Relationship between perceived friendship quality and well-being of students with psychosocial difficulties

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Master's thesis
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Department of Special Needs Education
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UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

2018

II

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2018

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Abstract

This study investigates the association between perceived friendship quality and well-being of students with psychosocial difficulties. The total number of participants is 178 from one public secondary school in Østfold area (southeaster Norway). The results indicate that friendship quality cannot be associated to all the aspects of the well-being. However, for students with internalized difficulties, perceived friendship quality is associated with connectedness, happiness and perseverance characteristics, while for students with externalized- connectedness and happiness. The well-being of students with psychosocial difficulties in comparison with their peers varied significantly within some of the domains, but not all. Concerning friendship quality, children with internalized difficulties scores significantly lower within all the features of friendship quality, while students with externalized- within half of the domains.

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Preface

Thank you for the people who helped me. You know who you are.

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1 Introduction

Special needs education, most importantly, is focusing on acknowledging different needs and contextual factors of all the students to promote life-long learning and development (Frederickson, 2015). Supporting students not only academically but as well socially and emotionally becomes inseparable part of the school's tasks. Naturally, the student's well-being, the psychological functioning of the child, becomes the topic of focus within education. The student's flourishing is linked not only with absence of negative social experiences, but as well with making connections, or having friends, and experiencing safe and supporting environment (Norwegian Education Act, 2002). Moreover, exclusion or lack of social participations may be highly stressful for the student, and it may negatively affect child's development and learning (Udir, 2016).

Friendship is one of the most intimate human connections which is contributing greatly to individual's development and flourishing (Hartup et al, 1996; Sullivan, 1953; Bronfenbrenner, 1989). This mutual affection between people is built upon different characteristics and features, which can influence person and his/her development both positively and negatively (Berndt, 2002). However, there is relatively little research done investigating the quality of the relationships and how can it be associated with the well-being of pupils.

The topic for this study is chosen due to personal experiences and involvement in working with students with psychosocial difficulties. The everyday challenges the students are facing, as well as tendencies to negative social experiences and general lower well-being of the pupils, motivated to investigate and to better comprehend the interrelated notion of well-being and how it can be associated with the quality of the relationship the adolescence have.

1.1 General Statement of the Problem

Well-being often refers to higher psychological functioning and positive experiences (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The feeling of prosperity allows us to face the challenges and pursue our unique goals in life. However, negative encounters, neglect or even unrealistic goals and expectations can negatively affect our psychological well-being (Peterson et al, 2008). The youths' development and well-being are highly interlinked with the surrounding environment and cultural contexts, personal characteristics and of course- relationships with others (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Looze et al, 2017). Family relations is known to be the most influential relation towards the child's development, however during adolescence, peer relationships, or friendships, obtain more significance and relevance, therefore- more salient to the adolescence well-being (Sullivan, 1953; Goswami, 2012). Friendships are a great source of support and can have a great impact on our well-being, by protecting and bringing the best in us; especially for teenagers, since internal and external stress managing strategies have not been developed yet (Sullivan, 1953; Hartup, 1996).

During adolescence, teenagers acquire skills and competences necessary for smooth transition to fulfilling, healthy and flourishing adult life (Ryan & Deci, 2011). It is known, that individuals with good social skills are better adjusted in academic, social and emotional contexts (Mustian & Cuenca-Sanchez, 2012; Gresham & Kern, 2004; Lund, 2012; Kremer et al, 2016). However, early to late adolescence relationships obtain new, more demanding settings, requiring broader social and emotional competences (Sullivan, 1953). Often this may become demanding, especially for students with psychosocial difficulties, who are prompt to face substantially more tensions and challenges in social interactions than their peers (Lund, 2008; Ogden, 2009). As expected, those disadvantageous situations can negatively influence their well-being (Berndt, 2002). Therefore, considering the connection between the relationships and the mental health of pupils, the students with psychosocial difficulties are at risk of having lower well-being due to troubles occurring in the social contexts.

1.2 Research Question

The study is based on the hypothesis that the well-being of a student with psychosocial difficulties may be associated with the perceived friendship quality of the child. The psychosocial difficulties can interfere with the positive social interactions between children

which are needed for friendship building and therefore negatively affect the 'safety net' which may be provided by the healthy friendship. The study's goal is to investigate the relationship between perceived friendship quality and the well-being of students who have internalized and externalized difficulties. In order to clarify the research goal, the following research question can be formulated:

1. To which extend, perceived friendship quality domains can be associated with the well-being domains within students with internalized and externalized difficulties?

The study as well explores the well-being and perceived friendship quality of students with internalized and externalized difficulties, therefore the following sub-questions are added:

2. How do students with internalized and externalized difficulties perceive their friendship quality in comparison to their peers?

3. How do students with internalized and externalized difficulties evaluate their well-being in comparison to their peers?

1.3 Students' Well-being in Norway

Norway is known for its child's welfare system and strategies regarding child's well-being. Some of the strategies taken into action are widely discussed outside of the country, implying that it may be hard to comprehend the policies applied for people who are not familiar with the Norwegian culture and the country's laws. For example, in many places around the world, a slap with 'parenting' reasons can be considered acceptable, however in Norway- it is an abuse against a child and is punishable by law. Predictably, the regulations and laws existing regarding the school and the child's well-being in school are also well developed and multidimensional.

According to the Norwegian Education Act Chapter 9 (2002), all the students in primary and secondary school have a right to good physical and psychosocial environment which promotes health, well-being and learning. *Physical environment* is described as fitting to educational subjects as well as individual needs of the student regarding learning, health and well-being. It is defined by law, that in care of official complaint from the student or the care givers of a student regarding physical environment, the school must react and act upon the matter. The *psychosocial environment* involves active and systematic work from school with

the goal that every single student can feel safe and experience social belonging and acceptance. In case of suspicion of student's exposure to offensive words or acts such as bullying, racism or neglect, the immediate investigation and needed action must be pursued. In case of care-giver complain or request for the needed support, the school must react according to the official laws. In addition, the psychosocial environment involves home-school collaboration, student-teacher relationships as well as student's physical health and, of course- student's social competences.

In addition to an excellent educational law in the country, Norway is also well known for its societal gender equality, which is linked with higher subjective well-being of youngsters (Looze et al, 2017). Looze and the colleagues (2017) were comparing national data of women's involvement in politics, decision making power as well as economic participation with adolescence well-being across different nations. The results indicated that in countries with relatively high levels of gender equality, adolescence reported higher level of subjective well-being than the youngsters in countries with lower levels of equality (Looze et al, 2017). The greater level of well-being can be explained by the increased support in adolescences' social contexts: the family, peer relationship and school (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Looze et al, 2017). Equalizing the division of the child's caring tasks in the family and creating the supportive environment for the adults, revealed to improve the youngster's life satisfaction as well (Looze et al, 2017). In addition, the school's environment in countries with feminine cultures tend to be less competitive and more supportive- creating caring and friendly foundation for flourishing of well-being of teenagers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Looze et al, 2017). With the child centred laws and balanced gender roles in the society, which supports adolescence subjective well-being, Norway arguably becomes one of the best countries in the world for the child to grow up in.

1.4 Outline of the study

In chapter two, the theoretical background is presented. It has been noticed, that comparably little research has been done on association between the perceived friendship quality and well-being of students with psychosocial difficulties. Therefore, the literature from three main topics is introduced- psychosocial difficulties, well-being and friendship quality. In chapter three the methodological choices are outlined regarding the correlation research, including sampling procedure, data collection and analyzes. Chapter four includes the results of the data

analyzes: first, preliminary analyses within the three topics (psychosocial difficulties, perceived friendship quality and well-being), after- correlation analyzes between well-being and perceived friendship quality. The last chapter five, includes the discussion and summary of the results in relation to relevant theories and research. Chapter five as well includes limitations of the current study, recommendations, also practical and theoretical implications of the findings.

2 Literature review

The literature review chapter provides structure for comprehending the phenomena investigated in the study. The chapter presents and discusses relevant theories and previous researches which are laid out in three main themes- psychosocial difficulties, well-being and friendship quality.

The prevailing theory in the study regarding well-being and psychosocial difficulties as well as importance of friendship, is the biopsychosocial perspective (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Based on the theoretical framework of Social Ecological Model of Bronfenbrenner (1979), the child is simultaneously tangled in different ecosystems (figure 2.1.1), which interact and impact each other as well as the child's development simultaneously (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner is his latest adaptation of the theory, focuses on the *proximal processes* as a "engine for development". Proximal processes refer to interaction between the developing individual and the other (significant) people, but also objects or even symbols in their proximate environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). The significant person can be parents, teachers but also other peers. Proximal processes are viewed as the most influential predictor for the child's development however, the theory also explores how personal characteristics and environmental factors affects the proximal processes. That said, the theory provides an explanation for understanding the well-being and psychosocial difficulties of a student as phenomena which are interconnected with personal factors and proximal processes in the immediate environment of the child. The different contextual factors like family characteristics, school's adaptations or cultural interpretations of the child's behaviour creates a framework for the child's development and well-being. For the full understanding of the child and positive adaptations of interventions regarding well-being and psychosocial dificluties, the in-depth knowledge of the relevant ecosystems of the child is required (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Due to interconnectivity of the biopsychosocial perspective, the changes applied in one of the systems, will affect other systems as well. If the wanted changes are practiced simultaneously in few ecosystems- the outcomes will have greater and more influential results on the pupil (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner's perspective provides alternative interconnected way of explaining the child's psychosocial difficulties as well as well-being as a result of interaction between the individual and environmental factors.
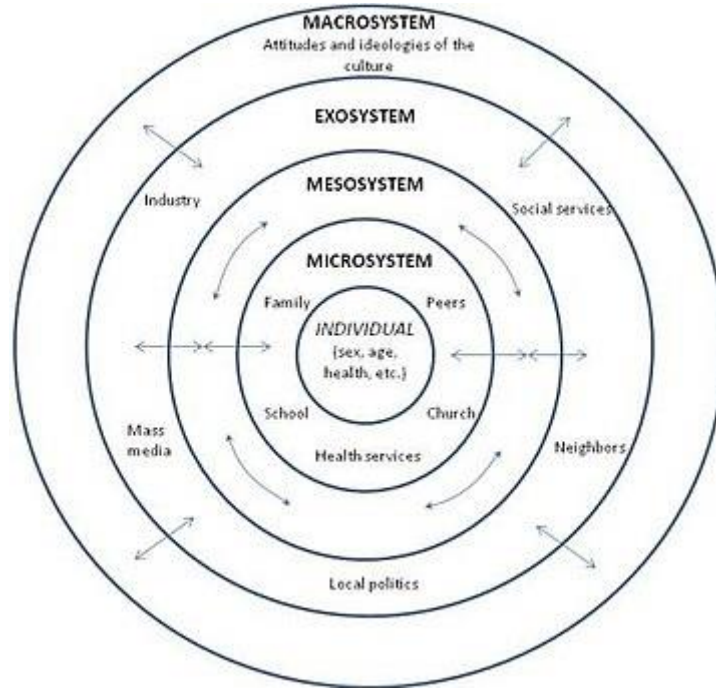
2.1.1. Illustration of Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Model

In addition, regarding the perceived friendship quality of the students, the Sullivan's Interpersonal Theory explains the significant importance of the human relations to development (1953). Sullivan proposed that individuals evolve their personality, their inner self, within in a social context; he claimed that without interpersonal interactions, humans simply would not have personality and would not develop (1953). Sullivan distinguished between different developmental stages (such as infancy or early adolescence), and insisted that knowledge about inner self, should be gained through the structured studying of relationships (1953). With his theory, Sullivan explores the importance of establishing intimacy (in a form of a friendship) to human development, being aware that anxiety or negative emotions can influence interpersonal relationships at any stage of development (1953). The adolescence is named to be one of the most vulnerable stages in the development, since the youngsters still have not mastered efficient stress coping strategies in comparison to the adults (Sullivan, 1953). Friendship, as a form of human relationships, is crucial for the adolescence development, therefore the clear understanding of it is required for investigating the well-being of students with or without psychosocial problems.

The chapter will start with describing and discussing the psychosocial difficulties, giving a great understanding of the difficulty and its characteristics with the help of relevant literature. Later, the well-being and the terminology used to explain the matter will be presented and

discussed. Then, the perceived friendship quality, with its different dimensions and qualities will be presented as well as discussed. Lastly, the chapter will combine perceived friendship quality and well-being of a student and discuss it from the perspective of the student with psychosocial difficulties.

2.1 Psychosocial Difficulties

In this chapter, the clear definition between the unwanted behavior and the difficulty will be provided as well as the internalized and externalized psychosocial difficulties will be described and discussed from the perspective of relevant literature. The chapter as well includes the prevalence of the psychosocial difficulties in Norway and international levels.

2.1.1 Definition of Psychosocial Difficulties

The terminology used in this paper, psychosocial difficulties, was chosen due to implications, that emotional and behaviour difficulties occurs in social and emotional contexts of a child. As defined by Ogden, psychosocial difficulties are psychosocial issues which occurs in social interaction with others, often in situations where the imposed demands of the society, becomes challenging for the individual to attain (2009). ICF-CY describes the psychosocial difficulties as challenges in:

> *general mental functions, as they develop over the life span, required to understand and constructively integrate the mental functions that lead to the formation of the personal and interpersonal skills needed to establish reciprocal social interactions, in terms of both meaning and purpose; including any difficulty in self-other relationships as well as attachment.*'[1] (WHO, 2001)

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[1] The definition is used from Word Health Organization, (2001) "International classification of functioning, disability and health: children & youth version*: ICF-CY"* due to its inclusive characteristics of biopsychosocial model. Biopsychosocial model is a fusion of the medical and the social models, providing the combined view and perspectives of functioning, health and disability- including biological heritage, individual factors and social/environmental influences.

All students can occasionally experience psychosocial difficulties during their school life due to the changing and demanding environments or social interactions, which with time increase in complexity (Sullivan, 1953; Ogden, 2009; Hartup, 1966). However, it is important to distinguish between "difficult time" and "difficult life"- the main division between the two is the intensity and the time frame of the difficulty (Ogden, 2009). If the issue consistently adversely affects educational, social or intrapersonal functioning, the immediate interference is needed to prevent further negative outcomes.

Psychosocial difficulties are not a disease rather than complications with social interactions, contact with other peers or negative inner experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Place & Elliott, 2013). Often while discussing psychosocial difficulties, the problematic behavior, aggression and bullying are mentioned as key elements of the problem (Lund, 2008). However, social isolation, sadness and loneliness are even more dangerous psychosocial difficulties, since it may be harder to notice (Gresham & Kern, 2004). The two distinguishing characteristics-external and internal problems- is a standardized matter for separating pupils into two groups-internalize and externalized difficulties (Nordahl et al., 2005). However, this grouping is being criticized for being unspecific and limiting, requiring distinct and in-depth investigation of the difficulties (Nordahl et al., 2005; Tandon et al., 2005). Still, the grouping is widely used in research and literature (Gresham & Elliot, 1993; Ogden, 2009).

Regarding internalized and externalized difficulties, it is important to realize that these two concepts are interconnected and sometimes can be interpreted as a single case (Lund, 2008). Even if the expression of emotions and feeling occur differently- externally or internally- it is highly possible that the instigating emotion for the outcome is the same. In addition, prevalence research suggests, that there is a great number of pupils who experience both-internalized and externalized difficulties (Rescorla et al, 2007).

Psychosocial difficulties can be displayed in various forms, with or without additional disease, illness or disability (Wearmouth, 2005). There is no one defined reason for psychosocial difficulties, rather than combination of environmental and personal factors, such as learning difficulties, moving to a new place, problematic home situation, death in the family or experienced bullying and victimization (Ogden, 2012; Spurkland & Gjone, 2002). Research as well suggest, that positive social support from friends, family or caregiver can prevent the development of internalized as well as externalized difficulties (Parker & Asher, 198; Parker & Seal, 1996; Berndt, 1982; Bukowski et al 2010). In addition, some of the

students have a greater tendency to psychosocial difficulties than others due to personality trades, environmental influences and generics (Ogden, 2009; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

2.1.2 Externalized Difficulties

All children at one point may exhibits unwanted behaviours in some situations, it is a normal and natural part in development towards the independent human being (Gresham & Kern, 2004). However, as mentioned, only long lasting, intense and having internal as well as external disrupting properties behaviors are defined as difficulty (Ogden, 2009). Externalizing difficulties as defined by Gresham and Elliot are improper behaviors which can be characterized by "verbal or physical aggression towards others, poor control of temper and arguing" (1990). Moreover, The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) categorize externalized difficulties into disruptive, impulse and conduct disorders as well as substance and addiction related disorders (APA, 2013).

Students with externalized difficulties are probably the most visible group in the classroom due to disruptive or antisocial conducts which are not accepted and challenging to handle for the teachers. Due to the characteristics of the distress, externalized difficulties are demanding for the environment, therefore expectedly there is more attention and resources placed in reducing the unwanted conducts, than for internalized difficulties (Nordahl et al., 2005). Often some common assumptions are made about children with behavioural problems- for example that children *can* control and *could* stop their unwanted actions any time. These beliefs influence the attitudes of teachers, peers and sometimes even family members towards children with externalized difficulties and could have negative outcomes for the child's development (Frederickson, 2015, Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As mentioned, children who have external conduct problems, often experience internal difficulties, such as anxiety and depression, which might be the reason for the unwanted behaviour (Lund, 2008). However, while working with the external difficulty, often the focus is placed on the interventions for changing the unwanted conducts of the child, rather than adopting the environment or dealing with internal difficulties (Frederickson, 2015, Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Additionally, McDowell argues that if unwanted behaviour is acknowledged more often than the socially accepted one- the challenging conduct will persist over time (1983). This over-representation of the externalized difficulties without implementation of functioning support systems, may become a threat of exclusion for the child (Wearmouth et al., 2005).

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2.1.3 Internalized Difficulties

Internalized difficulties are an important treat for the child's inner environment by withdrawn, anxious and depressed behaviors (Barlow & Underdown, 2005). As defined by Gresham and Elliot, internalized difficulties are behaviors characterized by "anxiety, sadness, loneliness and poor self-esteem" (1990). Moreover, students with internalized difficulty disposes towards lack of self-confidence and negative self-image (Gresham & Kern, 2004). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) divides internalizing difficulties into anxiety and mood disorders (APA, 2013). Some examples of the disorders include depressive and obsessive-compulsive disorders, trauma related or eating disorders.

Internalized problems are harder to identify, since the children does not affect the classroom management directly (Frederickson, 2015). Sometimes, the internalized difficulties may be seen as less problematic by caregivers or in institutional setting, therefore, often, the issues would stay kept secret, leaving the children alone with self-destructive emotions (Tandon et al., 2005). In addition, there are worrying suggestions in the research field that externalized behavior problems decrease with age, while internalized- increases, leaving youngsters alone with hidden problem (Bongers et al, 2003; Torsheim et al., 2006). Similarly to externalized difficulties, it is important to distinguish between the long lasting, destructive behaviors and natural shyness of the child. Lund describes shyness as a natural occurring reluctant characteristic or a problematic feature which may influence the child's social and emotional state negatively (2012). Harmful impact on interactions with the proximate environment of the child, should be interpreted as psychosocial difficulty which requires specific support and interventions.

It is important to mention, that internalized, the same as the externalized difficulties, can negatively influence performance at school, lead problems in peer relationships as well as affect the well-being of the child (Mustian & Cuenca-Sanchez, 2012; Gresham & Kern, 2004; Lund, 2012; Kremer et al, 2016). However, due to the specific characteristics of internalized difficulty, one of the greatest challenges that children with internalized difficulties face- is not to be noticed at all (Tandon et al., 2005).

2.1.4 Prevalence of Psychosocial Difficulties

It is estimated that between 5 and up to 30 percent of children in general population are judged to have psychosocial difficulties (Parker & Asher, 1987; Ogden, 2012; Rescorla et al, 2007). The numbers in Norway are evaluated to be lower- between 2% to 10% (Ogden, 2012). The prevalence estimations can widely differ depending on prevalence method, definitions involved in the study, the participants of the study as well as the context the research took place, making the studies hard to compare (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007; Rescorla et al, 2007; Ogden, 2012). For example, it is known that self-reporting measures are more efficient for investigating sensitive and intrapersonal information, for example- internalized difficulties (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007). However, there are still many studies which uses parents or teachers reports while investigating internalized problems (Rescorla et al, 2007). Regarding the definition of the psychosocial difficulties, often the terminology can be not clear and can either vast (including categories such as ADHD or autism spectrum disorders), or very specific- investigating only externalized difficulties (Rescorla et al, 2007; Parker & Asher, 1990; Bor et al, 2014). Deliberate exclusion or inclusion of the difficulties impacts the statistical representation of the phenomena. As Ogden pointed out, Norway has a well-developed system for prevalence of various problems, disorders and disabilities, if which many have similar characteristics as psychosocial difficulties- problems occurring within the social contexts (2012). After removing all or only some of the disorders from the definition of psychosocial difficulties, the prevalence numbers of internalized and externalized problems can be reduced dramatically.

The context as well as the participants play an important role in the psychosocial difficulty prevalence. Rescorla et al (2007; 2007), presented two comprehensive literature researches comparing general population samples of emotional and behaviour difficulties. The first study investigated parents' ratings of adolescence (ages between 6 to 16) samples from 31 countries (N= 55.508) within the common instrument- Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1991); and in the parallel study-samples from 24 countries (N=27.206) within Youth Self-Report forms (participants aged 11 to 16) (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). Both studies exhibited a great mean score differences between the countries, which cannot be clearly explained since apart of response rates, no other components (like economic/political system, geography or religion) seem to predict the scores of the studies (Rescorla et al, 2007). Some of the countries

mean scores differed between parent's and children's reports, while others stayed similar, which accords to the emphasis of the importance of the methodological choices in the study.

Both reviewal studies indicate considerable consistency within the surveys, showing that girls were generally scoring significantly higher on internalized difficulties and boys- on externalizing (Rescorla et al, 2007; Rescorla et al, 2007). This is quite an expected finding, since many scholars have already indicated the gender differences within mood and anxiety disorders (Place & Elliott, 2013; Hartup et al, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1989; Zahn-Waxler et al., 2008; McGrath, 2005). Bor et al (2017) conducted a comprehensive literature research investigated the change in mental health of adolescence, with analysing 12 study articles where the data was gathered within 10 years apart. The findings of the research suggest, that internalizing difficulties within adolescence girls have increased compared to earlier years, regarding the boys- the results were mixed (externalized difficulties did not show a significant change). However, the important question is why the girls are more vulnerable to internal problems than the boys. There are suggestions in the field that the girls are more prompted to negative influences by academical pressure, while the boys seem to be less affected (Wiklund et al., 2012). The combination of supressed stress and worries over the educational pressure as well as private matters, such as looks, can elevate female's tendencies toward internalized difficulties (Maclean et al, 2010; Sweeting et al, 2010). Furthermore, early sexualization and the effect of social media are corresponding to have negative influences on the adolescence mood and self-esteem (Kathy & Laird, 2000; Hatch L., 2011). In addition, there are suggestions in the research field that the girls are more socially-emotionally perceptive than males, however the negative style of thinking due to low self-esteem created by the changed cultural norms and contexts, can explain the incline of females towards the internalized difficulties (Hankin et al., 2008; Sullivan, 1953; Eckersley, 2008).

In both studies, the analyses revealed, that Norway scored 1 standard deviation bellow the grand mean, implying that the amount of reported internalized and externalized difficulties are less than average compared with other countries involved in the studies (Rescorla et al, 2007; 2007). There is no one simple explanation to the difference. However, as mentioned, perhaps the methodological decisions made in the various studies can influence the outcome. Another reasoning for the results can be hidden in the social and cultural norms regarding the accepted behaviour of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In a child centred society like Norway is, the environment in school tend to focus on social adaptation and friendliness of the educator

rather than competition and authoritarian teaching (Looze et al, 2017). This in may lead to greater tolerance for the behaviour of the child, for example, discussions within students while studying can be seen as learning-supportive activities, rather than learning-disturbing ones (Ogden, 2010). In addition, high levels of competition in the school's setting is related with increased level of internalized difficulties (Wiklund et al., 2012; Ogden, 2010). After reducing the social pressure from the student to behave in certain matter and increasing the social support within the environmental factors, there may be seen a reduction in psychosocial difficulties, due to interconnectivity of the ecosystems of a child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

2.2 Well-being

Students' wellbeing is a topic of focus in the field of educational research. Due to different approaches of explain wellbeing, there is still no universal definition of it, rather than combination of different elements which contribute to overall wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2011). In this chapter, relevant theoretical overview, and a summary of previous researches on wellbeing will be described and discussed.

2.2.1 Definition of Well-being

The notion of wellbeing is an umbrella term alluding to optimum psychological functioning and experience (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Due to the complexity of wellbeing, great discussions arise to indicate what is included in term 'the good life' or 'happiness' since it also influences experiences in our daily life. As mentioned, according to Norwegian Education Act (Chapter 9), all students at the Norwegian schools have an individual right to an environment which promotes wellbeing in all the areas of the school- academical, social and physical. To secure wellbeing of all students, the term should be clearly understood and applied.

From the phycological perspective, wellbeing can be explained from two separate outlooks-hedonism and eudaimonism. The philosophies have different points of view for explaining wellbeing, however both are investigating how different circumstances and collective processes are influencing it (Ryan & Deci, 2001). *Hedonism* and can be understood as subjective wellbeing (SWB) or happiness, and explained as combination of life satisfaction, existence of positive feelings and absents of negative emotions (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993; Sirgy, 2012); while *eudaimonism* is called phycological wellbeing (PWB)

and claims that wellbeing (or happiness) is a product of positive phycological functioning and engagement in developmental and meaningful activities (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Dodge et al, 2012; Seligman, 2011). For example, if one listens to her child playing piano then the practise is far from perfect, from hedonic perspective- it would not contribute to wellbeing of the person; however, from eudaimonic perspective- since the performance of the child is meaningful for the listener- it would contribute for the overall wellbeing and happiness of the listener in a long run (Seligman, 2011).

In this research, definition of well-being is described within the eudaimonism perspective- positive psychology and is based on Seligman's well-being theory due to its operationalized and holistic approach. Seligman describes well-being as a construct, 'which in turn has several measurable elements, each a real thing, each contributing to well-being, but none defining well-being' (2011). This theory was created from the theory of universal happiness after deepening the research and considering criticism. Theory of well-being includes five different elements as constructing pillars of well-being- positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and accomplishment, referred as PERMA (Seligman, 2011).

Firstly, *positive emotion* should be understood as 'the pleasant life' and how much of it the adult is experiencing during the everyday situations. The second building element in the theory is engagement- one's involvement into the activity. Engagement is closely related to positive emotions, however is still measured separately. Engagement and positive emotion, as explained by Seligman, are purely subjective elements, and while the 'subjective state of the pleasures is in the present, the subjective state of engagement is only retrospective' (2001). Meaning, under PERMA, engagement can be understood as the feeling of belonging and being part something that is greater than the individual- for example working on something challenging and difficult now, however something truly meaningful for the individual in the bigger picture. Accomplishment (or achievement) refers to winning not only for your own good rather than wining with the pursuit for accomplishing something; with this though even a defeat in something can bring the feeling of achievement if it involved exiting and fulfilling experience of using the skill. Lastly, positive relationships, simply put- positive interactions with other people. The five domains of the well-being theory were put together with the notion, that no single element can define well-being, rather than combination of the elements.

2.2.2 Adolescent Well-being

Well-being is an age-related concept due to the defining themes in the psychological context (Verboom et al, 2014; Sullivan, 1953). Therefore, the same argumentations and well-being explanations can be hardly used for children and youth. With this notion, EPOCH model of well-being is an extension and an adaptation of Seligman's PERMA theory to adolescents. The model as well is representing five positive elements in youth well-being which later expects to impact the PERMA domains in adult life (Kern et al, 2016). The five domains are as follows- engagement, perseverance, optimism, happiness and connectedness.

Like in Norwegian Act of Education (2002), adolescence well-being can be discussed from multi-dimensional perspective- psychological and social dimensions, the cognitive as well as physical dimensions, which are both- the outcome and facilitating conditions for the well-being (Seligman, 2011). The psychological dimensions of adolescence well-being include student's emotional strength and state, self-awareness and resilience (WHO, 2014; Dodge et al., 2012). The EPOCH model of well-being represents this dimension by engagement, perseverance, optimism and happiness domains.

Engagement regarding adolescence well-being refers to an ability of being involved in the activity where one gets absorbed in and reaches a great focus of what one is doing now. This 'great level of engagement' can be as well referred as 'flow' as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1997). Research has showed that high levels of engagement are contributing for the student's well-being (Bassi et al, 2014; Hunter & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Wentzel & Wigfield, 2009).

Perseverance describes the ability to carry on with the task or activity even if some obstacles occur. It is highly connected with optimist due to the thought of believing that the negative periods are just temporary as well as the student is persistent to continue the activity in face of challenges (Kern et al, 2016). In addition, the perseverance is associated with self-esteem, where both characteristics are interlinked closely, fulfilling each other simultaneously (Mecca, 1989). However, perseverance does not immediately refer to school related activities, such as doing homework or learning, but also includes free time activities and practices- such as taking care of a pet, continuing a hobby or consistently playing a video game. In addition, lack of perseverance is linked with negative self-image and increased risk of depression (Acremont & Van der Linden, 2006; Bassi et al, 2014).

Optimist in the EPOCH measure stands for simply believing that positive things will happen to you and the feeling of hope and confidence about the future (Kern et al, 2016). One's optimist results the child to disregard the negative experiences as temporary and anticipate for favourable future situations. The connection between well-being and optimist is well investigated and in the field of psychology- optimism is linked with high psychological well-being, absents, or lower tendencies to depression and engagement in more meaningful activities (Wani, 2018; Ferguson & Gunnell, 2016; Krok, 2015).

Happiness, according to EPOCH model, may be understood as a constant condition of positive mood and a feeling of satisfaction with one's life. Happiness does not refer to the current moment rather than the overall experience for an adolescence- feeling of joy, having fun with what one is doing (Kern et al, 2016). Happiness is often used parallel with the term 'well-being', however according to Seligman (2011), happiness is a building block for well-being. It is not required for the happiness to be present all the time; it is expected that the feeling of happiness will increase or decrease depending on the situation, however it is not a short-lasting emotion rather than extensive condition (Sundriyal & Kumar, 2014).

As for the social part of well-being, *connectedness* describes a feeling of connected with other around the student, for example- friends, family, teachers; as well as the sense of reciprocal care, belonging and approval (Seligman, 2011; Kern et al, 2016). A need for a positive connectedness to others has been shown to have a great impact not only on the adolescence well-being but as well on emotional and cognitive processes throughout life (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Sullivan, 1953; Bowlby, 1988).

Other authors have named some more elements in the construction of the well-being, such as autonomy, mastery of the environment or the sense of improvement (Ryff, 2013). However, the general construct of well-being stays similar. The cognitive and physical dimensions are as well important parts of the adolescence well-being. However, due to the focus of this study, the measurements of cognitive functions, physical health and awareness of health-related topics of the students will not be measured, therefore, not discussed further.

As seen from the descriptions, the five elements of EPOCH model are interrelated, however still expressing separate perspectives over the domains, which then manages to describe the well-being of a student. The EPOCH model does not focus on the specific area of the well-being, for example- school or social well-being, rather than the overall well-being of

adolescences. The domains in the model are built up with the expectations that it will endorse PERMA elements in the adulthood (Kern et al, 2016). Since the EPOCH measure is relatively new there is still little evidence in the literature presenting the direct link between EPOCH and PERMA domains in adulthood.

Many studies suggest, that females tend to have lower well-being than males (Akhter et al, 2015; Kern et al., 2016; Derdikman-Eiron et al, 2011, Savoye et al 2015). As some studies explains, the difference may exist due to income inequality, individualism and human rights as well as societal inequality (Diener et al, 2009). However, lower well-being only of females may be explained due to existing structural factors and limitations (opportunities for males and females), socio-cultural components (such as different expectations from females and males) as well as biological differences (tendencies to internalized difficulties ((Wiklund et al., 2012)). Looze et al (2017) cross-national study found that adolescence in Norway have highest well-being within European and North American countries. The study argued that the high well-being scores exist due to societal gender equality. Due to balanced and distributed family tasks, as well as involvement and relieved social-cultural pressure from adult females, for both- female and male- adolescences well-being increases. (Looze et al, 2017). Regarding students with psychosocial difficulties, there are studies in the field arguing that students with internalized and externalized problems tend to have lower well-being than their peers (DeSantis King et al, 2006). The explanation for the lower well-being of students with the named difficulties, may be given considering the characteristics of the difficulties. For example, the students with externalized problems, tend to have problematic behaviour at the school setting and be more aggressive and/or lack needed social skills for solving the conflicts (Gresham and Elliot, 1990). These features may create problems at the learning situations as well as social contexts, therefore, without needed support- damage student's well-being (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Respictevly, students with internalized difficulties tend to have lower self-esteem and negative self-image, which can then disturb the aquirancce of proximal proccesses and therefore effect the child's develeopment as well as well-being for the worse (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Gresham & Kern, 2004). Well-being is a wide and complex term including many different aspects regarding the person and his surroundings; it is important to understand how the individual is functioning and experiencing his/her own well-being in order to investigate it and eventually support it.

Regardless Seligman's PERMA model adaptability and its design to measure positive psychological functioning, the instrument, as well as positive psychology, are widely criticized and therefore requires to be interpreted with caution. As pointed by Miller, one of the greatest flaws of positive psychology aspects is that instead of justifying well-being by positive attitudes, the specific personality trails are kept accountable for the mental health (2008). In other words, an outgoing, goal-orientated and optimistic extravert would be destined to flourish, while pessimistic introvert would not. In addition, it is argued that already the name 'positive' excludes the negative emotions and focuses on individual happiness, rather than including relationship phenomena into the picture (Miller, 2008). Regarding the students with psychological difficulties, where the social contexts plays an important role, positive psychology may be lacking the needed measures to assess the notion of well-being. The measure is concentrating on the positive characteristic of the person, rather than active interaction within the environment and the individual, as well as leaving the negative experiences out which may be caused by the difficulty.

2.3 Friendship

This part of the chapter will be exploring the dimensions and qualities of friendship. First, the friendship will be conceptualized and described based on previous research and literature. Then, the difference between friendship and acceptance as well the implications it might have to the research will be shortly discussed. Lastly, the qualities and their importance for the student's development will be described and discussed within the frame of the relevant literature and theory as well as previous research.

2.3.1 Conceptualizing Friendship

As defined by ICF-CY, "friends are individuals who are close and ongoing participants in relationships characterized by trust and mutual support" (2007). Friendship is a purely intimate interpersonal bond, which becomes hard to be measured or investigated. However, scholars have noted this distinctive and interactive relationship between people and its influences towards the individual and pursued to conceptualize it. Nevertheless, there is no one definition of a friendship, rather than combinations of characteristics which are attempting to define, or better- to conceptualize friendship. One of the earlier descriptions of a friendship in the research field, comes from Hartup et al- friendship is a relationship between

people with shared tenderness and enjoyable time spent together (1996). Two positive interactions- tenderness and enjoyable time spend together- are mentioned while characterizing friendship. However, the authors agree that friendships involve not only supportive but also contradictive interactions which could last shorter or longer periods of time, for example, conflicts are identified as a significant characteristic of children's friendships (Hartup et al, 1996; MacEvoy & Asher, 2011).

Conceptualizing of friendship occurs via comprehension of collected perceived experiences, expressed behaviors and observations (Hartup et al, 1996). Both for children and for adults, friendships are linked with 'liking' the other person, in other words, being attached to one another and enjoy the time spent together (Hartup et al, 1996). However, understanding of friendships does vary over time- there are different qualities and existent themes while comparing toddler's, adolescence's or adult's friendships, therefore, one definition for friendship is simply not possible.

Acceptance and Friendship

According to Sullivan's interpersonal theory, social relationship and social contexts are crucial for child's development (1953). Therefore, expectedly, children's relationships are widely investigated. As noted by Hartup et al, the research tends to go two directs: describing and normalizing the relationships or investigating friendship and its qualities as well as what does it mean to have friends and how it does affect the individual (1996). Normalization implies investigation of changes over time in a friendship, whereas the second division: creates two separate outlooks for investigating peer relationship- friendship with its qualities and group acceptance (Hartup, 1996). Due to the direction of current study, the difference between friendship quality and acceptance investigations will be discussed shortly.

Friendship and peer acceptance are two separate aspects of peer interactions which influence child's development from different perspectives. As mentioned, friendship occurs explicitly between two individuals, while acceptance is linked with individuals' relationship with the group or to which extend the child is collectively accepted by other peers (Hartup, 1996). If the child is not accepted by the group- exclusion or victimization can occur (Nordahl et al, 2013; Hodges et al, 1999). However, it is suggested, that the friendship can have a protective role against the negative experiences related to group acceptance (Bukowski et al, 2010; Bukowski & Sippola, 2005; Parker & Asher, 1987). The friend him/herself can stand against

victimization or provide needed social support for dealing with the negative effects (Hartup et al, 1996). However, group acceptance problems can as well interfere with establishment of friendships- the child can be excluded out of the group so that no other peers would be willing to form the relationship (Bakalım & Taşdelen-Karçkay, 2016). The interconnectivity and different implications for each of the approach of investigating friendship should be comprehended fully to provide the foremost and relevant support for the students who are in need.

Friendship Qualities

Following the increased interest in youth friendships and its affects towards the individual, the number of instruments for measuring friendship were created. Due to its complexity, friendship cannot be defined by single value, therefore multiple characteristics, or as later referred- qualities, were created to explore the extensive dimensions of friendship. Hartup et al., named five characteristics of friendship- companionship, conflict, help, closeness and security; these qualities were fitted together to construct a model for helping to conceptualize and investigate friendship (1996).

Companionship refers to the extent to which the friends spend enjoyable, voluntary time together inside or outside of school. The play, or recreational activities, are identified as a basic characteristic for children's friendships (Sullivan, 1953). Sullivan contended that by engaging in a play interaction, the children are not only building up the friendship, but also possibly improving their own mental health since the interpersonal relationships are the key to mental health (1953). Moreover, recreational activities are mentioned to be an important characteristic not only for children, but as well for adults (Bukowski et al, 2005; Bukowski et al, 1996; Jones et al, 2014; Berndt 2002). It may be concluded that without recreational activities existing in a friendship, the friendship would not have a basic ground for further development of interpersonal relationship between individuals.

As mentioned, *conflict* play an important part in the children's friendships. Conflict refers to experiences of betray and extent to which the relationship is characterized by disputes, arguments, irritations or doubts (Hartup et al, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1993). Hartup et al, in his model of friendship, referred to conflict as a purely negative aspect for the friendship and associated it with cessation of friendship. On the other hand, literature suggest that if conflicts are handled in a healthy manner, especially at the early adulthood, it can contribute to

development of personal values, influence social development and even strengthen the friendship (Shantz & Hartup, 1992; Sullivan, 1953). However, as presented, good conflict management skills, such as stress management, control of emotions and behaviors, and comprehension of emotions and feeling being expressed as well as intrapersonal experiences, are required for securing the positive outcome of the conflict (Shantz & Hartup, 1992; Hartup et al, 1996). Parker and Asher (1993) expanded on the conflict characteristic and included conflict resolution into the conceptualization of friendship. The authors describe conflict resolution feature as the magnitude to which conflicts occurring in the relationships are settled or resolved (1993). However, the scale does not measure how the conflicts are solved and if both parties are satisfied with the outcome of the resolution. The lack of measurement of conflict management skills within friendship concept, still leaves space for the future studies to expand and explore the full impact of integral component of conflicts to children's friendships. Regarding students with internalized and externalized problems, where the child can be lacking needed skills for managing socially challenging situations, the conflict becomes the threatening aspect not only for the friendship but as well for individual's development (Rescorla, 2007; Bor et al, 2017, Hartup et al, 1996). In addition, the study of Lindeman et al, suggest that the boys have a greater tendency for conflicts than the girls; also, that boys, in mid and late adolescence (14-17 years old), as a most common strategy for solving conflicts, chooses aggression, while girls- pro-social behavior or withdrawal (1997). The implication of differences between sexes is widely recognized and requests different approaches while investigating and understanding the patterns of friendships between youngsters (MacEvoy & Asher, 2011; Parker & Asher, 1993; Bukowski et al, 1996).

Help, in Hartup et al (1996) model, represents two aspects- assistance or guidance with everyday activities or challenging task, and protection from victimization. From the theoretical perspective, Sullivan postulated that the assistance and guidance appears after the relationship between peers becomes more intimate- the children gain the awareness of the needs of a friend and proceed to augment each other's situation, for example, by helping with assignments or protecting from victimization. Berndt (1982) explains help as expression of mutual responsiveness and after summarizing empirical research, claims that during adolescence, help is more occurring than in earlier years of children's development, therefore is also more significant for student's friendship. At least few studies have found that friendship does play a protective role against victimization, going in line with Hartup et al (1996) explanation of help's role in the model of friendship (Bukowski et al, 2010; Bukowski

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& Sippola, 2005; Parker & Asher, 1987). The instrument by Parker and Asher (1993) used in the current study also includes help as part of friendship process. However, the focus of the help domain is concentrated on the assisting and guidance part, rather than protective attributes. Parker and Asher (1993) argues, that protective feature of friendship is linked with reflected appraisal which will be shortly described in the next paragraph.

Closeness is another friendship's characteristics named by Hartup et al (1996); it refers not to physical intimacy rather than acceptance, validation and attachment within the friendship. Sullivan (1953) also greatly emphasized the closeness in the relationship, for its significance to individual for understanding his value of the self by evaluating self from the context of friendship. In other words, the students can develop their personality within the social context, in this case- close friendship. In the model of Hartup et al (1996), comprehension of closeness is divided into two dimensions: affective bond and reflected appraisal. From the perspective of attachment theory, affective bond refers to the pupil's attachment behavior towards the friend with a great emotional significance (Bowlby, 1988). It is argued that the friendship is not as critical for personal development as primary caregiver, and that is rather a reflection of initial attachment with the caregiver than initiation of significant attachment bond (Kamenov et al, 2010). Additional criticism towards measuring closeness within the affective bond may arise from the argument that if the instrument is used in cross-sectional rather than longitudinal study, it becomes challenging to distinguish between transitory and persistent relationships, which is one of the main needed criteria for the attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988; Parker & Asher, 1993). Some studies investigating the changes in the friendships over time, revealed that adolescence's friendships do tend to last shorter periods rather than endure, which support the idea for measuring closeness from the affective bond perspective mostly with longitudinal studies (Berndt, 1982; Parker, 1996). Regarding reflected appraisal, Sullivan directly relates it to the processes influencing the development of the concept of self (1953). If the student experience validation and acceptance expressed via connectedness with a friend, the positive development of self will be triggered. However, the influence of the reflected appraisal increases with the gather expression of affective bond (Sullivan, 1953; Hartup et al, 1996). Meaning, the closer the friends are, the more influence the friendship will have for the concept of self. Berndt suggest including an extra dimension of *stability* into the model of friendship, for measuring and fully understanding the importance of *closeness* to construction of the self (1982). Other suggestions for investigating closeness and its affects,

are to measure the two dimensions- affective bond and reflected appraisal- together in a longitudinal study (Sullivan, 1953; Hartup et al, 1996).

Last characteristic of friendship mentioned by Hartup et al (1996) is *security*. Security, as described by Hartup et al, is a sense of security and ability to manage the difficulties within the relationship as well as trust and exchange of personal information or feelings (1996). Sullivan named security, or as he refers, intimacy as an important characteristic of friendship with the features of self-disclosure and intimate exchange (1953). Parker and Asher separated security into two dimensions- conflict resolution, where the focus is placed or the resolution of socially challenging situation and intimacy- which predominantly includes exchange of feelings and sensitive information (1993). Whereas security is separated into different directions or not, the importance of the characteristic is well documented (Berndt, 2004; Sullivan, 1953).

Friendship is known to have a great number of influences towards the individual and majority of the studies investigating friendships are focused on positive developmental outcomes. However, recent literature suggest that friendship not always has beneficial outcomes. It is known that friends become similar over time, therefore harmful characteristics of the friend could possibly lead to development of the same negative issues for individual (Hartup et al, 1996; Hojjat & Moyer, 2017; Dishion & Owen, 2002). Hojjat and Moyer discussed two better investigated examples of the negative aspects of friendship- contagion of depression and deviancy behaviour (2017). The authors indicated variation between the sexes in the inclination towards the tendencies- the girls seem to have greater proclivity towards increase of depressive symptoms if their friends have higher levels of it; while the boys tend to befriend other boys with delinquent behaviour and increase the risk of developing problematic behaviour themselves (Hojjat & Moyer, 2017). Understanding that friendship can influence adolescence not only positively but as well negatively, can increase the awareness of the importance of friendship to the youth's development.

The sex different is found not only while investigating the negative aspects of friendship but also regarding the positive characteristics of the relationship. For example, some research suggests, that the girls have a greater disclose to friends than the boys, where the boys are believed to generate more fun (Goswami, 2012; Rose et al, 2012, Hartup et al, 1996). Berndt (1982) suggests, that the girl's friendships tend to have greater intimacy levels, while the boys- less, due to the fear of wrong interpretations of the intimacy. Also, there are some

studies proposing that the girls tend to have more explicit friendships than boys (Berndt, 1982). One of the possible explanations is that the females prefer interactions with smaller groups of peers than the males. For example, the boys have a tendency towards group sports, which may motion males to be more inclusive than explicit in their relationships. Friendships are created differently, and a lot depends not only on personal characteristics or cultural norms, but also on the sex. Therefore, while investigating this intimate link, it is required to understand the various aspects the student's sex which plays a role in forming and maintaining the relationship.

Regarding perceived friendship quality of students with psychosocial difficulties, it is seen that rather little research is conducted in the field. A great part of the studies investigating relationships of students having psychosocial challenges, are focusing on peer acceptance rather measuring the quality of those relationships (Valås, 1999; Frostad & Jan Pijl, 2006; Hartup, 1996). However, studies investigating the quality, reveal that those friendships tend to be of a lower quality (Wiener & Schneider, 2002; Waldrip et al, 2008; Parker & Asher, 1993), where the greatest issues appear to be conflicts and their resolutions (Wiener & Schneider, 2002).

2.4 Well-being and Friendship Quality of Students with Psychosocial Difficulties

According to the biopsychosocial perspective, both personal characteristics and proximal processes can influence the well-being of student's with psychosocial difficulties (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Friendship is the second most important proximal process effecting child's well-being, where the family relations are the most significant (Goswami, 2012). A high-quality friendship is referred as friendship with elevated positive qualities-security, help, closeness; while low-quality friendship has higher levels of conflict, combination of dominance and other negative characteristics (Berndt, 2002; Hartup et al, 1996). On the other hand, the low-quality friendships have been showed to impact enormously on child's life satisfaction, stress, state of mind, loneliness and even depression (Goswami, 2012; Parker & Asher, 1993; Bakalim & Karcka, 2016). Due to characteristics of the problem as well the suggestions from previous research, it may be argued that students with psychosocial difficulties tend to have lower quality of the friendship, therefore faces

additional threat for their well-being (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007; Hartup, 1996; Gresham & Kern, 2004).

High quality friendships can work as a safeguard for all children and is of a greater importance to the one who have psychosocial difficulties- offering so needed buffer against negative social experiences (Hartup et al, 1996; Hodges et al, 1999; Waldrip, Malcolm & Jensen-Campbell, 2008). For example, if the friendship lacks voluntary enjoyable time spent together but has a greater frequency of conflicts- that could affect the child in a stressful and challenging matter (Berndt, 2002). One may say that the child could end the friendship which has negative influences, however due to personal characteristics, level of social skills or even social setting around the student, that becomes challenging (Rescorla, 2007). Additionally, it is known from the current literature that friendship becomes increasingly important during adolescence (Bukowski, 1999; Berndt, 2002; Jones, 2014; Sullivan, 1953) and that students with psychosocial difficulties tend to have problems within social contexts, including peer relationships (Gresham & Kern, 2004; Lund, 2012; Kremer et al, 2016). It becomes a great priority to strengthen and ameliorate the peer relations as well as create functioning supportive systems- proximal processes- for securing the needs of students with psychosocial difficulties in order to obtain the positive psychological well-being of a child (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).

3   Methodology

This chapter describes and explains the methodological choices regarding the project-including design of the research, participants, instruments, procedures, and data analyzes. This section also includes validity and reliability of the measures as well as ethical considerations and issues regarding the project.

3.1   Research Design

In correspondence to the research question described in previous chapter, it was decided on using nonexperimental, quantitative research design, more specific- survey. In the study, the perceived friendship quality and the well-being of students with and without psychosocial difficulties are compared, therefore this study also qualifies as a correlation research. Correlation research, as described by Gall, Gall and Borg (2007), aims to discover the relationship between variables with the use of correlation statistics. The relationship was investigated with an online questionnaire at a specific point in time making the research a cross-sectional study (Creswell, 2014).

3.2   Sample

To successfully select the sample, the sample selecting guidelines were followed- first the defiining characteristics of population are determined; then the targeted sample size is expressed; and lastly, the possible sample procedures are described (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

Population of interest in this research project is Norwegian secondary school (grades 8 to 10) students who demonstrate psychosocial difficulties. The specific grades were chosen due to increased awareness of personal and social differences between the students in teenage years which might affect the perceived friendship quality and correspondingly influence the well-being of the students with psychosocial difficulties (Bukowski, 1996; Goswami, 2012). The percentage of students who demonstrate behaviour problems in Norway is estimated to vary between 1,7% to 10% of all school students depending on the definition of psychosocial difficulties (Ogden, 2009, Skogen & Torvik, 2013).

The sample is expected to represent the population in the best way possible, therefore different sampling procedures are selected to secure the representation of the population (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). However, due to limitations of the study, convenience sampling method was chosen to select the participants, meaning the stratification of the population was not involved in sampling procedures (Creswell, 2014).

For this sample, all public secondary schools (in total 30 schools, with total of around 9950 students) in Østfold (southeaster Norway) were contacted and invited to participate in the study. Østfold country was selected due its accessibility regarding the distance to the study base- Oslo. During the month of September, the schools were approached by phone as well as received email with invitation for participation, and after agreed time (no later than 10 working days), the schools were contacted again for assuring the participation. Majority of the schools declined the offer due to lack of time and/or interest, however one Norwegian public secondary school (*ungdomsskole*) agreed to take part in the study.

For the confidentiality purposes the school will not be identified, rather than shorty described. The total number of students in the school is 299, which makes the school an average sized school in Norway, since statistically 40% of all public secondary schools have between 100 to 300 students. The population of the city, where the school is situated, consist of 13.6% immigrants, which represents the countries average percentage- 14%. However due to confidentiality laws in Norway, no further information about the students' background can be provided for the research. The school is located out of the city center, in the residential area with clam surroundings and good facilities. Regarding students' well-being at school (excluding bullying), the school is matching the national results where students score 4,2 points (the scale 1 to 5, where 5 is the highest)[2].

The total of 178 students participated in the study, 60% of all students. 85 participants were females and 93 males (F-48%, M-52%). The students are in grades from 8 to 10, ages between 12 to 17 (96,1% of all students are between 13-15 years old).

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[2] The statistics takes from skoleporten.udir.no

3.3 Data Collection

Data was collected in the end of November over the online questionnaire which was given to the participants during the school time. Due to the construction of the questionnaire, the response rate of the participants was 100%. The three aspects of the research- perceived friendship quality, internalized and externalized difficulties, and well-being- were measured in the combined survey consisting of 72 questions. Written instructions as well as guidance from the teachers were provided before and during the execution.

3.4 Instruments

To measure psychosocial difficulties, Social Skill Rating Scale (SSRS) by Gresham and Elliott (1990) was used; for measuring perceived friendship quality- the Friendship Quality Questionnaire (FQQ) by Parker and Asher (1993) and for investigating students well-being- The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being by Kern et al. (2016). In the following section of the chapter, the instruments will be described and discussed in detail.

3.4.1 Internalized and Externalized Difficulties

Social Skill Rating Scale (SSRS) by Gresham and Elliott (1990) was used to determine behavior patterns in students. The original scale consists of three subscales regarding internalized and externalized behavior, as well as hyperactivity. However, hyperactivity scale was not included in the study due to specificity and characteristics of hyperactivity disorder, which would require additional investigation and may become a whole new topic (Gresham and Elliott, 1990; Rescorla, 2007). Children's behavior can be accessed by parent, teachers or self-reporting questionnaire. For this study in particularly, the self-reporting form of the questionnaire was chosen, since the self-reporting questionnaire can give a better glimpse to the intrapersonal word of the student, without the participants feeling pressured to answer in a socially acceptable notion (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). The total of twelve questions were added to the questionnaire- six questions from each subscale. Moreover, the official translation from English to Norwegian language, which was constructed and validated by Ogden (2003), was used in the current study.

The scoring in the internalized and externalized difficulties scales is from 0 to 18 (0-never, 1-sometimes, 2-often, 3-always). The students were divided into different groups depending to

scoring as it is described in the scoring manual by Gresham and Elliott (1990). Students who were within one standard deviation above or below the mean were placed to the group called *Average*- referring to the average amount or frequency of behavior. Students scoring one standard deviation above the mean were places in the group- *More*- implying that the student experience more than average internalized or externalized difficulties. Students who scored one standard deviation below the mean, supposing experiencing fewer than average psychosocial difficulties, were placed together with the group *Average*, since the focus of the study is to investigate the relationship between perceived friendship quality and well-being of students with psychosocial difficulties. The two groups (internalized and externalized difficulties) were not merged together and investigated separately due to the different behavior patterns and implication it might have on the on perceived friendship quality and well-being (Gresham and Elliott, 1990).

The main goal of SSRS is to assess the areas of social skills where the child is facing difficulty and to determine the needed interventions. Gresham and Elliott (1990), defined social skills as socially learned behaviors which allows the child to positively interact with other without creating socially unacceptable conducts. The authors claim that teaching social skills includes many of the same strategies used in teaching academic notions in the school.

3.4.2 Perceived Friendship Quality

While choosing the instrument for investigating perceived friendship quality, it was noticed that there is limited number of validated and reliable measures in the research field. In addition, none of the instruments where used in Norway, which required additional preparations for the study. However, after further considerations and explorations of the literature, the Friendship Quality Questionnaire (FQQ) by Parker and Asher (1993) was chosen.

The instrument is a derivation of a similar instrument developed by Bukowski et al. (1994). The Friendship Quality Questionnaire does not give an overall scoring of the perceived friendship quality; however, it allows to investigate different factors as well as problematic areas while determining perceived friendship quality. The questionnaire consists of 40 questions and is divided into six subscales measuring students' perceptions of different subjective features of their friendships; in addition, each subscale has a different number of items. The names of the subscales are as follows (the number of items in subscale is stated in

the brackets): Validation and Carrying (10), Conflict and Betray (7), Conflict Resolution (3), Help and Guidance (9), Companionship and Recreation (5) and Intimate Exchange (6). Subscales are scored with 5-point Liker-scale (Never- 1, Sometimes-2, Often- 3, Very Often-4, Always-5). As seen, some of the subscales within the Friendship Quality Questionnaire are relatively short, for example, Conflict Resolution has only 3 questions. That creates a possibility that the reliability as well as validity of the questionnaire may be challenged (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Further analyzes of reliability and validity of the questionnaire will be displayed and discussed in the later part of the chapter.

The questionnaire is constructed for students between the age of 12 up to the age of 17 (Parker & Asher, 1993). Even if it makes the instrument adaptable to a great range of participants, it may as well become an obstacle. Some of the questions can become confusing or out of age range for the youngest students, while others- for the oldest participants, therefore, differently interpreted (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007).

The Friendship Quality Questionnaire is relatively short; however, it requires the student to answer the questions while thinking about the closest friend. It may become challenging and the participant may start answering based on the general experiences from interacting with the peers. To prevent the student answering generally and motivate to keep the focus, the general instructions before the questionnaire starts as well as written instruction before every segment of the questions are provided.

As mentioned earlier, the instrument was not used in Norway before, therefore there was no official translation and validation of the tool. As part of the preparations of the study, the questionnaire was translated using professional translator from English to Norwegian. The questionnaire originally was made for the English-speaking participants; therefore, some adjustments were conducted after the translation, to match the cultural differences and norms (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). For example, the word "a fight" directly translated would be "slåsskampen", however in Norwegian it would purely mean a physical fight, rather than a big argument between the individuals. Therefore, it was decided to use word "krangler" which then in English represents "fighting" or "arguing". On the other hand, due to adjustments, some of the questions sounded relatively similar and might confuse the participants, which then influence the outcome of the study (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). In addition, no pilot-study for the instrument was conducted in Norway before the final attempt of collecting the data for the current study. Therefore, relevance, coherency as well as

practicability and adequacy must be considered while discussing the outcome of the questionnaire.

3.4.3 Well-being

The Measure is made of 20 questions which are grouped in 5 specific categories-Engagement, Perseverance, Optimism, Connectedness, and Happiness (Kern et al., 2016). The scoring of the questions in each category is made based on Likert scale (Never-1, Sometimes-2, Often-3, Very Often-4, Always-5). The scale was first used in USA in 2013 and after carried out in Norway in 2014. The original translation to Norwegian was used in the current research.

The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being intends to characterize and outline various aspects of students psychological functioning. However, it does not give a single measure of overall well-being rather than the different components of it. The questionnaire is easy to use and have a favorable number of items for the user, however due to low number of items might become hard to measure a high level of Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which is widely recognized for measuring the internal consistency of the scales. The in depth analyzes of reliability and validity of the scale in the current study will be discussed later in the chapter.

3.5 Data Analyzes

The data was analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. Since the nature of the study was to investigate the relationship between perceived friendship quality and well-being, the correlation analyzes was used. For interpreting the strength of the correlation value r, Cohen (1988) guidelines were used (table 3.5.1.).

3.5.1. Cohen (1988) guidelines for correlation value r

r value	Correlation strength
r < .29	Small
.30 < .49	Medium
r >.50	Strong

For characterising the distribution patters in the sample, Skewness and Kurtosis values were examined. The skewness is a measure of symmetry, with the value measured according to

zero. If the data is normally distributed, the skewness value will be closer to 0; then the distribution is positive- the data is shifted to the right and then negative- towards the left from the mean. Kurtosis measures if the data are heavy- or light-tailed, in comparison with the normal distribution. The expected value of kurtosis is 3: higher value of kurtosis implies heavy tails, while lower than 3- lighter tails (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007).

To exhibit the results from the different domains of the Friendship Quality Questionnaire as well as EPOCH Measure of Well-being, the mean scores of the scales where converted into percentage. The decision was made due to the differences in the number of questions in each scale. The maximum value of each of the scales presents the 100% while the mean of the total score per scale- exhibited percentage. The midpoint score per scale is expected to be around 60%, since none of the scales can have a score of 0 due to formulation of Likert scale. The percentage scores are used only for exhibiting the results (see chapter 4, charts 4.2.1. and 4.3.1.).

3.6 Reliability and Validity of the Instruments

The following sections are presenting internal consistency of the instruments used in this study in comparison with previous studies. Regarding reliability of the measures, the Cronbach's alpha is used to measure the internal consistency of the scales (table 3.6.1.). Cronbach's alpha is sensitive to the number of items in the scales as well as the sample size, therefore it will be discussed with caution.

3.6.1. Cronbach's alpha coefficient guidelines

Cronbach's alpha	Internal consistency
$0.9 \leq \alpha$	Excellent
$0.8 \leq \alpha < 0.9$	Good
$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$	Acceptable
$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$	Questionable
$0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$	Poor
$\alpha < 0.5$	Unacceptable

3.6.1 Internalized and Externalized Difficulty scale

Cronbach's Alpha for externalized subscale after reliability analyzes is shown to be 0.78 (items total correlation varies from 0.36 to 0.60); as for internalized- Cronbach's Alfa is 0.75 and item total correlation varies from 0.27 to 0.65. Cronbach's Alfa would not improve if any of the item is deleted. These measures are acceptable, and it does correspond to the outcomes of the study by Gresham and Elliott (1990) (Everitt, 2002).

The instrument is widely used and recognized as valid instrument for measuring students' problem behavior. The authors of the instrument, Gresham and Elliott, established confirmation of the content validity of the SPSS in well executed matter: firstly, the in-depth investigation about assessment and teaching the socials skills for youth was conducted; then the relationship between the particular conduct and outcome was investigated; lastly, the conducts which characterize the students with behavior problem and without were identified as well as rated according to the significance (Gresham and Elliott, 1990). The SPSS is not only recommended by other researchers in the field, but also is used to demonstrate the validity of new measures for social skill rating (Merrell et al, 2011).

3.6.2 Friendship Quality Questionnaire

Table 3.6.2.1. exhibits internal consistency of the scales. All the scales have acceptable or good Cronbach's Alfa, except of Conflict Resolution scale, where r=.55 (Everitt, 2002). Apart of Conflict Resolution scale, the psychometrical measures do correspond with the computations made by Parker and Asher (1993). If the item in Conflict Resolution scale- "Talk about how to get over being mad at each other"- is deleted, the r value increases dramatically to .82 (see Appendix A for detailed item correlations and consistency). According to the recommendation for internal consistency of the instruments, the item might be deleted due to low item inner correlation (which is only .12) (Everitt, 2002), however, the scale of Conflict Resolution has only three items in total, therefore deleting one- would reduce the scale to two items. After further considerations and primary analyzed of the results, it was decided not to modify the scale and keep all the thee items, since in the overall perspective, the scale with three or two items does not change the general results significantly. None of the other scales' Cronbach's Alfa could increase if any of the items are deleted.

3.6.2.1. Internal consistency of Friendship Quality Questionnaire

	Study by Parker & Asher (1993)	Current study
Conflict Resolution	.73	.55/.82*
Conflict & Betray	.84	.75
Help & Guidance	.90	.88
Companionship & Recreation	.75	.75
Intimate Exchange	.86	.85
Validation and Carrying	.90	.82

*Internal consistency if item deleted

Regarding the validity of the instrument, the instrument was adapted from Bukowski et al. (1994) instrument of Friendship Quality Questionnaire. The questionnaire was revised and modified to clarify possible ambiguities in interpretation; in addition, the instrument was pilot tested to secure and refine the structures of the scales (Parker & Asher, 1993). Partial or complete instrument was used in the studies investigating friendship quality within the school aged students and it is referred to be a valid and relevant tool for today's research (Bakalım & Taşdelen-Karçkay, 2016; Akin, Akin & Uğur, 2016; Bukowski, Laursen & Hoza, 2010).

3.6.3 The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being

The instrument is measuring five different components with just four questions, which might lead to low inner consistency. On the other hand, the internal consistency of measures does correspond with the provided results from the study made in USA (Kern et al, 2016) and in Norway (Austdal, 2014). Cronbach's Alfa of the scales varies from acceptable to good (table 3.6.3.1.), and the internal consistency would not increase if any of the items are deleted (Everitt, 2002). The Engagement domain is named to be the least reliable in the instrument which is also the case in the current study (Kern et al., 2016).

	Kern et al., 2016	Austdal, 2014	Current Study
Engagement	.76	.76	.72
Perseverance	.79	.78	.79
Optimism	.82	.83	.85
Connectedness	.81	.82	.80
Happiness	.87	.87	.86

Regarding instrument validity, the tool is constructed after in-depth investigation of well-being and it is shown to have content validity in comparison to other measures in the field (Kern et al, 2016; Kozina & Straus, 2017). On the other hand, even if the instrument has been used in Norway before, the proper validation of the measure with adequate number of participants is still required.

3.7 Ethics

Children, and especially students with psychosocial difficulties, are vulnerable group and developing individuals who have different needs and capabilities which should be protected with even more precautions than adult matters (NESH, 2016). All the participants were informed about the purpose of the research, however, the notification about the research was made in a way that no generalization could be made, to avoid social group stigmatization (NESH, 2016). In addition, the methods were adopted according the age group.

To achieve more honest answers for the questionnaires and as well to assure the security of identity, anonymity is provided during all the process of the study (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). For the current research, the only personal information needed is the gender and age, however the students still should feel safe and protected while participating in the investigation. Also, the study is conducted voluntary with the right to refrain without any consequences at any time.

Regarding the methods of the research, questionnaires could limit the access for individual insight and experiences, especially investigating the quality of friendship and well-being of pupils due to the nature of deeply personal encounters. Consequently, the themes and items in the questionnaires are considered carefully and assured the relevance and clearness (Gall, Gall

& Borg, 2007). In addition, since friendship is an intimate and personal, the nature of questionnaire could stimulate students to consider their own friendship and, especially if the friendship is low-quality, it could lead to decrease of self-esteem and even self-worth (Parker & Asher, 1989), therefore it is important before giving out the questionnaire, to explain that human relationships are complicated and varies a lot. If the student seeks for a dialog, the support should be provided for all.

4 Results

In this chapter the results of the study are presented. The information was collected with the help of online questionnaire, therefore no missing variables existed. First, the results from each of the scales are described. After the different groups of interest are compared within the relationship between perceived friendship quality and well-being subscales.

4.1 Internalized and Externalized Difficulties

In this part of the chapter, the form of distribution as well as correlation analyzes between two scales of internalized and externalized difficulties will be described, differences in distribution between males and females will be explored, also the scores from internalized and externalized scales between the sexes will be compared.

The Skewness of both distributions (Internalized- 0.695 and Externalized-1.629) shows that number of students scoring high on internalized or externalized difficulties is low. While examining measure of Kurtosis (Internalized-0.052, Externalized- 3.415), it is noticeable that the externalized group has heavier tails, meaning most of the students are within the group of Average and only few scored high in the scale (table 4.1.1).

4.1.1 *The form of distribution of internalized and externalized behaviour scales*

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Internalized	178	0	17	5.60	3.74	0.695	0.052
Externalized	178	0	18	3.82	3.38	1.629	3.415

After running the correlation analyzes of the two scales (internalized and externalized), Pearson Correlation shows a significant correlation of 0.30 (p=.001). The correlation is medium, indicating that some of the students have mixed problems (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). However, the students with mixed problems were not grouped due to the focus of the study.

As seen from table 4.1.2., internalized group of *More* is slightly bigger within females (18.8%) than within males (11.8%) while externalized *More* group of males (19.4%) is almost

four times greater than the same group of females (4.7%). 15.1% of all students in the sample (N=27) expressed to have internalized while 12.4% (N=22) externalized difficulties.

4.1.2. Distribution of females and males within internalized and externalized difficulties- the size of the groups- Average and More

		female (N=85)		male (N=93)		Total (N=178)	
		N	N%	N	N%	N	N%
Internalized	Average	69	81.2	82	88.2	151	84.9
	More	16	18.8	11	11.8	27	15.1
Externalized	Average	81	95.3	75	80.6	156	87.6
	More	4	4.7	18	19.4	22	12.4

After running an independent-samples t-test to compare Internalized and Externalized difficulty scores for sexes (table 4.1.3.), there was no significant difference in scores of Internalized difficulties between females and males. In contrary, the difference between females and males in the scores of Externalized difficulties was significant.

4.1.3. Differences between the sexes regarding internalized and externalized behaviour problems.

	Female		Male		t-test for Equality of Means		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T	Df	P
Internalized	.25	.55	.16	.47	1.113	176	.267
Externalized	.05	.21	.28	.61	3.311	176	.001

4.2 Perceived Friendship Quality

In this part, the results of Friendship Quality Questionnaire (Parker & Asher, 1993) are described. To start with, the distribution of the median scores of the Friendship Quality Questionnaire domains are provided; then the differences between the sexes as well as the two groups (*Average* and *More*) of internalized and externalized difficulty scores within the domains are reported and compared.

The table 4.2.1. displays percentage of the mean scores within perceived friendship quality domains for all participants. Conflict and Betray mean score percentage were less than average, implying that students in the sample regarded their friendship as being low in conflict. Intimate Exchange, Validation and Carrying, as well as Help and Guidance mean

score percentage were average suggesting that students experienced their friendship neither high nor low in the three domains. Conflict Resolution together with Companionship and Recreation mean score percentage were slightly higher above average indicating that students' experiences of their friendships in the two domains are rather high. The further analyses of the domains were conducted to explore the differences between the males and females.
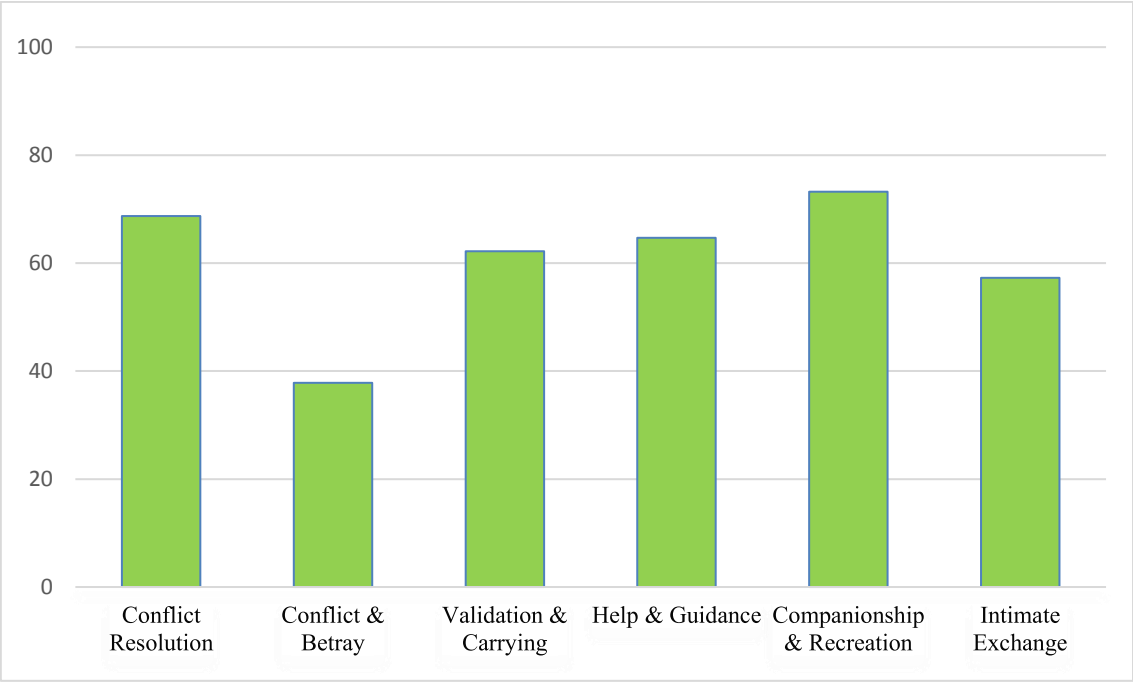
4.2.1. *Percentage of the mean scores within Friendship Quality Questionnaire*

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the Friendship Quality Questionnaire domains between sexes (table 4.2.2.). There was no significant difference for females and males only in the scores of Companionship and Recreation domain. The other domains (Conflict Resolution, Conflict and Betray, Help and Guidance, Intimate Exchange, Validation and Carrying) differed significantly (p value varied between <.001 to .035) implying that females perceive friendship domains with the higher scores than males except for Conflict and Betray domain, where males showed greater level of conflicts.

4.2.2. Friendship Quality Questionnaire domains' differences between sexes.

	Females		Males		t-test for Equality of Means		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T	df	p
Conflict Resolution	10.8	2.6	9.9	2.9	2.125	176	.035
Conflict & Betray	12.1	4.0	14.2	5.1	-2.920	176	.004
Help & Guidance	31.4	8.2	27.0	8.0	3.632	176	<.001
Companionship & Recreation	18.9	4.8	17.7	4.4	1.684	176	.094
Intimate Exchange	20.0	6.4	14.6	5.5	5.981	176	<.001
Validation & Carrying	32.7	8.9	29.8	8.0	2.348	176	.020

An independent sample t-test was conducted between the two groups (*Average* and *More*) of internalized difficulties. Friendship Quality domains varied significantly between the two groups within all the domains, where p value varied from <.001 to .023 (two tailed). Negative t value only within Conflict and Betray domain scores revels, that the group of *More* mean scores were higher than the group *Average- More* scored on average 3.3 points higher than the *Average* group. Within the rest of domains, *Average* scores were statistically higher than group *More* (table 4.2.3.).

4.2.3. Friendship Quality domain's differences between Internalized difficulty groups (Average and More)

	Average		More		t-test for Equality of Means		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T	Df	P
Conflict Resolution	10.7	2.5	8.4	3.4	3.284	176	.003
Conflict & Betray	12.6	4.0	16.3	6.7	-2.784	176	.009
Help & Guidance	30.0	8.0	24.3	9.1	3.023	176	.005
Companionship & Recreation	19.1	4.0	13.6	5.2	5.205	176	<.001
Intimate Exchange	17.7	6.4	14.3	6.8	2.382	176	.023
Validation & Carrying	32.1	8.3	26.0	8.2	3.530	176	.001

Regarding externalized difficulties (table 4.2.4), the two group- *Average* and *More*- scores varied significantly within three domains: Conflict Resolution, Conflict and Betray and Companionship and Recreation. Conflict and Betray scores for the group of *More* were 5.5 scores higher than the *Average* group. The rest of the domains- Help and Guidance, Intimate Exchange as well as Validation and Carrying did not varied significantly. In addition, the domain scores of Help and Guidance did not varied significantly and the scores of *Average* and *More* were almost identical (p=.900).

4.2.4. Friendship Quality domain's differences between Externalized difficulty groups (Average and More)

	Average		More		t-test for Equality of Means		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T	Df	p
Conflict Resolution	10.5	2.6	8.8	3.5	2.237	176	.035
Conflict & Betray	12.5	4.0	18.0	6.2	-4.067	176	<.001
Help & Guidance	29.1	8.4	29.3	8.4	-.127	176	.900
Companionship & Recreation	18.6	4.5	15.8	4.7	2.647	176	.013
Intimate Exchange	17.3	6.6	16.3	5.8	.707	176	.485
Validation & Carrying	31.4	8.5	29.3	8.7	1.078	176	.291

4.3 Well-being

The following part presents the results of different components of EPOCH well-being model (Kern et al., 2016). Firstly, the median scores of the domains of EPOCH measure are presented, later differences between the sexes are investigated, and finally the impact of internalized and externalized behavior problems on well-being domains are explored and compared.

The percentage of the mean scores within the domains display that the social and emotional well-being of the sample participants was medium to high (table 4.3.1). Connectedness scores were the highest while Happiness, Optimism and Perseverance scored slightly lower, however

within expected range; Engagement scores were slightly lower than average (Kern et al., 2016).
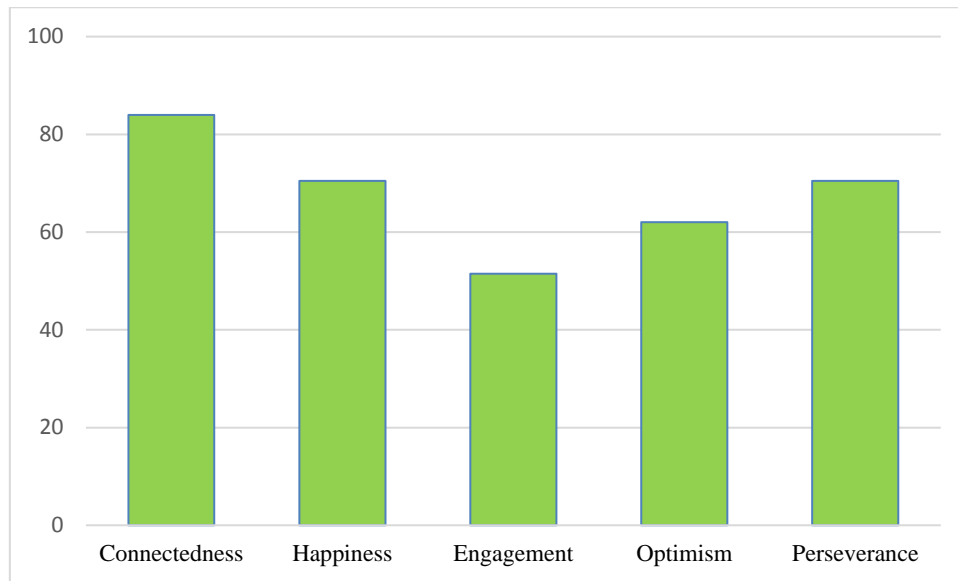
4.3.1. *Percentage of the mean scores within domains of Epoch Measure of Well-being*

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to compare the well-being domain scores between males and females (table 4.3.2.) The only significant difference between males and females was found within Perseverance domain.

4.3.2. *Differences in scores between females and males within five domains of well-being.*

	Females		Males		t-test for Equality of Means		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	T	df	P
Connectedness	17.0	3.6	16.6	3.6	.935	176	.351
Happiness	13.8	3.4	14.4	3.8	-1.102	176	.270
Engagement	9.9	3.3	10.6	2.9	-1.549	176	.123
Optimism	12.1	4.1	12.7	3.8	-.975	176	.331
Perseverance	14.8	3.1	13.4	3.5	2.681	176	.008

To determine whether where are statistically significant mean score differences within well-being domains across students with internalized and externalized difficulty (Average and More), an independent-sample t-test was conducted.

Regarding internalized difficulty groups, the scores varied significantly within all the domains of well-being where p value varied from <.001 to .001, except of Engagement (table 4.3.3.);

internalized difficulty group scored lower within all the domains and the greatest mean score differences can be seen within the domains of Connectedness and Happiness.

4.3.3. *Internalized difficulties groups (Average and More) mean score differences within domains of well-being*

	Average		More		t-test for Equality of Means		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	Df	P
Connectedness	17.5	2.9	12.9	4.9	6.792	176	<.001
Happiness	14.8	3.2	10.0	3.0	7.168	176	<.001
Engagement	10.3	3.0	10.0	3.5	.577	176	.564
Optimism	13.0	3.8	9.2	3.4	4.822	176	<.001
Perseverance	14.4	3.3	12.1	3.4	3.410	176	.001

Concerning the score differences of students within externalized difficulty groups of Average and More, three domains varied significantly- Connectedness, Happiness and Perseverance. Engagement and Optimism did not vary significantly; in addition, Engagement's domain revealed that the group of *More* scored slightly higher than the group *Average*.

4.3.4. *Externalized difficulties group (Average and More) scores mean differences within the domains of well-being*

	Average		More		t-test for Equality of Means		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	Df	p
Connectedness	17.0	3.4	15.2	4.9	2.256	176	.025
Happiness	14.4	3.6	12.3	3.7	2.500	176	.013
Engagement	10.1	3.1	11.1	3.1	-1.386	176	.168
Optimism	12.5	4.1	11.8	3.1	.818	176	.415
Perseverance	14.4	3.2	11.7	3.6	3.638	176	<.001

4.4 Relationship between Friendship Quality and Well-being

In this part of the chapter, the correlations between Friendship Quality and Well-being domains will be presented. Firstly, the correlations for all the participants will be showed and later the correlations of the domains within the internalized and externalized difficulty groups

of *More* will be demonstrated. The tables demonstrate direction, positive or negative correlations as well as the strength of how the domains are related to one another.

The table 4.4.1 shows that almost all the domains of Friendship Quality and Well-being are significantly correlated at p value < .001. Conflict and Betray domain is negatively correlated with all of the Well-being domains, however only with small correlation (r between -.10 to -.27), and medium correlated with of Connectedness (r=-.43). Connectedness has a medium correlation with all Friendship Quality domains (r between .35 to .50). Companionship and Recreation and Validation and Carrying domains has medium correlation with all well-being domains (r between .34 to .50), except Engagement domain; Engagement domain has only small correlations with the friendship quality domains (r between -.10 to .29). The only strong correlation is between Connectedness and Companionship and Recreation domain, however r=.50 so the correlation must be considered carefully.

4.4.1. *Correlations for Friendship Quality and Well-being domains for all participants (N=178)*

	Conflict Resolution	Conflict & Betray	Help & Guidance	Companionship & Recreation	Intimate Exchange	Validation & Carrying
Connectedness	.35	-.43	.40	.50	.37	.40
Happiness	.28	-.19*	.29	.49	.19*	.41
Engagement	.11*	-.10*	.22	.24	.19*	.29
Optimism	.23	-.15*	.38	.40	.28	.45
Perseverance	.30	-.27	.32	.34	.25	.34

Note. Correlations marked with * are significant at p= .05 level and all other coefficients are significant at p<.001.

Table 4.4.2 exhibits correlations between Friendship Quality and Well-being domains within internalized difficulty group of More. Regarding internalized difficulty group *More*, it is visible that Engagement and Optimism domains did not significantly correlated to any of the friendship quality domains. Conflict and Betray domain correlated negatively with all friendship quality domains, however significantly only with Connectedness domain (r= -.56); in addition, Connectedness has a medium significant correlation with all the rest friendship quality domains (r between .40 to 49). Happiness and Perseverance significantly correlated with Help and Guidance, Companionship and Recreation as well as Intimate Exchange

domains (r between .41 to .60); moreover, Happiness has a medium significant correlation with Validation and Carrying domains (r = .49).

4.4.2. Correlations for Friendship Quality and Well-being domains for group of More within internalized difficulties.

	Conflict Resolution	Conflict & Betray	Help & Guidance	Companionship & Recreation	Intimate Exchange	Validation & Carrying
Connectedness	.40*	-.56**	.39**	.45*	.45*	.49**
Happiness	.30	-.26	.41*	.60**	.44*	.48*
Engagement	.01	-.10	.29	.30	.09	.19
Optimism	.13	-.12	.27	.30	.33	.37
Perseverance	.23	-.28	.44*	.47*	.49*	.38

Note. Coefficients marked ** are significant at p< .001 and coefficients marked * are significant p<.05.

The table 4.4.3 shows the externalized difficulty group More correlations between Friendship Quality and Well-being domains. Comparing to internalized group of More, is it seen less significant correlations between the domains within externalized group. Perseverance, Optimism and Engagement does not significantly correlate with any of friendship quality domains. Happiness has medium significant correlation with Help and Guidance (r=.46), and strong correlation with Companionship and Recreation domain (r=.56). Connectedness has the most significant correlations- with Conflict and Betray (r=-.58), Help and Guidance (r=.48), Companionship and Recreation (r=.61) and Intimate Exchange (r=.59).

4.4.3. Correlations for Friendship Quality and Well-being domains for group of More within externalized difficulties.

	Conflict Resolution	Conflict & Betray	Help & Guidance	Companionship & Recreation	Intimate Exchange	Validation & Carrying
Connectedness	.33	-.58**	.48*	.61**	.59**	.36
Happiness	.11	-.21	.46*	.56**	.31	.40
Engagement	.01	-.22	.03	.01	.10	.11
Optimism	.17	-.02	.30	.33	.13	.36
Perseverance	.02	-.24	.18	.16	-.06	.17

Note. Coefficients marked ** are significant at p< .001 and coefficients marked * are significant p<.05

4.5 Summary of Results

15.1% of all participants expressed internalized and 12.4%- externalized difficulties; and while comparing the sexes, significant difference was found within externalized but not internalized difficulties. Regarding perceived friendship quality between males and females, significant differences were found across all the domains apart of Companionship and Recreation- females were scoring higher, except of Conflict and Betray domain. Comparing the groups of *Average* and *More* internalized difficulties, significant differences were revealed between all the domains; and examining externalized difficulty groups, the significant differences were discovered within Conflict and Resolution, Conflict and Betray as well as Companionship and Recreation domains. Conserning well-being of the participants, the t-test revealed the significant difference between the males and females within the Perseverance domain- females scored higher; the other domains did not differ. After investigating the mean score differences within internalized difficulties, the groups varied significantly within all, except Engagement domain; within externalized difficulties the differences were found between Connectedness, Happiness and Perseverance domains. Correlation analyzes showed that for all the participants in the sample well-being and friendship quality domains significantly correlated, however the correlations were mostly weak or medium. After splitting the groups and investigating correlations for the group More of internalized and externalized difficulties, the results show that internalized group More had more significant correlations than externalized group. Within externalized group More, Engagement, Optimism, Perseverance as well as Conflict Resolution and Validation and Carrying did not show to have significant correlations. Happiness and Connectedness domains significantly correlated with Help and Guidance and Companionship and Recreation domains; in addition, Connectedness as well significantly correlated with Conflict and Betray and Intimate Exchange domains. Regarding internalized group More, Connectedness correlated significantly with all friendship quality domains. Moreover, Happiness and Perseverance domains significantly correlated with Help and Guidance, Companionship and Recreation as well as Intimate Exchange domains; in addition, Happiness as well shows significant correlation with Validation and Carrying domain.

5   Discussion and Summary

The final chapter of the thesis includes the discussion of the main findings of the study in comparison with previous research. Then the summary and limitations regarding the research processes are provided. Lastly, implications and recommendations for the further studies are presented in the last part of this chapter.

5.1 Discussion of the Main Findings of the Study

In this chapter, to answer the research question- "what is the relationship between perceived friendship quality and well-being of students with internalize and externalized difficulties?", as well two sub-questions- "How do students with internalized and externalized difficulties perceive their perceived friendship quality *and* well-being in comparison to their peers?", the different aspects of the results will be discussed. The chapter starts with general characteristics of the sample- gender differences within well-being, friendship quality as well as psychosocial difficulties. Later, the correlations between well-being and friendship quality domains of students with internalized and externalized difficulties will be discussed deliberately. Lastly, the students with and without internalized and externalized difficulties will be compared to their peers within friendship quality and well-being. It is important to mention, that due to the construct of the research, it is impossible to determine the direction of the relationship between the well-being and perceived friendship quality of the students with the psychosocial difficulties. Therefore, it is not clear if the difficulties are influencing the outcome of the measures or, the friendship qualities and well-being affects the child's behavior.

5.1.1 Prevalence and Gender Differences

The results exhibit that 12.4% of all participants have internalized and 15.1%- externalized difficulties. The prevalence percentage found in the current study contradicts previous research done concerning adolescence in Norway- the numbers in the study are higher than anticipated (Ogden, 2012; Rescorla et al, 2007). The differences may occur due to the differences in the definition or/and the differences in use of the methods (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). The current study did not distinguish between psychosocial difficulties and other disorders exhibiting similar problems occurring in the social-context (for example, ADHD or

autism spectrum disorders), therefore the prevalence numbers could be higher than expected (Ogden, 2012). In addition, the information was gathered from the perspective of students rather than teachers and parents, which may as well affect the result of the prevalence (Rescorla et al, 2007). It is hard to conclude if the participants in the sample have greater percentage of psychological difficulties due to methodological choices or other socially and/or environmentally occurring settings.

Concerning gender differences within psychosocial differences, the girls scored significantly lower in the externalized difficulty scale, which coincide with the previous research (McGrath, 2005); implying that the boys are expressing more aggressive and short-tempered behavior, than girls (Gresham &Elliot, 1990). However, regarding internalized difficulties, there was no significant difference between the sexes, which collides with previous research claiming that the girls have a greater tendency towards the internal problems (Place & Elliott, 2013; Hartup et al, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1989; Zahn-Waxler et al., 2008; McGrath, 2005; Derdikman-Eiron, 2011). The study of Bor et al (2014) points out that internalized difficulties increased within females in the last 10 years, while within males- not. Some authors argued that the early sexualization and a negative effect of social media are responsible for increasement of internal difficulties within females (Kathy & Laird, 2000; Hatch L., 2011). The results exhibiting no differences between the sexes may be hypothetically explained within the light of the societal gender equality, there adolescences males similarly to the females are experiencing increased pressure from socio-cultural factors, such as social media (Looze et al, 2017). However, the disagreeing outcome cannot be understood fully due to limitations of the study and therefore generalized or assumed occurring due to explained reason.

Regarding sex differences within friendship quality, the genders did not differ only between companionship domain of friendship- girls expressed higher levels of validation, help, conflict resolution and intimate exchange, while males reported to experience more conflict in their friendships. This is an anticipated result, which as well goes in line with previous research (Parker & Asher, 1987; Goswami, 2012; Rose et al, 2012, Hartup et al, 1996; Berndt, 1982). One of the possible explanations for the differences is that females tend to be more exclusive with their friendships than males, who engage in bigger groups of friends, therefore the girl's friendships reaches different levels of intimacy, validation and help (Berndt, 1982;

Goswami, 2012; Hartup et al, 1996). However, there is still little research done to name more accurate the reasons for differences in the friendships within males and females.

Lastly, comparing the scores of well-being measure of all the participants with previous studies, the results indicates that the students in the sample have relatively high well-being (Kern et al, 2015). It is anticipated result, since Norway is known for its well-structured and child centred policies regarding student's well-being. In addition, the results convey the sex differences within only one attribute of well-being- perseverance. Often the research made outside of Norway, suggest that females tend to score significant lower on well-being than males due to variation in structural and socio-cultural factors as well as biological differences (Batz, 2018). The similar scores between sexes, can be explained by Norway having high societal gender equality, where the cultural norms and expectations are relatively equal for boys and girls- allowing the well-being to be rather indifferent (Looze et al, 2017). Regarding the perseverance domain, it is known that the boys have a greater tendency towards aggression and impulsive behavior, which may influence the perseverance, however that might not be enough to explain the occurring significant dissimilarity (Cross, Copping & Campbell, 2011). The results might be also interpreted in the light of school related perseverance, there the boy's persistence may be lower than the girls (Kern et al., 2016). However, without additional investigation in school results and school related involvement, no further analyzes can be done.

5.1.2 Relationship between Well-being and Perceived Friendship Quality of Students with Internalized and Externalized Difficulties

This study explores the relationship between friendship quality and well-being of students with internalized and externalized difficulties. Well-being is an umbrella term which resemble to optimum psychological functioning and experience (Ryan & Deci, 2001). In addition, well-being consists of different domains- optimism, engagement and connectedness, perseverance and happiness; each of the domain may be associated differently by the perceived friendship quality of a student. Before dividing the sample into two groups-internalized and externalized psychosocial difficulties- correlation analyses demonstrated that regarding all participants in the sample, well-being and friendship quality domains are significantly correlated; however, the correlations are mostly small and only some-medium (r between .11 to .50). It goes in line with previous research, claiming that having intimate and validating friendships, in other

words- friendships of higher quality, is linked with better psychological well-being (Bakalım & Taşdelen-Karçkay, 2016; Akin, Akin & Uğur, 2016). Interestingly, Engagement domain of well-being has an outstandingly low correlations with friendship's domains. In addition, the correlations remain low (r between after .01 to .30) investigating the students with internalized and externalized difficulties separately. The interpretation of the finding could be that even if the domain is targeting to assess a general disposition for psychological engagement and immersion in activities, the participants may have interpreted the questions from the perspective of the school's involvement, where the individual is not engaged due to various reasons (Kern et al., 2016). Some of the reasons can be related with the characteristics of the difficulties (such as low self-esteem or aggression and poor self-control), which then reduces the child's involvement into the school related tasks, and affects the engagement (Gresham & Kern, 2004; Gresham & Elliot, 1990). However, for further understanding of the outcome, additional investigation clearly relating to the schools' engagement would be needed.

Well-being domain of Connectedness expressed to have significant correlations with all friendship quality domains for all participants in the study. After investigating participants with internalized and externalized difficulties, the strength of correlations increased (r between .40 to .61), except of Conflict Resolution and Validation and Carrying domains, where correlations were not significant for students with externalized difficulties. This is an anticipated result, since connectedness within the well-being refers to relationships with others and students with psychosocial difficulties are known to have problems occurring in social contexts (Ogden, 2009; WHO, 2001; Gresham & Elliot, 1990; Seligman, 2011; Kern et al, 2016).

Happiness, as a part of well-being, appeared to be associated with the friendship quality. For students with internalized and externalized difficulties, happiness is related with the experiences of help and support as well as enjoyable time spent together with a friend. In addition, for students with internalized difficulties, intimate exchange and validation is also linked with happiness. The additional link can be interpreted based on characteristics of internalized difficulties- the friendship with elevated qualities of care and support as well as intimacy might work as a "safety-net" for negative attributes of internalized difficulties- the tendency for lower self-esteem and loneliness; which could then predict higher happiness levels (Bukowski et al, 2010; Bukowski & Sippola, 2005; Parker & Asher, 1987). However,

for fully understanding the role of self-esteem in the current sample, the additional information would be needed.

As for students with externalized difficulties, where self-esteem might not necessarily play a role, happiness is linked with companionship and help- enjoyable time spent together and help while facing the challenges (Ogden, 2009). This might be explained in the connection with the interpersonal problems, rather than intrapersonal ones. External difficulty characteristics, such as aggression or intense arguing, negatively affects the way the child is taking part in play or participates in learning situations (Gresham & Kern, 2004). This, in turn, seem to be associated with the child's happiness. However, it is hard to judge if the child's happiness levels are influenced directly only by the characteristics or rather than unhappiness of the student causes the pupil to behave in an unappropriated matter.

For only students with internalized difficulties, perseverance is associated with help and guidance, exchange of personal information as well as enjoyable time spent together within the friendship. This is only valid for students with internalized difficulties, which may be understood within the features of difficulty- students tend to have lower self-esteem which is linked with perseverance (Mecca et al, 1989; Gresham & Elliot, 1990). The friendship qualities- help and guidance, intimate exchange as well as companionship- creates the secure and developmentally flourishing proximal processes, there the student with internalized problems can possibly increase the self-esteem and self-image needed for perseverance characteristic (Sullivan, 1953; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For the student to be perseverant, motivation as well as believe in one's success are the fragments (Mecca et al, 1989). The friendship, where the student can admit ones' struggles as well as receive needed support and accomplish it all in a positive interaction, seem to be associated with perseverance- as a building block for well-being (Sullivan, 1953; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

5.1.3 Perceived Friendship Quality of Students with Internalized and Externalized Difficulties

Regarding students with externalized difficulties, friendship quality differed in some of the domains. As expected, due to characteristics of the distress (such as poor control of temper and aggression), the students with externalized difficulties, expressed higher levels of conflict and revealed that it becomes problematic to resolve it (Parker & Asher, 1987). In addition, student's answers exhibits that externalized difficulties interfere with the level of

companionship in the friendship. In other words, perhaps the students with externalized difficulties experience less enjoyable time together with the friend due to negative characteristics of the difficulty, for example, aggression, tendency to argue or impulsivity (Ogden, 2009; Bukowski & Sippola, 2005). This outcome might be a sign of social exclusion of a student with the difficulty from the peer group. (Rescorla et al, 2007).

Comparing friendship quality scores within students with internalized difficulties and their peers, it is visible that internalized difficulties in this sample is associated with low friendship quality. Due to the nature of the difficulty, the result is anticipated, however still appalling. Internalized difficulties can manifest with social withdrawal and antisocial behaviors, which can interfere with creating intimate bond between the students- and therefore affect the quality of the relationships. However, it is hard to judge, if it is the difficulty which is affecting the friendship quality or the demoted friendship qualities cause the internalized problems.

Some research is arguing that the internalized difficulties are manifesting with time therefore the early intervention for improving mental health of adolescence is crucial for securing positive transition to adult life (Bor et al, 2014; Rescorla et al, 2007). Similarly, to students with externalized difficulties, greater number of conflicts and inability to solve them, seem to be a problematic area for students with internalized difficulties.

5.1.4 Well-Being of Students with Internalized and Externalized Difficulties

Previous research has established that students with internalized and externalized difficulties, tend to have lower levels of well-being (Bassi et al, 2014). From the results of the current study, it is visible that students with internalized difficulties score lower in well-being domains, expect of the engagement; as for students with externalized difficulties, only engagement and optimism did not differ significantly.

Both difficulty groups, internalized and externalized, scored lower within happiness domain, which might reveal concerning silent shout for help. The students might realize the difficulties they are facing, however inability to work with existing challenges, places the pupil in the situation of extensive unhappiness (Sundriyal & Kumar, 2014). Additionally, students with internalized difficulties scored low within optimism, which might indicate the feeling of hopelessness and show tendencies to depressive behavior (Wani, 2018; Ferguson & Gunnell,

2016; Krok, 2015). However, continuality of unhappiness cannot be measured via one point in time. Nevertheless, the lower well-being of students with internalized and externalized difficulties are requiring attendance.

However, the direction of relationship between well-being and psychosocial difficulties are not know. Because of the structure of the study, it is not possible to conclude if the well-being is low due to the problems the students have or the students have the problems due to the low well-being. One way or another, the low well-being of students is a great concern therefore, should be act upon for the improvement.

5.2 Summary

The summary of this study is formed on the research question- "To which extend, perceived friendship quality domains can be associated with the well-being domains within students with internalized and externalized difficulties?" as well as two sub-questions: "How do students with internalized and externalized difficulties evaluate their *well-being and perceived friendship quality* in comparison to their peers?"

Correlation analyzes reveals that friendship quality cannot be associated to all the aspects of the well-being. That said, Engagement and Optimism domains were not associated with any of the friendship quality domains. However, for students with internalized difficulties, perceived friendship quality is associated with connectedness, happiness and perseverance characteristics. Regarding pupils with externalized difficulties, relationship quality stayed important within Connectedness and Happiness domains.

Concerning well-being of students, psychosocial difficulties characteristics seem to play a role while comparing students with and without problems; however, students' engagement was not depending on the features. Students having external difficulties did not scored lower only within perseverance and engagement domains, while pupils with internal difficulties- only within engagement.

After evaluating perceived friendship quality of students with internalized difficulties, the results revealed that the scores were significantly lower between all the domains- conflicts and their resolution, intimate exchange, validation and carrying as well as companionship,

validation and help. As for students with external difficulties, the scores were lower within three out of six domains- conflict and their resolution as well as companionship.

This conclusion cannot be generalized further than the current sample.

5.3 Limitations

As with every study, this study has several limitations. This part of the chapter will go through the restrictions to help to comprehend the results of the research in a broader matter.

The most recommended sample method is random sampling. However, sample in this study was selected via convenience sampling procedure, which implies sampling bias and cannot assure that the sample is representative to the investigated population (Gall, Gall and Borg (2007). Furthermore, the sample size was limited, which creates even greater of restrictions for generalization for the entire population, rather than specific school in southeaster Norway.

In addition, even if the instruments used in the study are validated outside of Norway, two of the measures (measure of well-being and perceived friendship quality questionnaire) was used first or just second time in the country, therefore are not yet officially validated. The measures shown to have good and average internal reliability, however further adjustments and cultural adaptations might be needed. In case where the students cannot understand or relate to the questions, the results of the study might be sabotaged.

Regarding perceived friendship quality, there were instructions and explanations given to the participants to answer the questions regarding the closest friend; however, it cannot be totally ensured that the answers were given not based on ideal friendship or general experiences of peer relationships rather than the actual closest friendship. In addition, the participants' answers were limited to restricted friendship quality dimensions, rather than discussing other relevant qualities which are important to children's understanding of peer relationships. Moreover, due to the nature of the questions (for example, "We always play together in the break"), the targeted friendships were only the ones occurring at school- the questionnaire impels friendships which exists out of the school's setting.

Concerning the measure of the well-being, the instrument included the different aspects of the well-being and not only the social relationships, which is a positive commodity. However, perhaps the other measures of the well-being outside of the positive psychology perspective

should be used in the future studies, allowing to measure not only the child's characteristics relevant to the well-being, but the child's experiences and understanding for one's subjective well-being. In addition, since the study was conducted in school, during the lecture time, a clearer explanation about the focus of the well-being should have been made. Regarding the Engagement domain of the well-being it is not known if the students scored lower because they were interpreting the questions in connection with the school, or the sample exhibited lower level of engagement due to other reasons. Perhaps, extension of the instrument including school related topics or an extended definition of the current scales of the instrument is needed for a better interpretation of results.

After analyzes of the results, it was noticed that possibly the low self-esteem of students could have influence some of the outcomes in the study. Therefore, measures of the student's self-esteem could have been added for the validation of some interpretations.

Another limitation regarding the instruments is the length of the scales in each of the questionnaires. For example, the Conflict Resolution scale in the Friendship Quality Questionnaire has only 3 items, therefore the scale validity is highly questionable. Perhaps, the future studies could either expend the Conflict Resolution domain or remove it from the scale completely. Additionally, all EPOCH measure scales have only 4 questions, while measuring broad and complex themes within the well-being, therefore the instrument structure can be considered as a limitation for the current study.

Finally, the study is based on correlation design. The results cannot exhibit causal links between the perceived friendship quality and the well-being of students with psychosocial difficulties, regression analyzes would be required to fully comprehend the relationship. In addition, perhaps a longitudinal study should be conducted in the future to comprehend the relationship fully. Even if the longitudinal study requires more time, it would help to notice the various aspects of the student's relationships and how does it impact the well-being of the child. The current study allows us to explore the different links between the various aspects of well-being and perceived friendship quality, but not to identify the direction of the relationship.

5.4 Implications of the study

The results of the study exhibited that students with internalized and externalized difficulties until some extend have lower well-being and perceived friendship quality than their peers. However, even if the association between well-being and friendship domains is not as great as expected, the results still confirms the concerns regarding the subjective well-being and the quality of relationships of the students with psychosocial difficulties.

As already established, peer relationships are crucial for the students' development and well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). In order to improve the quality of the friendship of the student with internalized and externalized difficulties, more affective support systems are needed, involving social competence training (Gresham and Elliot, 1993). Due to the structure of the measurement, it is clearly visible that the students with difficulties are facing struggles within specific areas of the relationships, for example conflicts. By providing possible conflict solving strategies and focusing on specific skill training, there is great expectation for the relationship quality to improve and perhaps even for the difficulty to diminish (Frostad and Pijl, 2007; Gresham and Kern, 2004; Hartup, 1996).

Even if the well-being of all students is well emphasized in the school, the results indicating lower well-being of students with the difficulties are found. Improving the connections of the students, may have positive affect on the child's well-being, however additional interventions are required. The child's well-being is a phenomenon interconnected within different social contexts of the child, such as family and school as well as cultural norms and expectations (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). While improving one of the aspects in the environment of the child, the positive outcomes are expected. Therefore, it becomes crucial for the policy makers, parents as well as educators working with students with psychosocial difficulties get familiar with the nearest surroundings of the child, to suitably adopt and imply affective interventions focusing to improve the well-being.

5.5 Recommendations for the further studies

This study briefly looked at the broad subject involving many different aspects and extensive topics and investigated the correlations as well as the levels of well-being and perceived friendship quality of students with psychosocial problems in comparison with their peers. Even if the findings exhibit that perceived friendship quality is until some extend associated

with the well-being, the relationship direction is still not known. Investigating the influences of friendship towards the well-being with the help of regression analyzes could help to comprehend the relationship of these two crucially important phenomena better.

Current study did not investigate the specific characteristics of the psychosocial difficulties rather than finding associations. To be able interpreter and analyze the associations in the extensive matter, perhaps the measure of some of the characteristic features of the difficulty may be included in the future studies, for example- self-esteem. Regarding the well-being, the research is forced on investigating personal characteristics influencing the well-being rather than examining the state of the child's mental health. Future studies may include subjective indicators rather than only subjective personal characteristics, for deepening the understanding of the child's well-being.

Finally, this study assumes that the peer relationships effect the student's development as well as well-being in a positive matter over time. However, the actual development or change is not measure due to the construct of the reach. Investigating well-being and perceived friendship quality of students with psychosocial difficulties over time, could allow to understand the real influences over the matter as well as confirm the theories used in the study.

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Appendix A: Items and subscales of FQQ

Items and subscales of Friendship Quality Questionnaire Subscale(No of items/Cronbach's Alpha)/Item*	Item correlation
Conflict resolution (3/α=.55)	
9 Snakker om hvordan vi kan unngå å bli sinte på hverandre	.12
27 Blir raskt venner igjen etter en krangel	.56
36 Legger fort krangler bak oss	.48
Intimate exchange (6/α=.85)	
12 Snakker alltid sammen om problemene våre	.75
14 Snakker med ham/henne når jeg er sint på grunn av noe som hendte meg	.66
20 Deler hemmelighetene våre	.61
26 Snakker om ting som gjør oss triste	.60
30 Snakker om hvordan vi kan gjøre ting bedre hvis vi er sinte på hverandre	.56
39 Snakker sammen om private ting	.59
Validation and Carrying (10/α=.82)	
1 Tar mitt parti hvis andre snakker stygt om meg bak ryggen min	.36
3 Sier at jeg er flink til å gjøre ting	.62
4 Sørger for at den andre føler seg viktig og spesiell	.45
6 Sier «Unnskyld» hvis [han/hun] sårer meg	.42
8 Har gode ideer om spill/leker vi kan spille/leke	.53
10 Liker meg, selv om andre ikke gjør det	.62
11 Sier at jeg er ganske smart	.52
13 Gjør at jeg føler at jeg har gode ideer	.69
19 Bryr seg om følelsene mine	.60
31 Forteller ikke hemmelighetene mine til andre	.24
Companionship Recreation (5/α=.75)	
2 Sitter alltid sammen i matpausen	.40
5 Velger alltid hverandre som partnere når vi skal gjøre ting	.56
17 Gjør mye morsomt sammen	.60
23 Blir med hverandre hjem	.51
24 Leker alltid sammen i friminuttene	.54
Conflict and betray (7/α=.75)	
7 Sier noen ganger slemme ting om meg til andre barn	.35
18 Blir ofte sint	.37
21 Krangler mye	.66
28 Vi krangler mye	.68
22 Er til å stole på når det gjelder å holde på en hemmelighet	-.36
32 Plager hverandre mye	.49
38 Hører ikke på meg	.41
Help and Guidance (9/α=.88)	
15 Hjelper hverandre my med lekser	.50
16 Gjør hverandre spesielle tjenester	.72
25 Gir råd når vi må finne ut ting	.61
29 Deler ting med hverandre	.68
33 Finner gode ideer om hvordan vi kan gjøre ting	.65
34 Låner hverandre ting hele tiden	.56
35 Hjelper meg så jeg blir fortere ferdig	.65
37 Stoler på hverandre når vi må finne gode ideer om hvordan vi skal få ting g	.64
40 Hjelper hverandre mye med skolearbeid/lekser	.62

*Numbers are item numbers from the Friendship Quality Questionnaire

Appendix B: Items and subscales of EPOCH Measure of Well-being

Items and subscales of EPOCH Measure of Well-being Subscale (Cronbach's Alpha)/ Item*	Items Correlations
Engagement (α=.72)	
1 Jeg liker ofte aktiviteter jeg holder på med så godt at tiden løper fra meg.	.52
6 Jeg blir gjerne helt oppslukt av det jeg driver med.	.55
11 Jeg blir så involvert i aktiviteter at jeg glemmer alt annet.	.53
16 Mens jeg lærer noe nytt, mister jeg oversikten over hvor lang tid som har gått.	.45
Perseverance (α=.79)	
2 Begynner jeg med noe, fullfører jeg det.	.61
7 Jeg holder på med skolearbeidet mitt helt til jeg er ferdig med det.	.57
12 Når jeg har lagt en plan for å få ting gjort, holder jeg meg til planen.	.56
17 Jeg er en person som arbeider hardt.	.65
Optimism (α=85)	
3 Jeg ser lyst på fremtiden min.	.59
8 I usikre situasjoner, forventer jeg likevel at ting vil gå bra.	.65
13 Jeg tror at gode ting kommer til å skje meg.	.76
18 Jeg tror ting vil ordne seg, uansett hvor vanskelige de kan virke der og da.	.74
Connectedness (α=80)	
4 Når noe bra skjer i livet mitt, har jeg folk jeg liker å dele nyheten med.	.63
9 Det finnes mennesker i livet mitt som virkelig bryr seg om meg.	.61
14 Om jeg skulle ha et problem, har jeg noen som vil være der for meg.	.64
19 Jeg har venner jeg virkelig bryr meg om.	.59
Happiness (α=.86)	
5 Jeg føler meg glad og fornøyd.	.74
10 Jeg har det mye moro.	.74
15 Synes livet er herlig.	.72
20 Jeg er en person med godt humør.	.65

* Numbers are item number in the questionnaire