

Friendships Quality and Classmates Support: How to Influence the Well-Being of Adolescents

Gina Tomé^{[a],*}; Margarida Gaspar de Matos^[b]; Inês Camacho^[c]; Celeste Simões^[d]; José Alves Diniz^[e]

^[a]PhD, FCM, NOVA University of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal.

^[b]Professor of Health Psychology, FMH, University of Lisbon, CMTD/UNL, Lisbon, Portugal.

^[c]PhD, FMH/T.University of Lisbon, CMTD/UNL, Lisbon, Portugal.

^[d]FMH/T.University of Lisbon, CMTD/UNL, Lisbon, Portugal.

^[e]FMH/T.University of Lisbon, CMTD/UNL, Lisbon, Portugal.

*Corresponding author.

Received 2 May 2014; accepted 15 August 2014

Published online 27 September 2014

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of quality friendship and classmates support on risk behaviour and well-being of Portuguese adolescents.

The sample was composed by individuals that participated in the study in continental Portugal, integrating the European study HBSC – Health Behaviour in School – aged Children. The study included a total of 4877 students from the 6th, 8th and 10th grades from Portuguese public schools, with an average age of 14 years.

The results revealed the trend towards classmates' more protection for involvement in risky behaviour, than to have high quality friends. The quality of friendship comes as the protector factor to other areas just as important, as happiness, life satisfaction and quality of life.

Key words: Friendships quality; Classmates support; Adolescents; Risk behaviour; Well-being

Tomé, G., de Matos, M. G., Camacho, I., Simões, C., & Diniz, J. A. (2014). Friendships Quality and Classmates Support: How to Influence the Well-Being of Adolescents. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 7(2), 149-160. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/5656> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/5656>

INTRODUCTION

Friendship requires spending some time with others in activities, talking about varied subjects, providing social support and sharing information. Whatever type of activity, is important to be among friends (Qualter & Munn, 2005), either in occasional large groups (with circumstantial interests as a musical show or a sporting event), stable broad groups as is the case of classmates, small groups (within or outside the class) that tend to interact without adult supervision, or individual friendships which include special or intimate friends (Brown, 2004; Trallero, 2010). The individuals tend to experience various stages in their friendships and have various types of friends. The experience of these stages and the closest relationships help us feel happier, comfortable to self-express, feel and act responsible.

The friendship quality may also vary depending on the type of friendship that remains. For example, the best friend friendship might have a higher quality as close friends can have a different level of quality (Demir & Özdemir, 2010). The quality of friendship is a multidimensional construct consisting of positive (such as security, companionship, support, intimacy) or negative (conflict) aspects. However, it is methodologically difficult to measure it, since perceptions of what is a quality friendship are very different. Adolescents often have more than a good friendship with reciprocity. The quality of friendship is usually recognized when transmits less conflict and involves more companionship, security and trust (Woods, Done, & Kalsi, 2009).

It seems reasonable to consider that part of the reason for a quality friendship is associated to happiness, by providing the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (such as autonomy or competence), when subjects

experience high levels of quality in their friendships (Demir & Özdemir, 2010).

Friendship plays an important role in the health and well-being of adolescents. A close friendship with quality and with peers provides psychological well-being and strategies for coping with stress. It can still influence many contexts of adolescents' lives, such as attitude towards school or the relationship with parents (Wilkinson, 2010). Adolescents develop their self-image through the perception that they think that others have of them. The development of self-image will be gradually developed through the kind of relationship that the adolescents have essentially with peers. A negative relationship with peers can hinder this development, resulting in a possible social and emotional harm (Kim, Rapee, Oh, & Moon, 2008).

A high quality friendship can avoid feelings of loneliness (Tomé, Matos, & Diniz, 2008), symptoms of depression and increase self-esteem (Demir & Urberg, 2006). The peer group is of great importance during adolescence and a close and quality friendship may be more important than acceptance by a peer group (Demir & Urberg, 2006). Throughout adolescence peers become the reference pictures and a closer relationship can provide fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety, keeping youth healthy. Those who maintain less close relations have greater interpersonal difficulties that may affect their health (Nelis & Rae, 2009).

The mental health of adolescents may be affected by difficulties in maintaining social relationships with peers, through the absence of sense of belonging, rejection by peers, or a break in social relations. This interference may differ between the genders. Girls are emotionally more affected, while boys show a greater influence on their behaviour. Girls tend to have more psychological and emotional symptoms, while boys outsource these problems through behaviour (Bakker, Ormel, Verhulst, & Oldehinkel, 2009). The influence of peers can be positive or negative, more or less two-way, and can promote the similarity or exclusion. It may take the form of direct pressure (adoption of certain attitudes and behaviours and proscribing others), behavioural modelling (acquisition of attitudes and styles of expression through imitation), the normative regulation (enhancement of standards of behaviour and lifestyles), management opportunities (or contexts create opportunities to practice and reinforce certain behaviours) and feedback (opinions, advice) (Brown, 2004; Hartup, 2005; Kim, Rapee, Oh, & Moon, 2008; Sumter, Bokhorst, Steinberg, & Westenberg, 2009). Thus, peers can strongly determine the preferences in dress, manner of speaking, choices of media (movies, music, television, Web) illicit substance use, sexual behaviour, use and degree of acceptance of violence, the adoption of crime and anti-social behaviours and in many other spheres of life of adolescents (Padilla, Walker & Bean, 2009; Reitz et al., 2006; Tomé, Matos & Diniz, 2008; Trallero, 2010).

Some studies (Bot, Engels, Knibbe, & Meeus, 2005; Hartup, 2005) show that closer relationships with reciprocity, with greater intimacy and companionship have more influence on the welfare of adolescents than those where there are conflicts or low relational quality. Segrin and Taylor (2007) in the study of 703 subjects, aged between 18 and 87 years, found that social skills were strongly associated to positive relations with others and that both were associated with psychological well-being. The mutual friendship proves to be an important factor of social support, beyond the number of friends. Friends provide a context where every young person learns social skills and serves as a source of social support (Vaquera & Kao, 2008).

The fact that the peer group has a wide number of factors may hinder the closeness among adolescents, preventing intimate and more protective relationships. To have only one close friend can be enough to prevent certain conducts harmful to the health of adolescents (Jellesma, Rieff, & Terwogt, 2008). This shows how important it is for adolescents to have friends whom make them feel well and whom they can trust. The benefits of a quality of friendship are extensive and provide best friends, causing young people to maintain mutual friendships (Nangle, Erdley, Newman, Mason, & Carpenter, 2003). Having close friends can promote academic success due to the positive effect of friendship, as well as feelings of loneliness in children can lead to low motivation and academic achievement (Hughes, Dyer, Luo, & Kwok, 2009).

Adolescents spend much time at school, which makes this the ideal context for the protection or involvement in risk behaviours. The school has a significant effect on the psychosocial development of young people, for example, the school environment and connection to school and teachers may be protective factors for young people, especially for those who have a strong connection to school (Piko & Kovács, 2010). Piko and Kovács (2010) found that the good academic results provide the adolescent a feeling of success, helping to avoid engaging in risky behaviour such as substance consumption and influencing attachment to school and teachers. According to Suldo and Hueber (2006), a high quality of from classmates has a greater effect on life satisfaction of adolescents than social support of special friends. Teachers' expectations are another variable that might influence the academic success of children and adolescents. For example, teachers who reveal more positive expectations for students, provide more opportunities to participate criticize less and interact more positively with their students (Jussim & Harber, 2005).

Having friends at school helps the adolescent to be more involved in school activities, and maintain a high academic performance. Interpersonal relationships within the school context (with teachers, parents and peers) can

provide more autonomy to adolescents. In the relationship with classmates, the acceptance of peers and the number of friends can influence their academic achievement (Lubbers, Van Der Werf, Snijders, Creemers, & Kuyper, 2006). Jiménez, Moreno, Murgui and Musitu (2008) found that acceptance of classmates and the degree of friendship between the students were related to violent behaviour in classroom, which in turn influenced the relationship with teachers. Violent behaviour could be both a strategy to gain power within the group as a mean to obtain social approval. The authors also found that students rejecting a worse relationship with the teachers were also the most violent.

Rueger, Malecki and Demaray (2008) observed gender differences regarding the perception of support by classmates. The girls had a higher perception of support from close friends than their parents, teachers or classmates; the boys had less perceived support from classmates than from close friends, teachers or parents. They also found that support from classmates was the best predictor for depression and fewer symptoms of hyperactivity, leadership and social skills for girls. For boys leadership emerged as a better predictor. Already Rueger, Malecki and Demaray (2010) found that support from classmates was the only predictor of fewer symptoms of depression and a more positive attitude toward school for boys but not for girls. Both results highlight the importance of support from classmates and the difference not only between the genders, but between the kind of friendship that adolescents maintain within and outside the school.

Thus, apart from the context, the relationship with the peer group is also coupled differently according to gender (Pereira & Matos, 2005; Trallero, 2010). Boys spend more time with the group, more days with friends and go out more often at night (Tomé, Matos, & Diniz, 2008). Girls show greater emotional closeness to friends, friendships tend to be narrower and more intimate. Boys are usually part of larger groups, with greater openness to new friendships and less intimacy (Nangle, 2004; Vaquera & Kao, 2008), are more permeable to the influences of particular groups in risk behaviours (Küntscher & Gmel, 2004). Among older adolescents, there seems to be more resistance to such influence, that is, it seems that with age teens become less vulnerable to negative peer influence. This resistance can be explained due to the maturity that young people will acquire, which helps them control their impulses or have greater responsibility. Gender also seems to be another differentiating factor in the influence of peers. The girls seem to be less susceptible to such influence, although this susceptibility tendency to decrease in both sexes over the age (Sumter, Bokhorst, Steinberg, & Westenberg, 2009).

Although adolescents spend more time with peers than with their family, their relationship with parents continues to have a protective function and parents provide security

(Hair, Moore, Garrett, Ling, & Cleveland, 2008). The separation from family and closeness to peers may be due not only to the need to share experiences with peers and social relationships outside the family environment. It is also due to the changes experienced in family structure and adolescent development, largely from the lifestyle adopted in large cities. This has decreased the time of cohabitation between parents and children, and opening up space for the peer group assumes an increasingly important role in their development. That is, at the same time they try to integrate a group of peers, adolescents tend to distance themselves from parental control and other authority figures (Engels & Bogt, 2001).

The elusive friendship during adolescence is a duality. Sometimes it seems intense and influential, sometimes superficial and transient. However, several studies in the area indicate that the relationship with peers is associated to essential skills throughout adolescence, as the demand for autonomy, identity formation, sexuality and the exploitation of future expectations. These are beginning to develop while the teenager is learning to relate to peers and start closer relationships outside the family environment (Wilkinson, 2010).

This study aims to analyze the influence of quality friendship and maintained relationships with classmates on risk behaviour and well-being of Portuguese adolescents. It is expected that adolescents who maintain friendships with more quality and who reported having closer classmates have less involvement in risky behaviours that compromise their health and greater well-being.

1. METHOD

1.1 Sample

The data were drawn from the 2005/2006 World Health Organization collaborative HBSC study. HBSC is an international collaboration between research teams in 41 countries (2005/2006) across Europe and North America that aims to monitor and further understanding adolescent physical health and psychosocial well-being, and its antecedents. Data were collected through a school-based survey using classroom-administered self-completion questionnaires in each participating country and region, with standardized requirements for sampling, questionnaire items, and survey administration established by an internationally agreed research protocol. Participation in the survey was voluntary, with assurances provided in relation to confidentiality and anonymity. Each country respected ethical and legal requirements in their countries for this type of survey. Ethical approval for each national survey was obtained according to the national guidance and regulation in place at the time of data collection. Participating countries were required to include a minimum of 95 percent of the eligible target population within their sample frame. In the majority of

countries, national representative samples were drawn and samples were stratified to ensure representation by, for example, geography, ethnic group and school type. Further details of the study's development and methods employed can be found in Currie et al. (2001, 2004).

The Portuguese HBSC survey included pupils attending the 6th ($M=12, SD=.68$), 8th ($M=14, SD=.96$) and 10th ($M=16, SD=.91$) grades (high school) ($M = 14, SD = 1.89$). The National sample consisted of 4,877 students from 87 classes, from 125 randomly chosen Portuguese schools, representing those school grades in the entire country. From these 4,877 students, 50.4% were girls and 49.6% boys, and were distributed as follows: 31.7% attending the 6th grade, 35.7% the 8th grade and 32.6% the 10th grade. The response rate was 92% for schools.

1.2 Procedure

The sample unit used in this survey was the class, in each school classes were randomly selected in order to meet

the required number of students for each grade, which was proportional to the number of students of the same grade for each specific region according to the numbers provided by the Ministry of Education. Teachers administered the questionnaires in the classroom. The students' completion of the questionnaires was voluntary, anonymity was assured and they completed it on their own. Teachers were only allowed to help with administrative procedures.

1.3 Variables and Measures

In data collection was used the questionnaire HBSC 2006, according to its protocol. Among others, this questionnaire provides information on demographics, on indicators of well-being (quality of life related to health, happiness and life satisfaction) and on relationships with peers (Currie, Samdal, Boyce & Smith, 2001; Matos et al., 2006).

In this study was used variables related to adolescents' relationship with peers, school environment, risk behaviours, bullying and welfare, as described in Table 1.

Table 1
Study Variables

Items		Responses
Friends relationships	At present, how many close male and female friends do you have?	1. one 2. two or more
	Do you have one or more special friends?	1. Yes 2. No
	How many evenings per week do you usually spend out with your friends?	1. No night 2. One-Six nights 3. Every nights
	How many days a week do you usually spend time with friends right after school?	1. No day 2. One -Four days 3. Every days
Risk behaviours	Have you ever had so much alcohol that you were really drunk?	1. No, never 2. yes, once 3. yes, 2-3 times 4. yes, more than 10 times
	How often do you smoke tobacco at present?	1. I do not smoke 2. Less than once a week 3. At last once a week 4. Every day
	How many times have consumed illegal drugs in the past month?	1. Never 2. One time 3. More than one time 4. Frequently
Happiness	How do you fell towards life?	1. Happy 2. Unhappy
School environment	How do you feel about school at present?	1. Like 2. I don't like
	How pressured do you feel by the schoolwork you have to do?	1. Not at all 2. A little/ Some 3.A lot
Bullying	How often have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months?	1. I have not been bullied at school 2. 1-3 times 3. Several times a week
	How often have you taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months?	1. I have not bullied another student 2. 1-3 times 3. Several times a week

The relationship with teachers was measured by a subscale consisting of four items with responses on a Likert scale of three points (from “happens often” to “happens few times”). The internal consistency of the scale, measured by Cronbach’s alpha, was .66.

The support with peers in the class was measured by a subscale of three items. Participants responded on a Likert scale of five points, saying if the statements were more or less true. The internal consistency of the subscale, as measured by Cronbach’s alpha was 0.67. In order to use the scale as an independent variable, we used the analysis of percentiles to divide it into two equal groups. The groups were named as “less support classmates” with $n = 2207$ and “more support classmates” with $n = 2583$.

The quality of friendship was measured by a subscale of ten items, with an internal consistency of .95. The items consisted of statements to which subjects responded on a Likert scale of five points, between “is always false” and “is always true”. The subscale was divided into two equal groups by analysis of percentiles, with the aim of being treated as an independent variable. The groups found were named as “low quality” with $n = 2203$ and “high quality” with $n = 2264$.

The subjective health complaints were also submitted to factor analysis (KMO = 0.89) and two limiting factors with an explained variance of 43.38% were obtained. The first factor was composed by the items headaches, stomach aches, back aches, neck aches, dizziness and fatigue. This factor has an $\alpha = 0.74$. The second factor was composed by the following items: depressed, irritable, nervous, sleeping difficulties and fear. This factor has an $\alpha = 0.74$. The first factor concerns physical complaints and the higher score is related to more symptoms. The same criterion was used for factor 2, related to psychological complaints.

The scale used to measure quality of life was Kidscreen-10 (Gaspar & Matos, 2008). This scale consists of 10 items that place the adolescent in the previous week to respond to a Likert scale of five points between “nothing” and “totally”. This scale is used in this study with only one factor with $\alpha = .78$.

Satisfaction with life was measured with the scale of Cantril (1965), graphically represented as a ladder, where the step “10” corresponds to “best possible life” and step “0” represents “the worst possible life”. Adolescents were asked to mark the rung that best described their feelings at that moment.

The independent variables were the groups resulting from the friendship quality subscales and support of classmates. For the analysis of the results referred to the Chi-Square, the comparison of means (ANOVA) and logistic regression.

2. RESULTS

The subscale of friendship quality was divided into two equal groups the group of “low quality” with 49.3% and

“high quality” with 50.7%. The same procedure was performed with a subscale of the support of classmates, dividing it in a group of “less support classmates” with 46.1% and “more support classmates” with 53.9%.

With regard to differences between groups of friendship quality, it was found by the Chi-Square test that boys have more “low quality friendship” ($\chi^2 = 218.429$ (1), $p \leq .001$, 60.7 %), whereas girls have more “high quality friendship” ($\chi^2 = 218.429$ (1), $p \leq .001$, 61.4%). In terms of age, adolescents aged 13 ($\chi^2 = 27.886$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 53.3%) have more “low quality friendship” and elderly, aged 15, have more “high quality friendship” ($\chi^2 = 27.886$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 54.7%). The results for “close friends” were not statistically significant. Teens who claim having one or more special friends have more “high quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 152.501$ (1), $p \leq .001$, 99.1%), and those who have no special friends have more “low quality” ($\chi^2 = 152.501$ (1), $p \leq .001$, 8.9%). For a night out with friends, those who state not to go out any night have more “low quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 17.351$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 52.1%) and those who go out between one to six nights a week have more “high quality” ($\chi^2 = 17.351$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 50.5%). The same trend holds true for teens who do not stay with friends after school, they have more “low quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 23.069$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 12.6%); those staying one to four days a week have more “low quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 23.069$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 56.5%) and those staying with friends after school every day have more “high quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 23.069$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 37.8%). With regard to risk behaviours and groups of friendship quality, for drunkenness is observed that adolescents who have never been drunk have more “low quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 16.910$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 76.6%), those who have been drunk once have more “high quality” ($\chi^2 = 16.910$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 12.5%) and those who have been drunk two to ten times have “high quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 16.910$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 13.4%). Teens who say they do not smoke have more “low quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 11.293$ (3), $p \leq .01$, 89.1%), while those who smoke every day have more “high quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 11.293$ (3), $p \leq .01$, 6.1%). For the “consumption of illicit substances in the past month” those who consumed more than once have more “high quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 8.978$ (3), $p \leq .05$, 1.9%). For the well-being, adolescents with more “high quality friends” feel happier ($\chi^2 = 14.366$ (1), $p \leq .001$, 85%), while those who feel unhappy have more “low quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 14.366$ (1), $p \leq .001$, 19.3%). In examining the school environment, it was found that adolescents claiming to like school have more “high quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 15.986$ (1), $p \leq .001$, 79.8%) and those who dislike school have more “low quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 15.986$ (1), $p \leq .001$, 25.2%). For the pressure with their homework, those who do not feel any pressure have more “high quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 16.829$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 20.9%) while those who feel little or some pressure have more “low quality friends”

($\chi^2 = 16.829$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 72.8%). Finally, regarding to bullying, it is observed that adolescents who were never bullied have more “high quality friends” in school ($\chi^2 = 41.801$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 63.7%). Those that were bullied less than once a week had more “low quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 41.801$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 35.0%), those that were bullied about once a week had more “low quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 41.801$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 4.9%) and those bullied many times have more “low quality friends” ($\chi^2 = 41.801$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 5.2%).

For the mean differences using the ANOVA test, even for groups of friendship quality, it appears that adolescents with “high quality of friendships” have a higher mean of physical complaints ($M = 10.11$, $SD = 4.5$) (F (1, 4370) = 9.206, $p \leq .01$), satisfaction with life ($M = 7.50$, $SD = 1.9$) (F (1, 4429) = 48.983, $p \leq .001$), quality of life ($M = 39.51$, $SD = 5.4$) (F (1, 4257) = 77.356, $p \leq .001$), support from teachers ($M = 9.31$, $SD = 2.2$) (F (1, 4272) = 16.952, $p \leq .001$) and support from classmates ($M = 12.71$, $SD = 1.9$) (F (1, 4393) = 90.634, $p \leq .001$), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Analysis of Variance for Friendship Quality (ANOVA)

	Low quality			High quality			<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Physical complains	2153	9,71	4,2	2219	10,11	4,5	9,206	.002**
Psychological complains	2151	8,76	4,1	2215	8,82	4,1	.184	.668
Life satisfaction	2181	7,10	1,9	2250	7,50	1,9	48,983	.000***
KIDSCREEN-10	2079	38,04	1,9	2180	39,51	5,4	77,356	.000***
Teachers support	2100	9,03	2,2	2174	9,31	2,2	16,952	.000***
School colleagues suport	2167	12,14	2,1	2228	12,71	1,9	90,634	.000***

** $p \leq .05$; *** $p \leq .001$

For groups from the support from classmates subscale, the Chi-Square test showed that girls have “less support to classmates” ($\chi^2 = 7.939$ (1), $p \leq .01$, 48.1 %), while boys have “more support” ($\chi^2 = 7.939$ (1), $p \leq .01$, 56%). For age is observed that older adolescents, aged 15, have “less support to classmates” ($\chi^2 = 56.184$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 51.1%), while the younger ones are closer ($\chi^2 = 56.184$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 62.4%). With regard to the variables of the relationship with friends, teens who have only a close friend have “less support to classmates” ($\chi^2 = 9.701$ (1), $p \leq .01$, 1.9%), those with one or more friends have special closeness with their classmates ($\chi^2 = 11.474$ (1), $p \leq .001$, 95.5%). For risk behaviour, those who have never been drunk, are “more support to classmates” ($\chi^2 = 35.250$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 76.9%), those who never smoked are also “more

support to the colleagues” group ($\chi^2 = 27.295$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 90.2%) and those who did not consume illicit substances in the past month are also “more support to their classmates” ($\chi^2 = 21.758$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 96.9%). Happy adolescents are closer to their classmates ($\chi^2 = 130.565$ (1), $p \leq .001$, 88.7%). With regard to the school environment, the results go along the previous same lines. Adolescents who like school ($\chi^2 = 47.731$ (1), $p \leq .001$, 81.1%) and those who feel no pressure with homework ($\chi^2 = 42.495$ (2), $p \leq .001$, 21.5%) have greater support to classmates. With regard to bullying, young people who have never been bullied ($\chi^2 = 114.473$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 65.5%) and those who never bullied their colleagues in school ($\chi^2 = 50.708$ (3), $p \leq .001$, 68%), have more support to classmates. Results can be observed in Table 3.

Table 3
Differences for School Colleagues Suport

Background		School colleagues suport						χ^2	gl
		Less support classmates		More support classmates		Total			
		N	%	N	%				
Gender	Boys	1042	44,0	1325	56,0	2367	7,939**	1	
	Girls	1165	48,1	1258	51,9	2463			
Age	11 years	384	37,6	637	62,4	1021	56,184***	2	
	13 years	634	43,9	810	56,1	1444			
	15 years old or more	1189	51,1	1136	48,9	2325			
Close friends	One	40	1,9	21	0,8	61	9,701**	1	
	Two or more	2052	98,1	2451	99,2	4503			
Special friends	Yes	1968	93,2	2348	95,5	4316	11,474***	1	
	No	143	6,8	110	4,5	253			
Night out with friends	No night	1049	48,5	1272	50,1	2321	1,204	2	
	One-six nights	1038	48,0	1179	46,4	2217			
	Every nights	75	3,5	88	3,5	163			
Stay with friends after school	No day	275	12,7	278	11,1	553	3,663	2	
	One –four days	1161	53,8	1351	53,8	2512			
	Every days	724	33,5	884	35,2	1608			
Drunkness	Never	1526	70,0	1968	76,9	3494	35,250***	3	
	One time	264	12,1	280	10,9	544			
	Two-ten times	316	14,5	254	9,9	570			
Tobacco use	More than 10 times	74	3,4	57	2,2	131	27,295***	3	
	I do not smoke	1850	85,3	2292	90,2	4142			
	Less than once a week	113	5,2	97	3,8	210			
	At last once a week	74	3,4	54	2,1	128			
Illicit substances use	Every day	133	6,1	99	3,9	232	21,758***	3	
	Never	1908	94,1	2303	96,9	4211			
	One time	47	2,3	35	1,5	82			
	More than one time	44	2,2	22	0,9	66			
Happiness	Frequently	29	1,4	17	0,7	46	130,565***	1	
	Happy	1638	76,1	2244	88,7	3882			
	Unhappy	515	23,9	286	11,3	801			
School satisfaction	Like	1597	72,6	2079	81,1	3676	47,731***	1	
	I don't like	602	27,4	486	18,9	1088			
	Not at all	325	14,9	551	21,5	876			
Pressure schoolwork	A little/ Some	1575	72,0	1768	68,9	3343	42,495***	2	
	A lot	288	13,2	248	9,7	536			
Been bullied	I have not been bullied	1124	51,9	1657	65,5	2781	114,473***	3	
	Less than once a week	786	36,3	735	29,0	1521			
	About once a week	107	4,9	71	2,8	178			
	Frequently	150	6,9	68	2,7	218			
Bullied another students	I have not bullied	1274	59,0	1706	68,0	2980	50,708***	3	
	Less than once a week	722	33,4	698	27,8	1420			
	About once a week	84	3,9	47	1,9	131			
	Frequently	80	3,7	59	2,4	139			

In the mean differences using ANOVA, we found that adolescents with “more support to classmates” have a lower mean ($M = 9.33, SD = 3.9$) of physical symptoms compared to those with less support ($M = 10.53, SD = 4.7$) ($F(1, 4677) = 89.967, p \leq .001$); have lower average psychological complaints ($M = 8.05, SD = 3.6$) compared to those with less support ($M = 9.57, SD = 4.4$) ($F(1, 4663) = 165.877, p \leq .001$); have higher average life satisfaction ($M = 7.66, SD = 1.7$) compared to group with less support to classmates ($M = 6.90, SD = 2.0$) ($F(1, 4753) = 193.404, p \leq .001$); have higher mean of quality of life ($M = 40.30, SD = 5.0$) compared with those less support to classmates ($M = 37.03, SD = 5.6$) ($F(1, 4558) = 436.474, p \leq .001$); have higher mean of teachers support ($M = 9.52, SD = 2.1$) compared to those with less support classmates ($M = 8.79, SD = 2.2$) ($F(1, 4523) = 129.442, p \leq .001$) and finally, have higher mean of friendship quality ($M = 43.53, SD = 7.6$) when compared to the group with less support ($M = 40.92, SD = 8.8$) ($F(1, 4393) = 110.684, p \leq .001$).

After all there were two models of logistic regression in order to explain the condition of “high quality friendship” and “more support to classmates.” In each of the models were statistically significant variables included in the analysis of Chi-Square and ANOVA with a significance level greater than $p \leq .01$.

For the “high friendship” factor, we obtained an adjusted model (Hosmer and Lemeshow $\chi^2 = 6.688(8) p = .571$) and the regression equation explained 20% of the variance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .199$) and 71.5% of adolescents who have friends with “high quality”. In this model the explanation of the high quality of friendship was made by the variables gender (boys are 1.08 times less likely to have a high quality friendship than girls), age (adolescents aged 11 are .41 times less likely to have a low quality friendship and the aged 13 are .34 times to have a low quality friendship than the adolescents aged 15), those who have special friends (2.16 times more likely to have a high quality friendship), the adolescents who spend one to four days with friends after school (.18 times less likely to have a high quality friendship than those who stay every day), adolescents who have never been drunk (.58 times less likely to have high quality friends than those who got drunk several times), physical symptoms (.04 times more likely to have high quality friends), quality of life (.07 times more likely to have high quality friends), the support of classmates (.11 times more likely to have high quality friends) and ultimately the satisfaction with life (the most satisfied are .05 times more likely to high quality friends) (Table 4).

Table 4
Predictors of Good Friendship Quality (Logistic Regression)

	β	E.P	Sig	OR	95%IC than	95% IC to
Gender (male)	-1,084	,080	,000	,338	,289	,395
Age (11 years)	-,411	,108	,000	,663	,536	,819
13 years	-,339	,091	,000	,713	,596	,852
Special friends (yes)	2,165	,277	,000	8,717	5,060	15,015
Night out with friends (no night)	-,405	,236	,086	,667	,420	1,059
One-six nights	-,138	,230	,550	,871	,555	1,368
Stay with friends after school (no day)	-,051	,130	,693	,950	,737	1,225
One –four days	-,186	,082	,023	,830	,707	,974
Been drunk (Never)	-,582	,252	,021	,559	,341	,915
One time	-,145	,266	,586	,865	,514	1,457
Two-ten times	-,219	,262	,403	,803	,481	1,342
Happiness (happy)	-,114	,116	,326	,892	,711	1,120
School satisfaction (like)	,066	,094	,477	1,069	,890	1,284
Pressured by schoolwork (not at all)	,097	,148	,511	1.102	,825	1,472
A little/ some	-,063	,122	,603	,939	,739	1,192
Been bullied (I have not been bullied)	-,162	,198	,415	,851	,577	1,255
Less than once a week	-,198	,198	,318	,820	,556	1,210
About once a week	-,375	,270	,165	,687	,405	1,166
Bullied another students (I have not bullied)	,318	,236	,178	1,375	,865	2,185
Less than once a week	,207	,239	,387	1,229	,770	1,963
About once a week	,254	,315	,651	1,289	,695	2,390
Physical complains	,044	,010	,000	1,045	1,025	1,066
Life satisfaction	,056	,024	,020	1,058	1,009	1,109
KIDSCREEN-10	,072	,010	,000	1,075	1,054	1,095
Teachers support	,031	,018	,079	1,032	,996	1,068
School colleagues suport	,112	,020	,000	1,119	1,075	1,164
Constante	-5,814	,614	,000	,003		
$R^2_N = 0,199$						
$\chi^2_{HIP} = 6,688; 0,571$						

The model found for the variable “more support to classmates” was also a fitted model (Hosmer and Lemeshow $\chi^2 = 14.982$ (8) $p = .059$) and the regression equation explained 17% of the variance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .168$) and 72.4% of teens who are more support to classmates. The explanation of this closeness between classmates was achieved by the variables not being bullied in school, .7 times more likely to have to have more support to classmates, bullying colleagues about

once a week, with .73 times less likely to be have closer classmates, the teachers support, the adolescents feeling more supported are .06 times more likely to have more support to classmates, the quality of life (those with more quality of life are 0.08 times more likely to have more support to classmates) and ultimately the quality of friendship, where it appears that adolescents with higher friendship quality are 0.03 times more likely to have more support classmates (Table 5).

Table 5
Predictors of School Colleagues Support (Logistic Regression)

	β	E.P	Sig	OR	95%IC than	95% IC to
Gender (male)	,078	,082	,343	1,081	,921	1,269
Age (11 years)	,210	,108	,052	1,234	,998	1,526
13 years	,119	,092	,195	1,126	,941	1,348
Special friends (yes)	-,300	,192	,119	,741	,508	1,080
Been drunk (Never)	-,048	,286	,867	,953	,545	1,668
One time	-,050	,297	,866	,951	,531	1,703
Two-ten times	-,195	,288	,498	,823	,468	1,446
Tobacco use (I do not smoke)	-,075	,207	,718	,928	,618	1,392
Less than once a week	,084	,264	,751	1,087	,648	1,823
At last once a week	-,164	,293	,575	,848	,477	1,508
Illicit substances use (Never)	,674	,506	,183	1,962	,728	5,289
One	,243	,567	,669	1,275	,419	3,876
More than one time	-,104	,583	,859	,901	,287	2,828
Happiness (Happy)	-,059	,121	,629	,943	,744	1,196
School satisfaction (Like)	,055	,096	,571	1,056	,875	1,275
Pressured by schoolwork (Not at all)	,040	,150	,790	1,041	,776	1,395
A little/ Some	-,036	,123	,772	,965	,759	1,228
Been Bullied (I have not been bullied)	,688	,208	,001	1,990	1,324	2,993
Less than once a week	,370	,209	,076	1,448	,962	2,181
About once a week	,243	,279	,384	1,275	,738	2,202
Bullied another students (I have not bullied)	-,254	,250	,309	,775	,475	1,266
Less than once a week	-,283	,252	,261	,753	,459	1,235
About once a week	-,739	,331	,025	,477	,250	,913
Physical complains	-,002	,011	,843	,998	,976	1,020
Psychological complains	-,020	,013	,117	,980	,956	1,005
Life satisfaction	,026	,025	,290	1,026	,978	1,077
KIDSCREEN-10	,085	,010	,000	1,089	1,027	1,049
Teachers support	,062	,018	,001	1,064	1,027	1,102
Friendship Quality	,037	,005	,000	1,038	1,027	1,049
Constante	-5,911	,728	,000	,003		

$R^2_N = 0,168$

$\chi^2_{HIP} = 14,982; 0,059$

The results described indicate a trend towards greater protection of classmates on involvement in risky behaviours.

3. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine whether the quality of friendship and support to classmates can influence the welfare and adolescents' involvement in risk behaviours.

The quality of friendship is generally recognized by the reciprocity in friendships, fellowship and exchanging experiences. It is difficult to measure, since teens often have more than a good friend (Woods, Done, & Kalsi, 2009) and the kind of friends can vary (Demir, & Özdemir, 2010). However, there are authors who argue that having one or more friends with quality may be a protective factor for risk behaviours and for behaviours such as bullying violence (Woods, Done, & Kalsi, 2009; Bakker, Ormel, Verhulst, & Oldehinkel, 2009).

Moreover the classmates also have an essential role in the lives of adolescents, since adolescents spend much time at school and that context is privileged to prevent and protect involvement in risk behaviours. The school environment and connection to school and teachers may be protective factors for young people, especially for those who have a strong connection to school (Piko & Kovács, 2010). Some authors (Suldo & Hueber, 2006) consider that the high quality of social support from classmates has a higher effect on life satisfaction of adolescents than that of special friends (Suldo & Hueber, 2006).

In the results of this study found differences in the relationship that both sexes keep with classmates as with special friends. While girls have more high quality friendships, boys have more closeness with classmates. Results highlight the tendency for girls to maintain a greater emotional closeness with friends, having tighter friends and more intimate, while boys prefer larger groups, with greater openness to new friendships and less intimacy (Nangle, 2004; Vaquer & Kao, 2008). This difference may also be influenced by the high number of elements of peer groups, which can hinder closeness among adolescents, preventing intimate and more protective relationships (Jellesma, Rieff, & Terwogt, 2008).

There are other results worth discussing like the trend towards classmates' greater protection for involvement in risky behaviour, than to have high quality friends. This applies once: the teenagers who got drunk more often, who smoke more and consumed more illicit substances are those with more high quality friends, while for the quality of classmates, the results for the same variables are the opposite, who got drunk more often, smoke more and more frequently consumed illicit substances, are less close to classmates. It seems that the results contradict those found by Jellesma, Rieff, and Terwogt (2008) who claim that to have only a close and high quality friend may

be sufficient to prevent certain harmful conducts to the health of adolescents. In turn it considers the importance of classmates in the lives of adolescents, as classmates emerged as protective factor for high-risk behaviours.

However, the quality of friendship comes as the protector factor to other areas of the lives of adolescents just as important, as happiness, life satisfaction and quality of life, the school environment, bullying behaviours and teachers support. In all these areas the greater quality the more welfare teenagers feel. These results meet the authors that think that closest relationships with reciprocity, greater intimacy and companionship have greater influence on the well-being of adolescents (Bot, Engels, Knibbe & Meeus, 2005; Hartup, 2005); that the benefits of a high quality friendship are long (Nangle, Erdley, Newman, Mason, & Carpenter, 2003); or even that the quality of a friendship is linked to happiness (Demir & Özdemir, 2010).

The positive effect on the well-being of adolescents also regards to classmates. We observe the same tendency to happiness for the school environment, for the bullying behaviours, for the satisfaction with life, for physical and psychological symptoms, for quality of life, for the support of teachers and friendship quality. So, the closer the classmates, the more positive results are found. The difference arises when we look at the predictors of friendship and classmates' quality. While regarding quality arise not only variables associated to risk behaviours (more often drunk) but also gender (female), relationship with friends (more days with friends after school), the proximity to classmates, satisfaction with life and better quality of life, the classmates predictors seem more related to the school environment as being bullied less often, to bully less often, feeling more support from teachers, more quality friends and more life quality. We can suppose that to be closer to classmates makes the adolescents' well-being more positive in the school environment and is the biggest protective factor involvement in risk behaviours. Having friends at school helps the adolescent to be involved in school activities, and maintain a high academic performance. Interpersonal relationships within the school context (with teachers, parents and peers) can provide more autonomy to adolescents (Lubbers, Van Der Werf, Snijders, Creemers, & Kuyper, 2006). Maintaining friendships with quality, can influence the general well-being of adolescents, not just in school (since it also avoids the bullying behaviours) but also outside of school, avoiding feelings of loneliness and keeping young people more satisfied with life.

Overall, the results highlight the importance of maintaining good relations within and outside the school and especially the role of classmates in the lives of adolescents, factor which is often forgotten. The mental health of adolescents may be affected by difficulties in maintaining social relationships with peers. It was

also apparent from the results that this interference may differ between genders. Girls are affected more at emotional level, while boys show a greater influence on their behaviour. Girls tend to have more psychological and emotional symptoms, while boys outsource these problems through behaviour (Bakker, Ormel, Verhulst, & Oldehinkel, 2009).

Key Findings:

- Girls have more high quality friends;
- Boys have greater proximity to classmates;
- The proximity to classmates is the best protector for not engaging in risk behaviours;
- Variables associated to school environment emerged as best predictors for the closeness with his classmates;
- The quality of friendship positively influences the well-being of adolescents.

REFERENCES

- Bakker, M. P., Ormel, J., Verhulst, F. C., & Oldehinkel, A. J. (2009). Peer stressors and gender differences in adolescents' mental health: The TRAILS study. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 1-7.
- Bot, S. M., Engels, R. C. M. E., Knibbe, R. A., & Meeus, W. H. J. (2005). Friend's drinking behaviour and adolescent alcohol consumption: The moderating role of friendship characteristics. *Addictive Behaviors*, 30, 929-947.
- Brown, B. B. (2004). Adolescent's relationships with peers. In Lerner, R. M. & Steinberg, L. (dirs.). *Handbook of adolescent psychology* (2^a ed, pp. 363-394). Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley.
- Cantril, H. (1965). *The pattern of human concerns*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Currie, C., Samdal, O., Boyce, W., & Smith, R. (2001). *HBSC, and WHO cross national study: Research protocol for the 2001/2002 survey*. Copenhagen: WHO.
- Currie, C., Roberts, C., Morgan, A., Smith, R., Settertulte, W., Samdal, O., Rasmussen, V.(2004). *HBSC, and WHO cross national study: Research protocol for the 2001/2002 survey*. Copenhagen: WHO.
- Demir, M., & Özdemir, M. (2010). Friendship, need satisfaction and happiness. *Journal of Happiness Study*, 11, 243-259.
- Demir, M., & Urberg, K. A. (2006). Friendship and adjustment among adolescents. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 88, 68-82.
- Gaspar, T., & Matos, M. (2008). *Qualidade de vida em crianças e adolescentes versão portuguesa dos instrumentos Kidscreen 52* [Quality of life in children and adolescents Portuguese version of the Kidscreen 52 instruments]. Lisboa: FCT
- Hair, E. C., Moore, K. A., Garrett, S. B., Ling, T., & Cleveland, K. (2008). The continued importance of quality parent-adolescent relationships during late adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 18(1), 187-200.
- Hartup, W. (2005). Peer interaction: What causes what? *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 33, 387-394
- Heinrich, L., & Gullone, E. (2006). The clinical significance of loneliness: A literature review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 26, 695-718.
- Hughes, J. N., Dyer, N., Luo, W., & Kwok, O.-M. (2009). Effects of peer academic reputation on achievement in academically at-risk elementary students. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 30, 182-194.
- Jellesma, F. C., Rieffe, C., & Terwogt, M. M. (2008). My peers, my friend, and I: Peer interactions and somatic complains in boys and girls. *Social Science & Medicine*, 66, 2195-2205.
- Jiménez, I. T., Moreno, D., Murgui, S., & Musitu, G. (2008). Factores psicosociales relacionados com el estatus social del alumno en el aula: El rol de la reputación social, la amistad, la conducta violenta y la relación con el profesor. *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy*, 8, 227-236.
- Jussim, L., & Harber, K. D. (2005). Teacher expectations and self-fulfilling prophecies: Knowns and unknowns, resolved and unresolved controversies. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 9, 131-155.
- Kim, J., Rapee, M. R., Oh, J. K., & Moon, H.-S. (2008). Retrospective report of social withdrawal during adolescence and current maladjustment in young adulthood: Cross-cultural comparisons between Australian and South Korean students. *Journal of Adolescence*, 31, 543-563.
- Kuntsche, E., & Gmel, G. (2004). Emotional wellbeing and violence among social and solitary risky single occasion drinkers in adolescence. *Addiction*, 98, 331-339.
- Lubbers, J. M., Van Der Werf, P.C.M., Snijders, A.B.T., Creemers, P.M.B., & Kuyper, H. (2006). The impact of peer relations on academic progress in junior high. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44, 491-512.
- Matos, M., & Equipa do Aventura Social. (2006). *A saúde dos adolescentes Portugueses – Hoje em 8 anos – Relatório Preliminar do estudo HBSC 2006* [The health of Portuguese adolescences.- Today in 8 years – Preliminary Report of the HBSC 2006 study]. Retrieved from <http://www.fmh.utl.pt/aventurasocial.com>
- Nangle, D. W., Erdley, C. A., Newman, J. E., Mason, C. A., & Carpenter, E. M. (2003). Popularity, friendship quantity, and friendship quality: Interactive influences on children's loneliness and depression. *Journal of Clinical and Adolescent Psychology*, 4(32), 546-555.
- Nangle, D. (2004). Opposites do not attract: Social status and behavioral style concordances and discordances among children and the peers who like or dislike them. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 4(32), 425-434
- Nelis, S. M., & Rae, G. (2009). Brief report: Peer attachment in adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 32, 443-447.
- Padilla-Walker, L. M., & Bean, R. A. (2009). Negative and positive peer influence: Relations to positive and negative behaviors for African American, European American, and Hispanic adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 32, 323-337.

- Pereira, E., & Matos, M. (2005). Grupo de pares, comportamentos desviantes e consumo de substâncias [Peer groups, deviant behavior and substance use]. In M. Matos (Ed.), *Comunicação Gestão de Conflitos e Saúde na Escola* [Communication and Conflict Management in the School Health] (pp. 95-102). Cruz Quebrada: FMH Edições.
- Piko, F. B., & Kovács, E. (2010). Do parents and school matter? Protective factors for adolescent substance use. *Addictive Behaviors, 35*, 53-56.
- Qualter, P., & Munn, P. (2005). The friendships and play partners of lonely children. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 22*(3), 379-397.
- Reitz, E., Dekovic, M., Meijer, A. M., & Engels, R. C. M. (2006). Longitudinal relations among parenting, best friends, and early adolescent problem behavior. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 26*, 272-295.
- Rueger, S. Y, Malecki, C. K., & Demaray, M. K. (2008). Gender Differences in the relationship between perceived social support and student adjustment during early adolescence. *School Psychology Quarterly, 4* (23), 496-514
- Rueger, S. Y, Malecki, C. K., & Demaray, M. K. (2010). Relationship between multiple source of perceived social support and psychological and academic adjustment in early adolescence: Comparisons across gender. *Journal Youth Adolescence, 39*, 47-61.
- Segrin, C., & Taylor, M. (2007). Positive interpersonal relationships mediate the association between social skills and psychological well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences, 43*, 637-646.
- Suldo, S., & Huebner, E. S. (2006). Is extremely high life satisfaction during adolescence advantageous? *Social Indicators Research, 78*, 179-203.
- Sumter, S. R., Bokhorst, C. L., Steinberg, L., & Westenberg, P. M. (2009). The developmental pattern of resistance to peer influence in adolescence: Will the teenager ever be able to resist? *Journal of Adolescence, 32*, 1009-1021.
- Trallero, J. (2010). *El Adolescente en su mundo. Riesgos, problemas y trastornos* [The teenager in her world, risks, problems and disorder]. Madrid, Spain: Ediciones Pirámide.
- Tomé, G., Matos, M., & Diniz, A. (2008). Consumo de substâncias e isolamento social durante a adolescência [Substance consumption and social isolation during adolescences]. In M. Matos (Ed.). *Consumo de substâncias: Estilo de vida? à procura de um estilo?* [Substance consumption: Lifestyle? searching for a style?] (pp.95-126). Lisboa: IDT
- Vaquera, E., & Kao, G. (2008). Do you like me as much as I like you? Friendships reciprocity and its effects on school outcomes among adolescents. *Social Science Research, 37*, 55-72.
- Wilkinson, R. B. (2010). Best friend attachment versus peer attachment in the prediction of adolescent psychological adjustment. *Journal of Adolescence, 33*, 709-717
- Woods, S., Done, J., & Kalsi, H. (2009). Peer victimisation and internalising difficulties: The moderating role of friendship quality. *Journal of Adolescence, 32*, 293-308.