

# **A psycho social analysis of friendship formation among youths of different Socio-Economic Status**

Uday Shankar\*

## **Abstract**

The present study is aimed to investigate the effect of Socio-Economic Status (SES) of youths especially university students upon their friendship formation. Also, the purpose of the study was to find those psycho social factors which are responsible for friendship formation in youths in the fast growing Indian Society. In this empirical study, the sample was 400 college or university students among whom 140 were from High SES, 160 were from Middle SES and 100 were from Low SES. Results have indicated that difference in SES causes partial difference in the bases of friendship formation in youths. Another finding is that modern youths considered or gave more importance to interest of sports, goal of life, socio-economic status and religion in friendship formation.

**Keywords :** Friendship Formation, Youths, Psycho Social Factors, Socio-Economic Status.

## **Introduction**

Friendship is an important factor of interpersonal relationship. Modern social psychologists have also studied on the different dimensions of friendship formation. (Thaibaut and Kelley,1959; Feldman, 1985). John Thibaut and Harold Kelley's (1959) analysed that the social psychology of group was a major work that underpinned much subsequent research. They argued that we must understand the structure of a relationship in order to deal with the behavior that takes place, as it is this structure that defines the rewards and punishments available. According to this strategy, what follows is that a relationship is unsatisfactory when the costs exceed the rewards. People exchange resources with one another in the hope that they will earn a profit: that is, one in which the rewards exceed the cost.

Donn Byrne and Gerald Clore have carried out extensive research dealing with the connection between sharing attitudes with another person and liking them (Byrne, 1971; Clore & Byrne, 1974). Attitudes that were markedly similar were an important ingredient in maintaining a relationship. According to Morry's attraction-similarity model (2007), there is a lay belief that people with actual similarity produce initial attraction. The perceived similarity is either self-serving, as in a friendship, or relationship-serving, as in a romantic relationship. In a 1963 study, Theodore Newcomb pointed out that people tend to change perceived similarity to obtain balance in a relationship. Winch (1958) proposed that the main basis of attraction between two people is complementary needs. He explained it with two factors- Mutual need Gratification and Attraction to an ego ideal.

In a 1988 study, Lydon, Jamieson & Zanna suggest that interpersonal similarity and attraction are multidimensional constructs in which people are attracted to people similar to themselves in demographics, physical appearance, attitudes, interpersonal style, social and cultural background, personality, preferred interests and activities, and communication and social skills. Byrne, Clore and Worchel (1966) suggested people with similar economic status are likely to be attracted to each other. Buss & Barnes (1986) also found that people prefer their romantic partners to be similar in certain demographic characteristics, including religious background, political orientation and socio-economic status.

## **Objective of the Present Research**

In the present social context, it is essential to identify the similarity and dissimilarity percentage of psycho social factors which are more or less effective in friendship formation of youths especially university students. Especially when the social scenario is changing and tendency of personal benefit is increasing. People, particularly youths are tending more to progress, develop and have a high socio-economic status. In this perspective, the basis and nature of friendship formation in university students are certainly changing.

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\* Ph.D, Department of Psychology, Patna University

## A psycho social analysis of friendship formation among youths of different Socio Economic status

Identifying and analyzing these changes was the main purpose of the present study.

The present study is intended to examine the role of socio economic status on different psycho social factors of friendship formation.

### Hypotheses

The main tentative hypotheses of the present research are as follows—

- 1- Subjects from High, Middle and Low SES would differ on the different factors of similarity in friendship formation.
- 2- Similarity of study interest among youths will enhance friendship formation.
- 3- Similarity of sports interest among youths will make more friendship relation.
- 4- Persons with equal food interest, dress interest and political ideology will be friends.
- 5- There will be more possibility of friendship among youths with equal socio economic status.
- 6- Similar life goals among youths will be more beneficial in their friendship.
- 7- Similarity of religion and caste among youths will have more friendship formation.
- 8- Similar thought about own physical beauty of youths will have more friendship formation among them.

### Methodology

(A) Sample— As a sample, 400 students (boys and girls) from different colleges and University Departments of Patna Town were selected. They were selected randomly. In these 400 students, 140 were from High SES, 160 were from Middle SES and 100 were from Low SES. In this study, Accidental cum Purposive sampling technique was used.

(B) Tools—To study the different socio psychological factors among students, a friendship relation scale was used. This scale was developed by Professor Dr. Kartk Jha and Uday Shankar. It was earlier used in a project study in Department of Psychology (April, 2007). With this scale one can study the role of similarity of caste, religion, socio-economic status, residence, interest of sports etc in formation of friendship.

This scale has three parts- Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3. Part 1 has 12 items which collect the personal information about the subject, like name, education, caste, religion, goal of life, SES, interest of sports, interest of food etc. Part 2 has 7 items which measures friendship orientation. The part 3 has 13 items. The first item of this part asks about the name of two best friends of the subject. Second item finds out why the subject has chosen these two as his/her best friends. In this item, there are three causes given as the alternatives. According to the choice of the subjects, these are categorized as the order of 1, 2 and 3. Remaining 11 items collect the same information about the subject's friends that was earlier asked about the subject in the Part 1 of the scale, like education, caste, religion, goal of life etc. On the basis of these, the similarity and dissimilarity of information can be studied.

(C) Data Collection Procedure—The obtained data were subjected to statistical analysis with the help of similarity and dissimilarity percentage and chi square.

**Results:** The results of the present study have been presented in tabular form.

**Table-A**

Similarity % of students belonging from High, Middle and Low SES on different factors of friendship formation

S. No	Factors	HIGH SES N=140		MIDDLE SES N=160		LOW SES N=100		Chi square X <sup>2</sup>
		similarity	Dissimilarity	similarity	Dissimilarity	similarity	Dissimilarity	
1	Study interest	52.04%	47.96%	58.76%	41.24%	56.04%	43.96%	1.63 P>.05
2	Sports interest	46.83%	53.17%	48.39%	51.61%	61.39%	38.61%	5.92 P<.05
3	Food interest	52.31%	47.69%	58.69%	41.31%	62.68%	37.32%	3.43 P>.05
4	Dress interest	68.09%	31.91%	61.12%	38.88%	54.47%	45.53%	4.81 P>.05

5	Political Ideology	38.99%	61.01%	39.95%	60.05%	46.81%	53.19%	1.87	P>.05
6	SES	53.39%	46.61%	76.63%	23.37%	57.46%	42.54%	18.66	P<.001
7	Goal of life	33.43%	66.57%	50%	50%	40.62%	59.38%	9.05	P<.05
8	Religion	73.06%	26.94%	93.71%	6.29%	85.31%	14.69%	23.31	P<.001
9	Caste	30.38%	69.62%	22.59%	77.41%	34.13%	65.87%	4.47	P>.05
10	Physical beauty	66.2%	33.8%	67.55%	32.45%	71.14%	28.86%	0.76	P>.05

Table A presents the similarity and dissimilarity percentage of students from High, Middle and Low socio economic status on the ten factors of friendship formation. From the table we can see that on some factors like, sports interest, Socio economic status, life goals and religion, the process of friendship formation with the basis of similarity and dissimilarity has been found significantly different among the subjects of High, Middle and Low SES. While on the others factors like- study interest, food interest, dress interest, political ideology, caste and physical beauty, the reactions of the subjects of High, Middle and Low SES have not found significantly different. These findings partially support the first hypothesis of the study.

For instance, equal importance has been given to the study interest from the students of High SES (52%), Middle SES (58%) and Low SES (56%). However the subjects from middle SES have considered study interest more important than subjects of high SES and low SES. But there has been no significant difference found among subjects of these three groups. This result does not confirm the second hypothesis of the study.

Nevertheless, significant difference has been found between subjects of High, Middle and Low SES in friendship formation on the basis of similarity in sports interest. Where 46% subjects of high SES and 48% subjects of middle SES have chosen friends with similar sports interest, there 61% subjects of low SES selected friends of similar sports interest. It means that similarity of sports interest has been found in subjects of High and Middle SES but the response of Low SES subjects was different from these two groups. Subjects of low SES have preferred similarity in sports interest more important than the subjects of high and middle socio economic status. This finding fully supports the third hypothesis of the study.

On the other side, no significant differences have been found among the subjects of High, Middle and Low SES on the basis of the similarity of food interest, dress interest and Political ideology in friendship formation. Although, subjects of Low SES (62%) have displayed more similarity on the food interest than the subjects of High (52%) and Middle SES (58%). But it is clear that subjects of all the three groups have considered food interest important in friendship formation. On the other side, 68% subjects of High SES, 61% subjects of Middle SES and 54% subjects of Low SES have given importance to the dress interest in friendship formation. Clearly, these three groups have supported the similarity of dress interest in friendship formation. However subjects of high SES have displayed more similarity for dress interest than subjects of Middle and Low SES, but they have not found significantly different. Moreover, Subjects of High SES (39%), Middle SES (40%) and Low SES (46%) have given importance to the similarity of political ideology in friendship formation. 61% subjects of High SES, 60% subjects of Middle SES and 54% subjects of Low SES have chosen friends who have different political ideology from them. These findings do not confirm the fourth hypothesis of the study.

Subjects from High, Middle and Low SES have found significantly different on the similarity of Socio economic status, Goal of Life and Religion in friendship formation. 53% subjects of High SES and 57% subjects of Low SES have chosen those persons as friends who were economically similar to them while 76% subjects of Middle SES have selected friends with similar economical condition. Only 14% subjects of Middle SES have friends with different economic status. It illustrates that similarity of economic status in friendship formation has been found different in the context of subjects from High, Middle and Low SES. This confirms the fifth hypothesis of the present study.

Similarly, the subjects of three groups have found different on the similarity of life goal. 33% subjects of High SES, 50% of Middle SES and 40% subjects of Low SES have selected those people as friends who have same goals of life. It shows that 66%, 50% and 59% subjects of High, Middle and Low SES respectively have friends with different life goals. It clarifies that subjects have not considered similarity of life goal important in friendship formation. The three status groups have found significantly differ. This supports the sixth hypothesis of the study.

Significant difference has been found among the subjects of three status groups on the similarity of religion factor. 73% subjects of High SES have chosen friends with similar religion, there 93% subjects of Middle SES and 85% subjects of Low SES have friends with same religion. 26% High SES subjects, 6% Middle SES subjects and 14% Low SES subjects have friends of different religion. It is clear that subjects of High, Middle and Low SES have found different on the similarity and dissimilarity of religion. Table also shows that caste similarity is not a factor in friendship formation. Only 30% High SES subjects, 22% Middle SES subjects and 34% Low SES subjects have similarity with their friends on this factor. This is an interesting finding that now students do not give importance to caste while making friendship. These results partially support the seventh hypothesis of the study.

On the other side, similarity in physical beauty is not important for friendship. 66% subjects of High SES, 67% of Middle SES and 71% subjects of Low SES have friends whom they perceive as beautiful as themselves. It does not fulfill the eighth hypothesis of the study.

Conclusively, on the basis of analysis of the results, it can be said that similarity in interest of sport, SES, Goal of Life and religion are bases of friendship formation among youths. In the present study, subjects of High, Middle and Low SES groups do differ on factors of study interest and political ideology. It shows that effect of gender has been seen only in two factors and not in the rest factors. It may be because the social scenario of India is changing fast and the older bases of friendship formation are now changing.

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