

# Patterns of Student Friendship Trends According to Multi-Religious Perspectives: a Case Study at State Junior High School 1 Batu, Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This research aimed to explore the trends in how students make a social relationship and choose their good friends in regard to the multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-tribe perspectives at SMP Negeri 1 Batu, Indonesia. The background of this research was that the adolescence from elementary to junior high school is seen as a critical period to make friends heterogeneously and intensively in the psychological perspective; it is caused by several factors, namely psychological factors, similarities of characters and social mind, similarities of race, language, religion, and tribe. SMP Negeri 1 Batu, as a public school, represents multiculturalism and pluralism in terms of religion, ethnicity, as well as tribe. The problems of this research included (1) what dominant factors for consideration to choose a best friend were, and (2) how the relationship patterns and the open mindedness of students to accept multi-religious issues in their friendship were. The data were collected through in-depth interview, Focused-Groups Discussion (FGD), participant observation, questionnaire, and documentation. This research used a qualitative approach, and the data was analyzed using technical analysis taxonomy and description by induction method. The results of research showed that 73 percent of students prefer to choose friends with a similar religion, ethnicity and tribe. Meanwhile, 15 percent of all students felt comfortable with their relationship if they have things in common; this applied on not only religion and tribe, but also character, mindset, personality and hobby; and the other 10 percent of students preferred to share similar culture, habits, geographical place, sexuality and love tendency as aspects to consider in choosing friends. 2 percent of all students did not have any specific reason of criteria in choosing best friends. The results of the second problem revealed that the students were less prone to be open minded to accept friends with different religions, and were not welcome to the idea of tolerance to other religions or tribes either. The recommendation from this study is that the religious subject at public schools should teach about tolerance to other religion, ethnicity and tribe;

also, internalizing multi-religious values, and family synergy to shape a person who can accept other religion and tribe in any relationship, and always be humble to others. These values should become those that the students possess.

**Keywords:** patterns, student friendship, multi-religious

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical period in a social development, marked by an expansion of peer networks, increasing importance of close friendships, and emergence of romantic relationships. As adolescents make the transition to middle school and then high school, peer networks increase, and peer crowd affiliation becomes an important aspect of peer relations [1]. La Greca & Harrison [1] argue that preadolescent friendship and early teenage relationship have many considerable factors to be best friends. A thorough understanding of adolescence in society depends on information from various perspectives, including physic, psychology, biology, history, sociology, education, and anthropology, such is the religion and tribe. Within all of these perspectives, adolescence is viewed as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, whose cultural purpose is the preparation of children for adult roles.[2] For example, physically, adolescence is usually associated with the teenage years, but the psychologically or culturally expressions may begin earlier and end later, depends on gender and type of personality. Anthropologically, adolescence associated with the friend having the similar culture, language, tribe, ethnicity and religion.

As youth move from elementary school to junior high school, their psychological development takes place in tandem with changes in their relationships and social networks. During this period, friendship patterns become more heterogeneous, and relationship shift in nature and intensity. Dating relationships, while socially acceptable, afford adolescents opportunities to engage in sexual activity, and may even motivate youth to become

sexually active. Not surprisingly, prior research suggests that there is a significant association between dating and sexual activity. The nature of friendship patterns, relationship experiences and sexual behaviors differs for males and females, particularly at young ages, males tend to report more casual relationships with their first partners, while females have more intimate first relationships. Males are likely to emphasize sexual aspects of relationships, while females are likely romanticize relationships. [3] The end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood varies by country and by function. Furthermore, even within a single nation state or culture there can be different ages at which an individual is considered (chronologically and legally) mature enough for society to entrust them with certain privileges and responsibilities. Such milestones include driving a vehicle, having legal sexual relations, serving in the armed forces or on a jury, purchasing and drinking alcohol, voting, entering into contracts, finishing certain levels of education, and marriage. Adolescence is usually accompanied by an increased independence allowed by the parents or legal guardians, including less supervision as compared to preadolescence.

Family values and domestic figures to accept others religion, ethnic and tribe that internalized to students can be adopted to relationship among to friends at school. So that, the good values can be influencing to student to choose the good friend that to be having intense relationship. Other values from peer that having different family values can be neutralize the upon values from home, and other values from subject material learning at school can be made a mind to acceptance others religion to be friend having intense relationship.[4] Based on that theory and fact of social relationship of the adolescence, this research aim to explore and answer the problems of research are *first* what the dominant consider thing that prefer to choose for comfort relationship with friend by students, and the *second* is how the relation pattern and the open minded of students to accept multi religions, and multi ethnicities from others to be an intense friend.

## METHOD

This research was done at SMPN 1 Batu, East Java, Indonesia as this school is one of a public school that has a plural, multicultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-tribe students comparing to other schools, especially those which are privately owned and religious-based school. The population of the study was all students in this school; and thus the samples were taken using random sampling technique. The grade, gender, student achievement, school organization were not considered as the requirement for the research participants for this research. The researcher got 200 respondents randomly from 600 students.

The data was collected by in-depth interview to 20 students taken using random technique from 200 respondents. The interviewees were 10 percent of the total respondents, it represented to get an objectives data.[5]

The interview respondents answered the questions and gave detailed reasons on their consideration in choosing friends, and making a relationship with others according to several aspects such as religion, ethnicity, tribe, and others. The kind of other option are geographic place, language, gender and sexuality, love tendency, an achievement, character and personality considerable. Meanwhile, questionnaires were given to all 200 students. The contents of questionnaires were the similar to the questions of the interview, but some questions were not raised in the interview session. The data collected by Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were several specific themes to discuss among respondents, about the other religion, ethnicity, tribe, tolerance, and the other requirement of being friends. The documents collected were in forms of photos, student profiles, family backgrounds (including social and educational background), and school profile. It was used to analyze the material and fulfill the data needed. Observation technique was secondary in this research, it was done to support the primary techniques—interview, questionnaire and FGD. The data observed were the relationship among students on their leisure time at school, study groups, and catharsis.

The approach of this research was qualitative approach, and described by induction method that was more deeply and explicitly than that of the deduction method.[2] It was commensurate and fitted for the social research and qualitative approach research. Analyzing data is collected by Componential technique analysis, that analyzed each domains of research deeply and explicitly, found the contrasted among elements, identified each element and factor, and found the causality. Two other analysis methods of qualitative approach other than the Componential method, were Domain technique method, and Taxonomy technique method.[6]

## RESULT

Variants of all students at SMPN 1 Batu were multi-ethnic; there were Javanese, Madurese, Minangese and Chinese; multi-religions such were Islam, Catholics and Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The ethnic percentage of all students were 73 percent were Javanese, 12 percent were Chinese, 10 percent were Madurese, and 5 percent are Minangese. For religions, there were 72 percent Moslem; 12 percent embraced Catholic and Protestantism, others 16 percent believed in Hinduism and Buddhism.

The result of this research showed that students were prone to make friends with others with similar types and criteria. The similar thing that became a consideration for students to choose friends and make a social network were listed Table 1.

Table 1. The Students Considerations in preferring friends

No	Aspects	First *cons	Second *cons	Third *cons	**TOT
1	Similar gender	106	52	12	170
2	Similar personality	113	10	7	130
3	Similar Religion	66	15	42	123
4	Achievements and intelligences	50	21	13	84
5	Similar culture and hobbies	-	-	15	15
6	Popularity and Possessions	-	13	7	20
7	Love and sexuality	-	15	10	25
8	Similar geographical place	-	19	10	29
9	Ethnicity, tribe and language	-	-	4	4
		335	145	120	600

\*cons : Consideration

\*\*tot : Totally

The data explained that dominantly students chose *the similar gender* as consideration; it became the first, second and third choices. Mostly student chose *personality* as the second consideration. In addition, some of students chose the *similar religion* as a consideration to make a relationship with others.

The reasons of 1-3 best chosen points were: the student felt more comfortable when their friends have similar gender, they thought that they could be more open to each other; they also share similar psychology growth and the critical problems on the same age period. Moreover, the adolescent transition commonly had no confidence to make friends with different gender because of different biological growth and physical changes; it became the reason why they felt not comfortable to have intense friends from different gender. [7] The second best choice was personality; mostly students chose the personality that fitted them, they would make requirements for themselves to seek the personality that

fit theirs. The similar personality usually made a tendency for students to form a gang, that might lead to the negative attitude and aggressiveness if they had the same negative character and personality. However, similar personality sometimes might make students get support from each other. They got backups of relationship, happiness, more committed and loyal to their friends, so that it would be positive to them. [8][1].

The third best choice was similar religion; it made some students feel comfortable if they had a relationship with friends who shared similar religious values and knowledge of the "true way" as they believed. The similar religion and values sometimes were good for students in order to minimize the negative risk of juvenile delinquency. Yet, the similar religion relationship if we looked from the pluralistic perspective, it was not a really good thing to make an inclusiveness on social relationship. [9] In fact, the social expectation and the ideal relationship on the multicultural civilization should be having a sense of its values. [10] The factors influencing of the choice of similar religion were, mostly students were not welcome yet, or did not accept to other students with different religions to become their close friends. It was caused by the relationship homogeneity they had from school or family, or both of them. The family, neighbors, or relationship from elementary school before that they had were more homogenous in terms of religion; this made students feel strange to other friends with other religion. The other reason was, the student did not understand well about the values of other religions, and in their own religion either. Thus, it could lead the students to become intolerant, exclusive and reject the "difference" among them.[11] They did not have the knowledge of their religion values, especially about the tolerance values and the role of ideal relationship with other religions. The lack of knowledge of the own religion values and so on, sometime made some students become more sensitive and emotional when they talked about faiths.

The patterns of student relationship in this case were mostly composed by several factors, such as: *first*, similar condition that became the consideration, like gender, personality and religion. The *second* is the family and the environment values they got before, that mostly homogenous and rejected those who were "different" from them. The pattern of student relationship is shown in Chart 1.

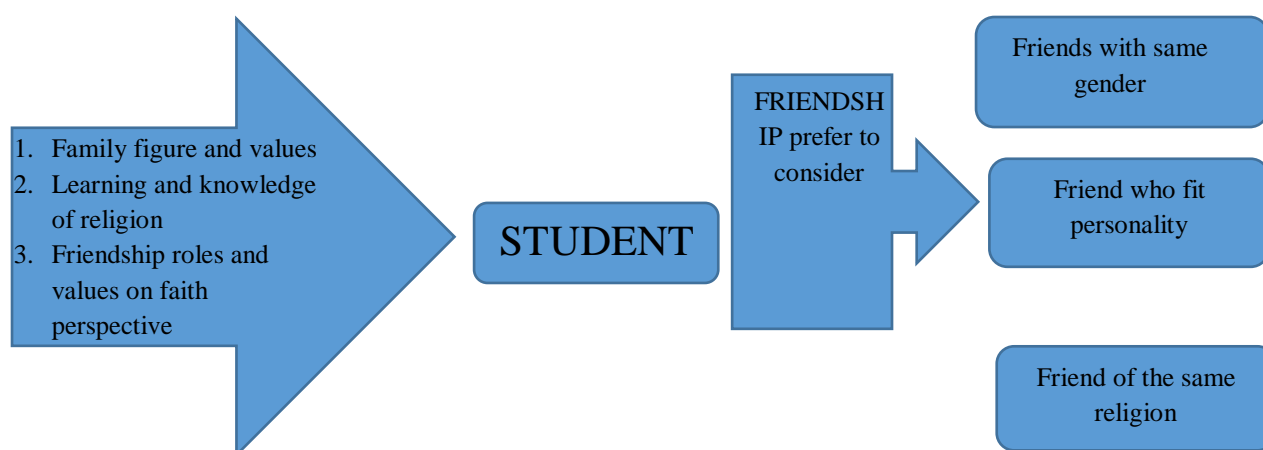


Chart 1. The pattern of student relationship

### CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this research are as follow:

1. Religion is one of 3 most popular considerations for students to make a relationship. It shows that mostly students did not have inclusivity values to different faiths.
2. The patterns of student relationship are influenced by several factors, such as learning of inclusivity and tolerance on religion, and knowledge of social role values on faith perspective.
3. Similar gender and personalities become the 2 best the considerations for students friendship. This mostly because the adolescent's psychological growth has tendency of the comfortable friendship.

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