships here... I feel as if I do not belong in the Duke community. I am considering transferring.”

33% of students drop out due to:

- Strong social support contributes to better mental health
- Low-quality relationships may worsen mental illnesses

Hypothesis

Positive friendship qualities are inversely related with negative mental health outcomes. Negative friendship qualities are directly related.

Methods

- N = 141 Duke undergraduates
- Mixed Methods Survey
- Measures:
  - Positive Friendship Qualities (PFQ):
    - Intimacy, Help, Stimulating Companionship, Reliable Alliance, Emotional Security, Self-Validation
  - Negative Friendship Qualities (NFQ):
    - Conflict Resolution Ease, Dishonesty, Competitiveness, Superficiality
  - Positive Affect
  - Negative Outcomes
    - Depression, Social Anxiety, Loneliness

Results

Correlation between PFQ and Mental Outcomes by Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women (N=106)</td>
<td><strong>p &lt; 0.01</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men (N=35)</td>
<td><em>p &lt; 0.05</em></td>
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</tbody>
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Avg PFQ Among Class Years

- Range: 135 – 405
- Median: 367

86% of upperclassmen said their friendship requirements changed

Conclusions

Positive friendship qualities are inversely related with negative mental health outcomes. Negative friendship qualities are directly related.

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