

# Role of Attitude Similarity and Proximity in Interpersonal Attraction among Friends (C 310)

Sumaya Batool<sup>1</sup> *Member, IACSIT* and Najma Iqbal Malik<sup>2</sup> *Member, IACSIT*

**Abstract**—A growing body of research explores that relationships are the significant part of our lives. The study examines important factors of attitude similarity and proximity working behind interpersonal attraction among same gender friends. The study was conducted on sample of 160 boy friends and girl friends (40 pairs in each) through purposive convenient sampling, from Punjab, Pakistan. Findings showed that friends with more similar attitudes and high proximity scored on interpersonal attraction as compared to friends with less similar attitudes regardless of gender. These findings will give a new horizon for the researchers to study friendship with a perspective of similarity and proximity. However, these findings suggest the need for a deeper and extensive study of all the factors pertaining to interpersonal attraction, which might give us more astute understanding of our social relations.

**Index Terms**—Attitude Similarity, Friendship, Interpersonal Attraction, Proximity

## I. INTRODUCTION

Satisfying relationships play significant role in individuals' mental and physical well being. For the long, social psychologists have been interested in how these relationships are established and maintained [1], [7], [9]. Attraction among different people is the basis of our social relationships which leads to friendships and romantic relationships. It is a force which draws people together and resists their separation and it is related to how much we love, hate, like or dislike someone. When making close relationships including mate selection and life time friendships, other person's qualities and social situations determine our level of attraction or repulsion towards him or her. Interpersonal attraction is influenced by many factors, like physical attractiveness, attitude similarity, proximity, reciprocity etc. [28]. No matter the gender is same or different; these determinants will remain same for predicting interpersonal attraction across different cultures [13].

Our self perceptions are based on our close relationships and on our feelings of attractiveness and attraction towards others. Apart from a person's outlook, similar attitudes and interests of a person make us feel more attracted towards him. The notion of "birds of a feather flock together" points out that similarity is a crucial determinant of interpersonal attraction. Morry [17] in his attraction-similarity model

described a common belief that people with real similarity produce initial attraction. Perceived similarity helps rating others as similar to ourselves in on-going relationship. Such perception is either self-serving (friendship) or relationship-serving (romantic relationship).

Interpersonal attraction is associated with attitude similarity, backgrounds, values and beliefs [8]. We tend to have more positive emotions towards a person when we come to know that he or she has the same attitude as ours [5]. Similarity is of great significance for us because we are always in need of others, conforming to our values and beliefs [29]. We illuminate our understanding of, and trim down our uncertainty about social situations by weighing our opinions against those of other people. Recognizing that others agree with us fortifies our beliefs and heightens our self-esteem [3].

We often assume that we share attitudes with people who attract us in other ways. A study cited in [3] conducted by Byrne and Blaylock revealed that marriage may partially based upon the illusion of similarity—that is, spouses tend to perceive more similarity in attitudes between themselves and their partners than in fact exists.

A grand study conducted at the University of Michigan by [21] measured the relationship of friendship with attitude similarity. Initial similarity between roommates ended up in a good friendship than initial dissimilarity. Same study repeated on anew group yielded similar results. There might be many reasons behind similarity attraction linkage.

One reason that similarity breeds liking might be that people value their own choices and opinions and enjoy being with others who conform their preferences, probably enhancing their self-esteem during the process. But possibly the major reason that similarity generates liking is merely a repeat of factors like, proximity and familiarity. Situational factors and social norms impact a lot in bringing those people closer who share similarity. Not only in social groups, but a majority of religious groups also prefer members of same religion for mate selection. Even in cultural norms people of same race and age are considered appropriate for each other. For example, a couple of an older woman and a younger man is still perceived as unsuitable. Situational factors also play an important role. Most of the people select their mates at college or graduate school, because they assume them to be similar in qualification level, general intelligence, ambitions, and probably in age and socioeconomic status. Moreover, tennis players will have met on the tennis courts, political liberals at a pro-choice rally, and lesbians at a meeting of the Lesbian's Union [21].

Results from the bogus stranger experiments, the get-acquainted interaction studies, and studies examining friendship choices in natural settings e.g., [17], four factors

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<sup>1</sup>Sumaya Batool is currently working at University of Sargodha, Pakistan as a lecturer, Department of Psychology, Phone; +92-332-7545260; e.mail: sumaya.awan@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Najma Iqbal Malik is currently working at University of Sargodha, Pakistan as a lecturer, Department of Psychology, Phone; +92-300-9600694; e.mail: najmamalik@gmail.com

have often been recognized as determinants of attraction: proximity (which includes not only geographical distance, but also interaction accessibility), similarity, physical attractiveness of the other, and reciprocal liking. A widespread research has demonstrated that these factors lead to attraction [4], [9], [13]. Proximity is a powerful medium of attraction. It is defined as the nearness or proximity in physical or psychological space which creates the opportunity to meet another person [11]. Proximity assists initial relationships (i.e. friendships) and attraction creating familiarity and repeated exposure [24].

Although proximity effect a lot but still the impact of similarity is greater. Despite all this, it is often suggested that the saying that opposites attract may still apply to certain complementary personality traits [20]. To take the most obvious example, one partner may be quite dominant and thus require someone who is relatively more submissive. A person with strong preferences may do best with someone who is very flexible or even wishy-washy. But despite the plausibility of this complementarity hypothesis, there is not much evidence for it [10]. In one study, marital adjustments among couples married for up to five years was found to depend more on similarity than on complementarity [16]. Attempts to identify the pairs of personality traits that bring about complementarity have not been very successful [26]. When all is said and done it is similarity that wins the day [21].

The research focused the following objectives:

- 1) To find out the effects of attitude similarity on interpersonal attraction.
- 2) To check gender differences in effects of attitude similarity on interpersonal attraction.
- 3) To explore the relationship between proximity and interpersonal attraction.

#### A. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses have been formulated for the study:

- 1) The friends having similar attitudes will also possess high interpersonal attraction.
- 2) Attitude similarity is as much important for the boys as for the girls in determining interpersonal attraction.
- 3) Friends having more proximity will have high interpersonal attraction as compared to friends with less proximity.

## II. METHOD

### A. Sample

The subjects (N = 160) were 40 pairs of boy friends and 40 pairs of girl friends from Punjab, Pakistan. The age range of students was between 19 to 27 years (M= 23, S.D= .65).

### B. Measures

#### Demographic Data Form

Demographic research form was consisted of basic information like name, age gender, length of relationship and distance from friend's home (i.e. sharing same room, 1-15Km, 15-30Km and living in separate cities)

#### Interpersonal Attraction Scale (I.A)

Attraction of each member of a pair toward the other member was measured by McCroskey & McCain's [14] Interpersonal Attraction Scale (I.A). The scale was consisted of 30-items divided into three sub-scales. The response set was in "Yes" or "No" format. First ten items were devised to check Social Attraction (S.A), next ten (11-20) for Physical Attraction (P.A) and last ten (21-30) for Task Attraction (T.A). Five items were positively worded and five negatively worded in each sub-scale of Interpersonal Attraction Scale. For example item no. 1, 2, 6, 7 and 10 were positively worded, while item no. 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9 were negatively worded in S.A subscale. In P.A subscale item no. 11, 12, 13, 16 and 19 were positively worded, while item no. 14, 15, 17, 18 and 20 were negatively worded. In T.A subscale item no. 23, 24, 27, 29 and 30 were positively worded, while item no. 21, 22, 25, 26 and 28 were negatively worded.

#### Survey of Attitudes

The Survey of Attitudes consisted of 26 items derived from Byrne's [5] original 56-item Survey of Attitudes was used in this study. Each item was scored on a six-point scale without the neutral point. Culture specific issues were discarded. [2] had already adapted this questionnaire and the checked reliability was  $r = .89$ . She had used 27 items in her study but one item was excluded from the present research owing to city cultural differences. As the present research required applying this questionnaire on pair of subjects who were friends so the reliability was measured again.

#### C. Procedure

The participants were asked to fill out the test booklets, which were consisted of demographic data form, Attitude Survey and Interpersonal Attraction Measurement Scale. As the participants were divided in pairs of friends, each member of the pair was instructed to give his/her personal opinion on Survey of Attitudes and to give his/her opinion about his/her friend on Interpersonal Attraction Scale, after filling out demographic data form. The data were analyzed qualitatively and by applying different statistical analyses.

## III. RESULTS

The reliability of measures used in the study was significantly high. Coefficient alpha for Survey of Attitudes was .95. The reliability estimates for all sub-scales of I.A Scale ranged from .58 to .76 respectively. Further statistical analyses were applied for hypotheses' testing. The results reveal that the alpha co-efficient of Survey of attitude scale is quite high ( $r = .91$ ,  $**p < .01$ ) determining that there is high positive correlation between the attitudes of the friends.

TABLE I MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS AND T-VALUES OF SCORES OF FRIENDS WITH MORE SIMILAR ATTITUDES AND LESS SIMILAR ATTITUDES ON THE I.A SCALE (N = 160).

| Group                               | M     | SD   | t         | p    |
|-------------------------------------|-------|------|-----------|------|
| Friends with more similar attitudes | 26.28 | 1.37 | 22.36**** | .000 |
| Friends with less similar attitudes | 21.44 | 1.36 |           |      |

*df* = 158

The results explore the relationship of attitude similarity and interpersonal attraction through t-test. Significant difference has been found ( $t = 22.36$ , \*\*\*\* $p < .000$ , 2-tailed)

between friends with more similar attitudes and friends with less similar attitudes on the scores of I.A Scale. It shows that attitude similarity works as an important determinant of interpersonal attraction.

TABLE II. THE IMPACT OF GENDER AND ATTITUDE SIMILARITY ON INTERPERSONAL ATTRACTION.

|                       | Boys<br>( <i>n</i> = 80) |      | Girls<br>( <i>n</i> = 80) |      | F    | p   |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|------|-----|
|                       | M                        | S.D  | M                         | S.D  |      |     |
| More similar attitude | 26.12                    | 1.41 | 26.42                     | 1.32 | 1.47 | .23 |
| Less similar attitude | 21.32                    | 1.38 | 21.55                     | 1.36 |      |     |
| Total                 | 23.72                    | 2.78 | 23.99                     | 2.79 |      |     |

*df* = 179,  $p = n.s$

In Table II, gender differences with reference to different variables were computed through F-test. The Mean values revealed that the friends with more similar attitudes scored high [M = 26.12 (boys), M = 26.42 (girls)] on I.A Scale, while the friends with less similar attitudes comparatively scored low [M = 21.32 (boys), M = 21.55 (girls)] on I.A Scale (see Table 2). So, it can be concluded that there is a direct relation between Attitude Similarity and Interpersonal Attraction regardless of gender.

#### D. Qualitative Analysis of Proximity and Attraction Relationship

The relationship of proximity and interpersonal attraction was analyzed qualitatively. Friends who stated that they share the same room and who were sharing the same street or same town scored high on interpersonal attraction, while the friends who were living in distant homes or living in separate cities and provinces did not show as much attraction towards each other. The reason behind these findings might be that when we share most of the time together, we feel more attached and more connected with those people. On the other side, the friends who do not come in contact as frequently as others do, they could not develop such a close and intimate relationship with each other and they even lack emotional attachment.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The present research was an attempt to study the most firmly established relationships in our culture that is the linear function linking similar attitudes, proximity and interpersonal attraction among same gender friends. The

results clearly confirmed all the hypotheses, that similarity of attitudes breeds attraction and more proximity brings more attraction.

The hypothesis that attitude similarity is one of the major determinants of interpersonal attraction was confirmed by the findings of t-test applied on the scores of friends with more similar attitudes and with less similar attitudes on I.A Scale. The mean values revealed that the friends with more similar attitudes scored high on I.A Scale, while the friends with less similar attitudes comparatively scored low on I.A Scale. Significant difference has been found between friends with more similar attitudes and friends with less similar attitudes on the scores of I.A Scale. [5] shared the common notion that increased proportion of attitude similarity between two people leads towards increased interpersonal attraction.

Statistics show that individuals in long-term relationships prefer to associate with other people who are similar to them [28]. Although there are so many researches done on determining factors associated with interpersonal attraction, and nearly all of them have findings regarding mate selection. But the same principles apply to attraction among friends. No doubt other factors like proximity, physical attraction and complementarity increase attraction but in some cases scenario is quite different. Although in proximity sharing of space helps someone to get to know a person better. But in some cases becoming more familiar with an individual can lead to a dislike of that individual. In long term relationships like friendships, similarity is the only thing which leaves no doubt to increase attraction

toward other person. As long as this relationship gets deeper with increased similarity, our positive feelings towards another person get more intense. [30] suggested that attraction among friends is the result of the propinquity, status and similarity effects. Other researchers [18], [21], [22], [23], [27] also verified the similarity-attraction bond in long term relations.

Another hypothesis that attitude similarity is as much important for the men as for the women in determining interpersonal attraction was also proved. The Mean values revealed that the friends with more similar attitudes scored high on I.A Scale, while the friends with less similar attitudes comparatively scored low on I.A Scale. Non-significant difference between scores of boys and girls revealed that attitude similarity is equally important for both the genders in determining interpersonal attraction. These findings are also inline with the previous researches in this area [16].

And the hypothesis that friends having more proximity will have high interpersonal attraction as compared to friends with less proximity. The results of qualitative analysis showed that friends who stated that they share same room or same town were shown to have high scores on interpersonal attraction than friends who lived in distant towns and cities. Previous researches done in this perspective strongly support our results. Close proximity to another includes a small practical distance and opportunity for continued interaction, which can considerably enhance the possibility of attraction [25]. A research by [17] found that people rated attraction charisma and friendship highest with those living on the same residential floor; rather than those living on other floors or distant buildings this research evidence the intoxicating effects of proximity on interpersonal attraction. Other studies in this area also supported that after similarity, proximity is the most powerful determinant for increased interpersonal attraction [4], [11], [12],[13], [24].

#### V. CONCLUSION

Relationships have always been an issue of major significance for all human beings. Above mentioned results explained the importance of attitude similarity and proximity in friendship. The findings of the study may help researchers to focus on the perspective of friendship regarding interpersonal attraction on the basis of attitude similarity and proximity. Friendship is a very vital and essential part of our social life which needs to be focused by the researchers and social psychologists. Present research may help them studying the impact of gender on interpersonal attraction among close friends.

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