

UNIVERSIDADE DE LISBOA
FACULDADE DE PSICOLOGIA



**Sense of Power and Quality of Friendships:
The Mediating Role of Authenticity**

Joana Petra Moedas

**MESTRADO INTEGRADO EM PSICOLOGIA
Área de Especialização em Cognição Social Aplicada**

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Dissertação orientada pela Doutora Carla Sofia Carvalho de Freitas Silva

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Resumo

O sentido de poder tem sido associado a uma maior qualidade das relações próximas. Além disso, o poder também tem sido vinculado à autenticidade, sendo que vários estudos demonstraram que elevado poder está associado a uma maior autenticidade e autoexpressão autêntica. Vários estudos têm também sugerido que as experiências de autenticidade têm efeitos positivos na qualidade e satisfação com as relações próximas. No entanto, pouco se sabe sobre o papel da autenticidade como potencial mediadora da associação entre sentido de poder e qualidade das relações próximas. De modo a abordar esta lacuna na literatura, o presente estudo investigou o papel mediador da autenticidade na associação entre o sentido de poder e a qualidade da relação de adultos emergentes com o/a seu/sua melhor amigo/a. Os participantes foram 290 adultos emergentes, com idades entre os 18 e 27 anos, que frequentavam o ensino superior. Os resultados revelaram que maior poder está associado a melhor qualidade das relações próximas, através de maior autenticidade. Este estudo apoia a literatura existente, reforçando o papel do poder como um preditor da qualidade das relações próximas dos adultos emergentes com o seu melhor amigo. Além disso, destaca a importância da autenticidade como mediadora dessa associação, fornecendo, assim, implicações práticas importantes. Nomeadamente, os resultados sugerem que a promoção de comportamentos e expressão emocional consistentes com o verdadeiro eu dos indivíduos e a redução do conformismo à influência e expectativas dos outros poderão contribuir para uma maior qualidade das relações de amizade.

Palavras-chave:

Autenticidade; Sentido de poder; Amizades; Qualidade das relações

Abstract

Individuals' sense of power has been shown to be associated with a higher quality of close relationships. It has also been linked to authenticity, with several studies showing that elevated power is associated with greater authenticity and authentic self-expression. In turn, there is evidence which suggests that experiences of authenticity have positive effects on relationship quality and satisfaction. However, little is known about the role of authenticity as a potential mediator of the association between sense of power and relationship quality. To address this gap in the literature, the present study investigated the mediating role of authenticity in the association between power and the quality of emerging adults' relationships with their best friend. Participants were 290 emerging adults, aged between 18 and 27 years old, who were, at the time, attending university. Supporting our hypotheses, results revealed that higher power is associated with better relationship quality through greater authenticity. This study supports previous research by reinforcing the role of power as a predictor of the quality of emerging adults' relationships with their best friend. In addition, it highlights the importance of authenticity as a mediator of that association, thus providing important implications for practice. Namely, interventions which focus on increasing individuals' authentic living and decreasing the extent to which they accept external influence should contribute to an improved quality of relationships with friends.

Keywords:

Authenticity; Sense of power; Friendships; Relationship quality

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Resumo Alargado

O poder, isto é, a capacidade de um indivíduo para influenciar outros (Anderson et al., 2012; Keltner et al., 2003), tem vindo a ser associado a vários aspetos do funcionamento humano, comportamento e interações interpessoais. Mais especificamente, a investigação tem demonstrado que o sentido de poder aumenta a autoexpressão, autorregulação e confiança (Guinote, 2017), está associado a maior controlo e liberdade (Kraus et al., 2011), maior autoestima, otimismo e saúde física (Anderson et al., 2012; Fast et al., 2009; Guinote 2017), e exerce influência sobre escolhas comportamentais (Briñol et al., 2007; Galinsky et al., 2003; Guinote, 2015; Guinote & Chen, 2017). Para além disso, o poder tem sido associado à qualidade das relações próximas (e.g., Dunbar, 2015; Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021). Tem sido sugerido que o sentido de poder, ou seja, a perceção que o indivíduo tem da sua capacidade para influenciar outros (Anderson et al., 2012), tem efeitos na qualidade e a satisfação com as relações, e no bem-estar relativo à relação (Dunbar, 2015; Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021).

Adicionalmente, vários estudos têm também vinculado o poder à autenticidade, na medida em que experiências subjetivas de elevado sentido de poder predizem maior autenticidade, consistência do autoconceito e bem-estar geral (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Kifer et al., 2013 ; Kraus et al., 2011). A autenticidade, por sua vez, parece predizer relações mais saudáveis e felizes, maior satisfação e comprometimento com a relação, e bem-estar subjetivo geral (e.g., Brunell et al., 2009; Lopez e Rice, 2006; Wickham, 2012). Assim, a literatura sugere que o poder está associado à autenticidade (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011), e que tanto o poder como a autenticidade estão associados à qualidade das relações próximas (e.g., Brunell et al., 2009; Dunbar, 2015; Gouveia et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021; Laursen & Bukowski, 1997; Peets et al., 2017; Wenzel & Lucas -Thompson, 2012; Wickham, 2012).

No entanto, pouco se sabe sobre o papel que a autenticidade desempenha na associação entre o sentido de poder e a qualidade das relações. Para uma melhor compreensão desta interação, devem examinar-se associações mais complexas entre estas variáveis. Nesse sentido, o presente estudo teve como objetivo expandir as evidências empíricas existentes, analisando o papel mediador da autenticidade na associação entre o sentido de poder de adultos emergentes e a qualidade das suas relações com o/a seu/sua

melhor/a amigo/a. A idade e o sexo dos participantes foram incluídos no modelo hipotetizado como covariáveis, com base em evidência que sugere que as percepções dos indivíduos acerca da qualidade das suas relações com o seu melhor amigo variam de acordo com estas variáveis. Mais especificamente, a literatura indica que os homens relatam níveis mais elevados de conflito e interações negativas nas suas relações do que as mulheres, enquanto que estas relatam níveis mais elevados de intimidade e suporte (e.g., De Goede et al., 2009; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Jenkins et al., 2002; Noack & Buhl, 2005; Radmacher, 2006; Phillipson, 1999). Quanto às diferenças de idade, estudos anteriores mostraram que do meio ao final da adolescência e início da idade adulta, os indivíduos percebem níveis mais baixos de suporte nas suas relações de amizade (De Goede et al., 2009; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992).

Com base neste enquadramento teórico e empírico, delinearam-se as seguintes hipóteses para o presente estudo: (H1) maior sentido de poder está associado a melhor qualidade das amizades com o(a) melhor amigo(a); (H2) maior sentido de poder está associado a níveis mais elevados de autenticidade; (H3) níveis mais altos de autenticidade estão associados a uma melhor qualidade das amizades com o(a) melhor amigo(a); e (H4) a autenticidade desempenha um papel mediador entre o sentido de poder e a qualidade das amizades com o(a) melhor amigo(a), na medida em que maior sentido de poder está associado a maior autenticidade, que por sua vez está associada a uma melhor qualidade das amizades próximas.

Participaram neste estudo 290 adultos emergentes, com idades entre os 18 e 27 anos, estudantes do ensino superior. Para avaliar as variáveis em estudo, foram utilizados instrumentos de auto-relato. O sentido de poder dos participantes foi avaliado com a *Sense of Power Scale* (Anderson et al., 2012). Para medir a qualidade das relações, foi utilizado o *Network of Relationships Inventory - Relationship Quality Version* (NRI-RQV; Furman & Buhrmester, 2008). Por fim, a autenticidade dos participantes foi avaliada com a *The Authenticity Scale* (Wood et al., 2008).

Em relação à H1, os resultados revelaram uma associação total entre o sentido de poder e a qualidade das relações dos adultos emergentes com o seu melhor amigo. Isto apoia a literatura acerca das associações entre poder e relações (e.g., Chen et al., 2001; Dunbar, 2015; Gordon & Chen, 2013; Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021), que sugere que o sentido de poder influencia a qualidade das relações próximas. No que toca

às amizades em específico, a literatura indica que estas são fundadas numa igualdade de poder (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Laursen & Bukowski, 1997). No entanto, apesar desta especificidade na dinâmica de poder nas amizades, os resultados reforçam a ideia de que o sentido de poder está associado à qualidade das relações, mesmo no que diz respeito às amizades.

Apoiando a H2, os resultados revelaram associações entre o sentido de poder e a autenticidade, na medida em que maior sentido de poder está associado a maior autenticidade, indicada através de níveis mais elevados de vivência autêntica e níveis mais baixos de aceitação de influência externa e de auto-alienação. Estes resultados suportam a literatura existente (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011), a qual sugere que um maior sentido de poder está associado a níveis mais elevados de autenticidade, consistência de autoconceito e bem-estar subjetivo.

Os resultados que indicaram uma associação positiva entre a autenticidade (indicada por níveis mais elevados de vivência autêntica e níveis mais baixos de aceitação de influência externa) e a qualidade das relações suportam a H3. Curiosamente, os resultados indicam que, ao considerar o efeito simultâneo de todas as três dimensões de autenticidade (i.e., vivência autêntica, aceitação de influência externa e auto-alienação), apenas a vivência autêntica e aceitação de influência externa surgem como preditores significativos da qualidade das relações. Estas descobertas vão ao encontro da literatura, que sugere que a autenticidade desempenha um papel importante nas relações próximas (e.g., Brunell et al., 2009; Chen, 2019; Gouveia, 2015; Lopez & Rice, 2006; Peets, 2017; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012 ; Wickham, 2012), na medida em que facilita e melhora interações nas relações (Gouveia et al., 2015), aumenta a confiança, o comprometimento e a satisfação com as relações (Wickham, 2012), e está associada a maior autoestima, autoimagem positiva e níveis mais baixos de depressão e sentimentos de solidão (Lopez & Rice, 2006; Peets, 2017; Wickham, 2012).

Os resultados também suportaram a H4, revelando o papel mediador da autenticidade nas associações entre o sentido de poder dos participantes e a qualidade das suas relações com o seu melhor amigo. Estes resultados são consistentes com um estudo anterior que demonstrou que, em relacionamentos amorosos, o poder influencia a expressão autêntica, a qual, por sua vez, afeta a qualidade da relação, de tal forma que uma desigualdade de poder inibe a capacidade de autoexpressão autêntica, o que impacta

negativamente a saúde psicológica e o funcionamento da relação (Neff & Suizzo, 2006). Para além disso, os resultados do presente estudo apoiam a ideia de que a autenticidade desempenha um papel mediador na associação entre o sentido de poder e a qualidade das relações, mesmo em relações tipicamente caracterizadas por um maior equilíbrio de poder.

Em suma, os resultados apoiam a literatura acerca dos efeitos do poder na qualidade das relações e permitem uma melhor compreensão do papel que a autenticidade desempenha nesta associação. Tomados em conjunto, os resultados obtidos têm implicações práticas no que diz respeito a intervenções cujo objetivo é a melhoria da qualidade das relações de amizade dos indivíduos. Especificamente, o facto da autenticidade ter mediado a associação entre o sentido de poder e a qualidade das amizades próximas sugere que as intervenções devem focar-se no aumento do sentido de poder e da perceção de autenticidade dos indivíduos, principalmente no que diz respeito a uma vivência autêntica e aceitação de influência externa.

Introduction

Power, i.e., an individual's ability to influence others (Anderson et al., 2012; Keltner et al., 2003), has been shown to have an effect on several aspects of human functioning, behavior, and interpersonal interactions. More specifically, sense of power enhances self-expression, self-regulation and confidence (Guinote, 2017), is associated with increased control and freedom (Kraus et al., 2011), greater self-esteem, optimism, and physical health (Anderson et al., 2012; Fast et al., 2009; Guinote 2017), and exerts influence over choices of behavior (Briñol et al., 2007; Galinsky et al., 2003; Guinote, 2015; Guinote & Chen, 2017). Moreover, power has been linked to close relationships quality (e.g., Dunbar, 2015; Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021). It is suggested that sense of power, i.e., the perception of one's ability to influence others (Anderson et al., 2012), predicts relationship quality and satisfaction, and well-being within the relationship (Dunbar, 2015; Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021).

Furthermore, several studies have also linked power to authenticity, in that subjective experiences of elevated sense of power predict greater authenticity, self-concept consistency, and general well-being (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011). Authenticity, in turn, has been shown to predict healthier and happier relationships, more positive relationship behaviors, higher relationship satisfaction and commitment, and general subjective well-being (e.g., Brunell et al., 2009; Lopez and Rice, 2006; Wickham, 2012). Therefore, extensive research has suggested that power is associated with authenticity (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011), and that both power and authenticity are linked to quality of close relationships (e.g., Brunell et al., 2009; Dunbar, 2015; Gouveia et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021; Laursen & Bukowski, 1997; Peets et al., 2017; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012; Wickham, 2012).

However, little is known about the role of authenticity in the association between sense of power and relationship quality. To increase understanding on the interplay between authenticity and power when it comes to their influence on relationship quality, research examining more complex associations among these variables is needed. Therefore, the present study aimed to expand existing evidence, by analyzing the mediating role of authenticity in the association between emerging adults' sense of power and quality of their relationships with their best friend.

Taking these research goals into account, this dissertation is organized in five sections. The first section presents relevant research on the effects of power, in order to contextualize our research topic on the existing theoretical and empirical literature. The main research problems and objectives of this study are also outlined. The second section describes the methodology of this study, which includes a description of the participants, the instruments used, and the procedures of data collection and analysis. The third section reveals and describes the study's main results, which are then discussed in the fourth section, considering existing literature. This last section also outlines the main contributions of this study for this research field, as well as the study's limitations, and implications for future practice.

Theoretical Background

Despite traditional beliefs that power amounts to one's control over valued resources or exclusively to their social position, scholars agree that power is also a psychological state (Anderson et al., 2012), and it has, therefore, been defined as an individual's ability to influence others (Keltner et al., 2003). Thus, according to said definition, power is a social-relational concept, which can only be understood when in relation to others (Anderson et al., 2012).

There is considerable evidence for associations between power and several cognitive, affective, and behavioral consequences. Guinote (2015; 2017) found that power promotes brain activity and cognitive processes which help the ones who possess it to exert influence, express their desires, and satisfy their needs. Indeed, there is evidence that suggests that power holders frequently try to influence others, often intervening, and looking for opportunities to pursue their goals and desires (Guinote, 2017). In addition, extensive research has shown that high social power is associated with greater control, freedom, and influence of internal traits on an individual's actions (e.g., Anderson et al., 2012; Briñol et al., 2007; Guinote, 2015; Guinote & Chen, 2017; Kraus et al., 2011), experience of more positive affect and assertiveness, and higher self-esteem, physical health, and longevity (Anderson et al., 2012; Guinote 2017). On the contrary, lower social power is associated with reduced control and more situational restraints on behavior (Kraus et al., 2011). Another line of research has shown that power affects individuals' choices of behavior (Guinote, 2015). Specifically, it is suggested that power might be associated with positive (e.g., aiding behavior, altruism) or negative (e.g., corruption, harassment) social outcomes, depending on the direction of power holders' thoughts (Briñol et al., 2007). This is also supported by the claim that people in power almost always respond in ways that are consistent with their dispositions, values or attitudes (Guinote & Chen, 2017). Furthermore, Galinsky et al. (2003) also found that power facilitates action, regardless of it having prosocial or antisocial consequences.

Other scholars have focused on individuals' personal sense of power, that is, individuals' perception of their own ability to influence others, arguing that it may or may not coincide with their objective power (i.e., their control over resources, their position of authority, or status as appraised by others) (Anderson et al., 2012; Fast & Chen, 2009). It is assumed that it is subjective sense of power that most directly influences thought,

feeling, and action (Anderson et al., 2012). In line with this assumption, Dunbar (2015) states that we act on how powerful we perceive ourselves to be most of the time. Individuals' beliefs about their own power can shape their actual influence over others, even more than their social position, by leading them to behave in ways that are effective in increasing their actual power (Anderson et al., 2012; Bandura, 1999).

Sense of power and quality of social relationships

Power is a social construct which is present in everyday interactions and relationships (Körner & Schutz, 2021). When it comes to power, equality or inequality are central attributes which can be used to characterize any interpersonal relationship (Dunbar, 2015). This social construct is relevant to all interpersonal interactions because it affects people's satisfaction with their relationships, their chosen methods of communication, the topics in which they engage or avoid, and their emotional and physical well-being (Dunbar, 2015). Hence, power plays an essential role in the development and maintenance of close intimate relationships, since it determines relatability between partners and how they make important decisions (Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021).

A recent study evaluating the effects of power – both objective and subjective – on romantic relationships, showed that, when it comes to personal sense of power (i.e., subjective), there was usually a balance within the couples, while in regards to positional (i.e., objective) power, there was an imbalance (Körner & Schutz, 2021). Results of this study showed that it is the subjective, experienced power that is relevant to relationship quality, and not objective, positional power (Körner & Schutz, 2021). Furthermore, it seems that what is most important for relationship satisfaction is the perceived personal level of power, and not its balance (Körner & Schutz, 2021). This is in line with previous literature that suggests that perceived power has a stronger impact on behavior than positional power (Bugental & Lewis, 1999; Fast & Chen, 2009).

Power can also promote social responsibility goals (e.g., being attentive to another person's interests) among people who exhibit more communal orientation (Chen et al., 2001). However, it has also been suggested that being the power holder within a romantic relationship reduces the propensity to take the partner's perspective (Kim et al., 2019). Yet, that only happens when people are self-focused, and not other-focused (Gordon &

Chen, 2013; Kim et al., 2019). Self-focused individuals who hold more power in the relationship are less likely to engage in behaviors that are beneficial to the relationship, due to a lack of will to sacrifice their own self-interests or adapt to their partner's negative behaviors (Kim et al., 2019).

When it comes to relationships between friends in specific, research has indicated that most friendships are based on equality, wherein most interactions are developed on a basis of sharing power and avoiding instability (Laursen & Bukowski, 1997; Laursen & Hartup, 2002). However, although egalitarianism is the norm, friendships can also do well within a hierarchical structure (Laursen & Bukowski, 1997).

Authenticity as a potential mediator of the association between personal sense of power and quality of close relationships

The concept of Authenticity

Research on authenticity has been trying to shed light on this complex concept. One broad explanation may encompass genuineness in one's actions, i.e., knowing and operating consistently with one's true self in one's daily life (Baumeister, 2019; Kernis & Goldman, 2006). The "true self" is used to describe the essence of who a person really is (Schlegel et al., 2011), and there is evidence that links its perception to authenticity. Specifically, the subjective awareness of one's true self (i.e., the result of the disparity between one's conscious awareness and real experiences) is thought to be fundamental to the concept of authenticity (Vess, 2019), in the sense that authenticity encompasses knowing, being consistent with, or fulfilling the true self (Baumeister, 2019; Vess, 2019). It is important to mention the fact that the "awareness" in question is subjective in nature, since there is considerable evidence that people may not be capable of possessing accurate awareness of their true selves (Vess, 2019). Nonetheless, this does not weaken the importance of subjectively experienced authenticity.

Kernis & Goldman (2006) posited that this subjective feeling of true self-awareness is a central aspect of authenticity and psychological health and developed a multicomponent conceptualization of the authenticity construct, encompassing an integrative understanding of who people believe they are (Vess, 2019). Accordingly, the authors distinguished four interrelated components of authentic functioning: 1) Awareness: awareness of, and trust in, one's motives, feelings, desires, and self-relevant

cognitions; 2) Unbiased processing: not denying, distorting, exaggerating, nor ignoring private knowledge, internal experiences, and externally based self-evaluative information; objectivity and acceptance of one's positive and negative aspects; 3) Behavior: acting in accord with one's values, preferences, and needs; and 4) Relational orientation: valuing and achieving openness and truthfulness in one's close relationships; being genuine (vs. fake) in one's relationships with others (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). In a different, but related, conceptualization, the Authentic Personality model (Wood et al., 2008) proposes that one's awareness must correspond to their behavior for authenticity to ensue. If this occurs, they will have a high score on "authentic living," the first facet of the model. If not, this incongruity will likely result in "self-alienation," the second facet. They also assert that a person who is authentic is resistant to external or social influence, which pertains to the third facet of the model (i.e., "accepting external influence").

People naturally crave to be authentic, and such achievement correlates with positive psychological outcomes (Hicks et al., 2019; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Mengers, 2014; Scharf & Mayseless, 2010; Schlegel et al., 2011; Sedikides et al., 2019; Sheldon et al., 1997; Vess, 2019; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012; Wickham, 2012; Wood et al., 2008). Namely, higher levels of authenticity relate to one's general well-being (Hicks et al., 2019; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Mengers, 2014; Scharf & Mayseless, 2010; Schlegel et al., 2011; Sheldon et al., 1997; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012; Wood et al., 2008), socioemotional and adaptive functioning, such as problem-focused coping strategies, mindfulness, healthy aspects of self-concept structure, low verbal defensiveness (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Scharf & Mayseless, 2010), authentic life goal pursuits (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Scharf & Mayseless, 2010), higher couple satisfaction and functioning (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), higher self-esteem (Hicks et al., 2019; Sedikides et al., 2019; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012; Wickham, 2012), and lower levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and physical symptoms (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Mengers, 2014; Sedikides et al., 2019; Sheldon et al., 1997; Vess, 2019; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012; Wickham, 2012; Wood et al., 2008).

All in all, it is widely accepted that authenticity plays an important role in one's life. People value being authentic in their perceptions of others and of themselves, and their assessments of many experiences, having perceptions of authenticity (or inauthenticity) been shown to influence people's judgments and behaviors across various contexts.

Sense of power, authenticity, and quality of close relationships

One aspect of individuals' social life that influences authentic self-expression is personal sense of power. Indeed, high power is associated with a greater probability of behaving in a way that is consistent with personal states and traits (e.g., Keltner et al., 2003; Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011). Research has shown that people high in power (whether dispositional or situational) express themselves more than low-power individuals (e.g., Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Anderson et al., 2003; Berdahl & Martorana, 2006; Chen et al., 2009). Namely, Chen et al. (2009) showed that when people play a power role (i.e., high power vs. low power) that corresponds to their beliefs about their capacity to influence others, they are more prone to express their various states and traits, thereby increasing their probability of being perceived in a self-congruent way by others. Likewise, Kraus et al. (2011) found that higher levels of power predict greater self-concept consistency, which in turn increases reports of authenticity. Still another study has found that power increases feelings of authenticity (Kifer et al., 2013), thereby enhancing subjective well-being (i.e., satisfaction with life and positive affect).

Authenticity has also been associated with the quality of close relationships (e.g., Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Scharf & Mayseless, 2010). Indeed, the concept of authenticity is approached as a relational phenomenon, since it amounts, ideally, to truthful and open communication and behaviors between two individuals (e.g., Gouveia et al., 2015; Lopez & Rice, 2006). With regard to romantic relationships, authenticity is important for building intimacy, since it is essential in facilitating and enhancing couples' interactions (Gouveia et al., 2015). There is evidence that higher dispositional authenticity appears to be linked with having healthier and happier relationships. Specifically, research has shown that higher levels of authenticity are associated with more positive relationship behaviors (i.e., behaving in more intimate and less destructive ways within the relationship), and with higher relationship satisfaction (Brunell et al., 2009; Lopez & Rice, 2006). The simple belief that a romantic partner is authentically oriented towards the relationship has been found to be associated with better relationship outcomes, namely greater trust, and relationship commitment and satisfaction (Wickham, 2012).

When it comes to close relationships in general, there is evidence for an association between perceived authenticity of close others and authenticity of college-aged students (Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012), which reveals the importance of

perceptions of close relationship partners (e.g., parents) for the authenticity of emerging adults. It further suggests that adults should exhibit and encourage authentic behavior in youth, considering its positive impacts on mental health. Supporting this assumption, a recent study has found that adolescents who felt more authentic, both individually and within their friendships, exhibited higher self-esteem, less loneliness, and more friendship satisfaction (Peets et al., 2017). This suggests that feeling authentic with a best friend not only brings intrapersonal benefits, but also interpersonal well-being (Peets et al., 2017).

Hence, research suggests that feelings of authenticity in relationships with significant others are important to people, and that social hierarchy and social power within relationships creates contexts that influence authenticity (Chen, 2019). Accordingly, in a study that investigated associations between power, authentic self-expression, and well-being within romantic relationships, it was found that authentic self-expression is an important explaining mechanism of how power impacts close interpersonal relationships (Neff & Suizzo, 2006). Specifically, this study found that power inequality was associated with a lack of authentic self-expression, which in turn was associated with worse well-being within the relationship, having impacted psychological health. Thus, the ability to act and express oneself authentically was strongly linked to healthy relationship functioning.

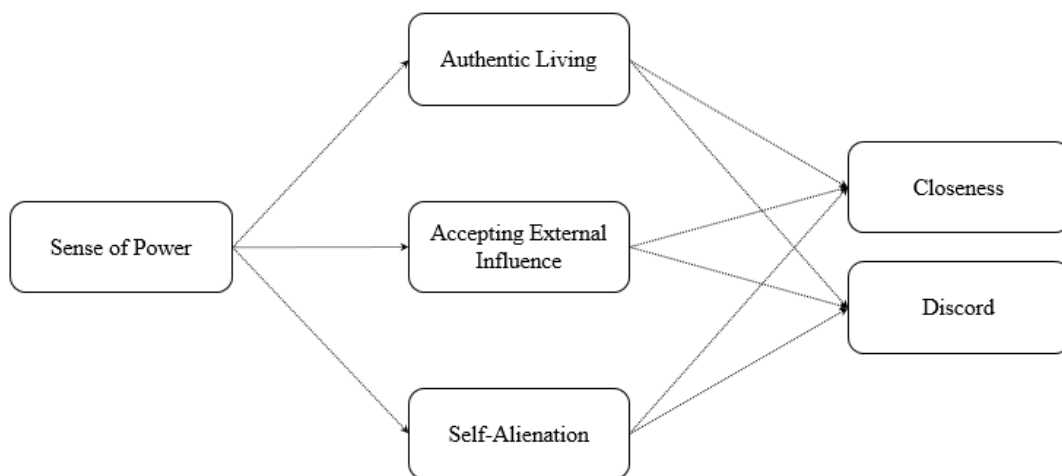
The present study

Based on the associations among power, authenticity, and the quality of close relationships documented in the literature reviewed above, this study aims to expand understanding of the effects of power on relationship quality through authenticity, by analyzing the association between sense of power of emerging adults and the quality of their relationships with their best friend. We know that power is associated with authenticity (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011), and that both power and authenticity are linked to quality of close relationships (e.g., Brunell et al., 2009; Dunbar, 2015; Gouveia et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021; Laursen & Bukowski, 1997; Peets et al., 2017; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012; Wickham, 2012). However, little is known about the role of authenticity as a potential mediator of the association between sense of power and relationship quality. Therefore, we also aim to analyze the mediating role of authenticity in the association between emerging adults' sense of power and quality of their relationships with their best friend.

Additionally, participants' age and sex will be included in the hypothesized model as covariates, based on existing evidence showing that individuals' perceptions of the quality of their relationship with their best friends vary according to these individual variables. Specifically, prior research has indicated that men report higher levels of conflict and negative interactions than women, while women report higher levels of intimacy and support (e.g., De Goede et al., 2009; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Jenkins et al., 2002; Noack & Buhl, 2005; Radmacher, 2006; Phillipson, 1999). As for age differences, previous studies have shown that from middle to late adolescence and early adulthood, there is a decline in individuals' perceptions of support in their friendship relationships (De Goede et al., 2009; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992).

We hypothesized that: (H1) higher sense of power is associated with better close friendship quality; (H2) higher sense of power is associated with higher levels of authenticity; (H3) higher levels of authenticity are associated with better close friendship quality; and (H4) authenticity plays a mediating role between sense of power and quality of close friendships, in that higher sense of power is associated with higher levels of authenticity, which in turn are associated with better close friendship quality. The hypothesized model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Model hypothesizing authentic living, accepting external influence, and self-alienation as mediators of associations between emerging adults' sense of power and quality of their relationship with their best friend.



Method

Participants

Participants were 290 emerging adults (72.1% females), university students, aged between 18 and 27 years old ($M = 19.21$; $SD = 1.41$). The vast majority ($N = 280$; 96.6%) were Portuguese, eight (2.8%) were Brazilian, one (0.3%) was Angolan, and another one (0.3%) was Swiss. Despite these different nationalities, all participants spoke Portuguese. Regarding participants' degree year, two hundred and seventy (94.7%) were attending the first year, twelve (4.2%) the second year, two (0.7%) the third year, and one (0.4%) the fourth year.

Measures

Sense of power

We measured participants' sense of power with an 8-item scale (Anderson et al., 2012), in which they rated their agreement with each item regarding their relationships with their university peers (e.g., "My wishes don't carry much weight") (Appendix A). Ratings were provided on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree). In the present study, internal consistency of the Sense of Power scale was good, $\alpha = .86$ (Kline, 2011).

Relationship quality

The Network of Relationships Inventory - Relationship Quality Version (NRI-RQV; Furman & Buhrmester, 2008) was used to assess relationship characteristics across different types of personal relationships (Appendix B). The NRI-RQV consists of 30 items, which assess ten dimensions, with 3 items each: Companionship (e.g., "How often do you spend fun time with this person?"); Intimate Disclosure (e.g., "How often do you tell this person things that you don't want others to know?"); Pressure (e.g., "How often does this person push you to do things that you don't want to do?"); Satisfaction (e.g., "How happy are you with your relationship with this person?"), Conflict (e.g., "How often do you and this person disagree and quarrel with each other?"), Emotional Support (e.g., "How often do you turn to this person for support with personal problems?"); Criticism (e.g., "How often does this person point out your faults or put you down?"); Approval

(e.g., “How often does this person praise you for the kind of person you are?”); Dominance (e.g., “How often does this person get their way when you two do not agree about what to do?”); and Exclusion (e.g., “How often does this person not include you in activities?”). These dimensions further form two second-order factors: (1) *Closeness* (15 items; e.g., “How often do you play around and have fun with this person?”), composed by the first-order factors describing positive relationship qualities (i.e., Companionship, Intimate Disclosure, Satisfaction, Emotional Support, and Approval); (2) *Discord* (15 items; e.g., “How often do you and this person argue with each other?”), composed by the first-order factors describing negative relationship qualities (i.e., Conflict, Criticism, Pressure, Dominance, and Exclusion). Ratings were provided on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all, 5 = Extremely much). A CFA supported the original structure of this scale, providing a good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011): $\chi^2(390) = 674.32, p < .001$; $\chi^2/df = 1.73$; CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.05; and SRMR = 0.08. Internal consistency for the Closeness and Discord factors in the present sample was good, respectively, $\alpha = .81$ and $\alpha = .77$ (Kline, 2011).

Authenticity

The Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008) was used to assess participants’ authenticity (Appendix C). It consists of 12 items, which assess three dimensions, with 4 items each: Authentic Living (e.g., “I think it is better to be yourself, than to be popular.”); Accepting External Influence (e.g., “I am strongly influenced by the opinions of others.”); and Self-Alienation (e.g., “I don’t know how I really feel inside.”). The Authenticity Scale (Wood et al., 2008) was carefully translated into Portuguese by the researchers, who possessed scientific knowledge and professional experience in self-report measures adaptation and validation. In the case of a translation discrepancy arising, it was discussed by the researchers until consensus was reached. No cultural discrepancies between the two versions were found. Ratings were provided on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Does not at all describe me, 5 = Describes me very well). In the present study, internal consistency for the Authentic Living, Accepting External Influence and Self-Alienation factors was good, respectively, $\alpha = .80$, $\alpha = .84$, $\alpha = .81$ (Kline, 2011).

Procedure

Data was collected via an online survey on Qualtrics.com platform, in Portuguese language. Students of a course of the Psychology undergraduate program of the Faculty of Psychology, University of Lisbon, were invited to participate in the study. In exchange for course credit, each of these students were asked to recruit five other participants. As criteria for participation, these recruited participants also had to be university students, aged between 18 and 29 years, based on Arnett's (2014) conceptualization of this period as emerging adulthood, given the similarities of experiences among people of these ages. When accessing the online questionnaire, individuals were informed that participation was confidential and voluntary, that any identifying information would not be attached to their data, that responses were non-mandatory, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time by closing the survey tab. After providing informed consent (by clicking in the "I agree to participate" option), the survey presented participants with demographic questions. Questions referring to personal sense of power, authenticity, and friendship quality followed. In order to control for a possible order effect on the presentation of measures, the instruments were randomized within the survey. This study was conducted in agreement with the Ethics Guidelines issued by Faculdade de Psicologia da Universidade de Lisboa.

Data analysis

Initial analyses included missing value analysis, descriptive statistics, and bivariate correlations among the study variables. All variables were composites computed by averaging or summing their respective items (except for participants' age and sex). Preceding the test of the mediation model, a missing value analysis was conducted including all model variables. Little's (1988) Missing Completely at Random test produced a non-significant chi-square (Little's MCAR test $\chi^2 = 20.852$, $df = 27$, $p = .793$), indicating that missing data were completely at random. Therefore, the expectation maximization algorithm available in SPSS (Schafer, 1997) was used to estimate missing values using all information available from the other variables.

In order to analyze the mediating role of authenticity in the association between sense of power and friendship quality, a multi-mediator model was tested using the PROCESS (v. 3.5.3) macro (Model 4) for SPSS (Hayes, 2018). To test the indirect effects,

95% bootstrap confidence intervals were used, based on 5000 bootstrap resamples (Hayes, 2018). Emerging adults' age and sex were included in the model as covariates, based on the reviewed literature.

A post hoc power analysis using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2009) indicated that our sample size is sufficient to detect medium, and large effect sizes in any of the endogenous constructs (i.e., mediator and criterion variables) of the proposed model. For each mediating variable, with 3 predictors (i.e., sense of power and covariates), and for each criterion variable, with 6 predictors (i.e., sense of power, covariates, and the three mediators), with $\alpha = .05$, and a sample size of 290, power exceeded .99 to detect both medium ($f^2 = .15$) and large ($f^2 = .35$) effects.

Finally, given the cross-sectional nature of the data, we tested five alternative models to consider the possibility of alternative hypothetical directions of effects that might account for the associations between the study variables, and to determine which fit the data best.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

The correlational analyses (Table 1) indicate that the predictor variable – sense of power – correlates to every other variable in this study, except for the control variables (i.e., sex and age). Sense of power was significantly and positively correlated with authentic living and closeness. In other words, as personal sense of power increases, so do levels of authentic living and closeness in relationships with a best friend. On the contrary, the predictor variable negatively correlates with the other two proposed mediators (i.e., accepting external influence and self-alienation), and the other criterion variable (i.e., discord), indicating that as personal sense of power increases, levels of acceptance of external influence, self-alienation, and discord in relationships with a best friend tend to decrease.

Significant correlations were also found between all three authenticity dimensions (i.e., authentic living, accepting external influence, and self-alienation), and both features of relationship quality (i.e., closeness, and discord). Specifically, the results show that higher levels of authentic living are correlated to: 1) higher levels of closeness; and 2) lower levels of accepting external influence, self-alienation, and discord. Moreover, higher levels of accepting external influence are associated with: 1) higher levels of self-alienation, and discord; and 2) lower levels of closeness. In turn, higher levels of self-alienation correlate to lower levels of closeness, and higher levels of discord.

The two criterion variables also significantly correlate to one another, in a way that higher levels of closeness are correlated to lower levels of discord. When it comes to the control variables (i.e., sex and age), the results revealed significant correlations between sex and the criterion variables, which suggest that, compared to men, women show higher levels of closeness, and lower levels of discord in their relationships with best friends.

Table 1.*Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations (N = 290).*

Study Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Sex ¹⁾	.72	-	-						
2. Age (# years)	19.21	1.41	-.051	-					
3. Sense of Power	3.39	.52	.050	.102	-				
4. Authentic Living	5.74	.90	.059	.087	.270**	-			
5. Accepting External Influence	3.15	1.21	-.002	-.078	-.345**	-.443**	-		
6. Self-alienation	3.29	1.33	.016	-.034	-.318**	-.374**	.517**	-	
7. Closeness	12.05	1.75	.130*	-.059	.213**	.406**	-.314**	-.270**	-
8. Discord	6.30	1.63	-.185**	.088	-.135*	-.337**	.309**	.212**	-.178**

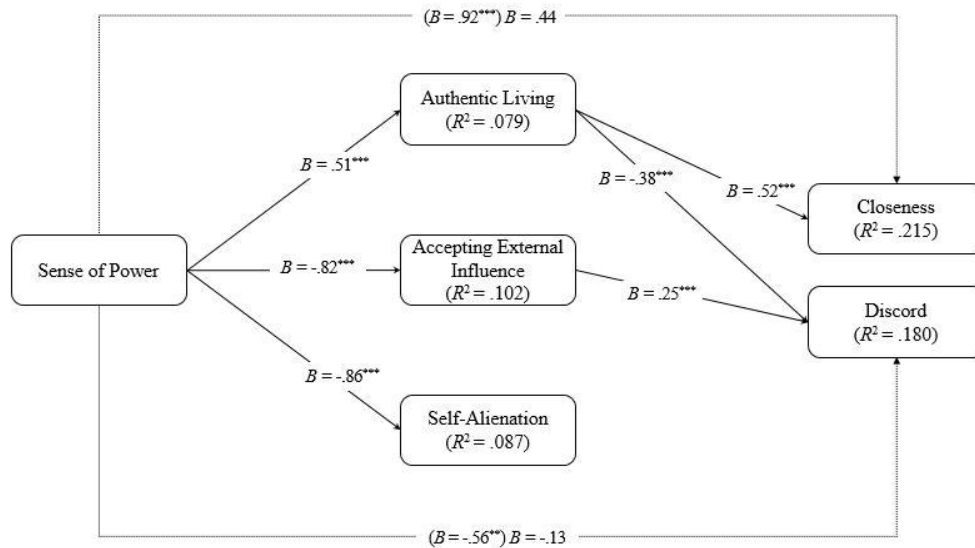
Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation.¹⁾ 0 = male, 1 = female, and the proportion of females is reported.* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Mediation analysis

In this section, the results of the multi-mediator path analysis model examining the indirect effects of sense of power on the quality of friendship relationships (specifically, participants' relationships with their best friend), through authenticity, controlling for sex and age, are presented. Authenticity (i.e., authentic living, accepting external influence and self-alienation) was included as a possible mediator. To test the mediation hypotheses, bootstrap estimation was used with 5000 subsamples to derive the 95% CI for the indirect effects (Preacher & Selig, 2012).

Model results are depicted in Figure 2. Results revealed significant indirect effects of power on: (1) closeness, through authentic living, $B = .27$, $SE = .10$, 95% CI: [.10, .47]; (2) discord, through authentic living, $B = -.20$, $SE = .09$, 95% CI: [-.40, -.05], and accepting external influence, $B = -.20$, $SE = .09$, 95% CI: [-.40, -.05]. More specifically, higher sense of power was associated with: (1) higher levels of authentic living, which in turn were associated with higher levels of closeness in friendships, and lower levels of discord in friendships; and (2) lower levels of accepting external influence, which in turn were associated with lower levels of discord in friendships. Although lower levels of self-alienation were also associated with higher sense of power, self-alienation did not emerge as a significant mediator in the model. Complete model results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Figure 2. Model examining the mediating role of authentic living, accepting external influence, and self-alienation in associations between sense of power and closeness and discord. Coefficients in brackets refer to the total effects. Only significant effects are presented (except for the direct effects adjacent to the total effects).



As shown in Figure 2, the total effects of sense of power on closeness and discord were significant, while the direct effects were not. Thus, authentic living fully mediated the association between sense of power and closeness, and authentic living and accepting external influence fully mediated the association between sense of power and discord.

Table 2.

Effects of the predictor and covariates on the mediator variables.

Variables	Authentic Living			Accepting External Influence			Self-alienation		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI
Sense of Power	.51***	.12	.27, .75	-.82***	.16	-1.13, -.50	-.86***	.18	-1.21, -.51
Sex (0 = male)	.09	.13	-.18, .35	.04	.17	-.30, .38	.10	.20	-.29, .48
Age (# years)	.04	.04	-.05, .12	-.03	.05	-.14, .08	.00	.06	-.12, .13

Note. *B* = Unstandardized estimate; *SE* = Standard Error.

*** $p < .001$

Table 3.*Effects of the Predictor, covariates, and mediator variables on the criterion variables*

Variables	Closeness			Discord		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI
<i>Total effect</i>						
Sense of power	.92***	.23	.48, 1.36	-.56**	.21	-.98, -.14
<i>Direct effects</i>						
Sense of power	.44	.23	-.00, .88	-.13	.22	-.56, .29
Sex (0 = male)	.41	.23	-.04, .87	-.56*	.22	-1.00, -.13
Age (# years)	-.12	.07	-.27, .02	.15*	.07	.02, .29
Authentic Living	.52***	.12	.28, .76	-.38**	.12	-.61, -.15
Accepting External Influence	-.16	.10	-.36, .03	.25**	.09	.06, .43
Self-alienation	-.09	.09	-.25, .08	.29	.08	-.13, .19
<i>Indirect effects, via:</i>						
Authentic Living	.27	.10	.10, .47	-.20	.09	-.40, -.05
Accepting External Influence	.13	.09	-.02, .33	-.20	.09	-.40, -.05
Self-alienation	.07	.07	-.06, .23	-.02	.07	-.17, .12

Note. *B* = Unstandardized estimate; *SE* = Standard Error.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .00$

Alternative models

Given the cross-sectional nature of the data, we tested five alternative models to exclude the possibility of other plausible pathways: (1) a model that was the “reverse” of our hypothesized model, examining the relationship quality dimensions (i.e., closeness and discord) as predictors of sense of power, via the authenticity dimensions (i.e., authentic living, accepting external influence, and self-alienation) (Alternative model 1); (2) a model examining sense of power as predictor of authenticity dimensions, via relationship quality (Alternative model 2); (3) a model examining the authenticity dimensions as predictors of relationship quality, via sense of power (Alternative model 3); (4) a model examining the authenticity dimensions as predictors of sense of power, via relationship quality (Alternative model 4); and (5) a model examining the relationship quality variables as predictors of authenticity, via sense of power (Alternative model 5).

These analyzes were performed using AMOS (v. 27; IBM Corp, 2020), to compare the fit of all models against one another, so as to determine which presented the best fit to the data. The following fit indexes and criteria were used as indicative of a good model fit: the comparative fit index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) higher than 0.95, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean residual (SRMR) lower than 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011).

As shown in Table 4, the comparison of the fit indices of all models showed that the proposed model presented a better model fit than alternative models 1, 2, and 5. The goodness of fit of alternative models 3 and 4 were similarly good, but the direction of effects hypothesized in those models was not supported by the model results. That is, there were not indirect effects of any authenticity dimension on sense of power, via relationship quality, nor on relationship quality, via sense of power. Therefore, the results yielded a stronger support for the hypothesized model. In the next section, we thus focus on this model when discussing the mediational analysis results.

Table 4.

Model fit comparison between the proposed model and the alternative models.

Model	χ^2	<i>p</i> -value	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
Proposed model	4.82	.31	4	1.21	.99	.98	.03	.02
Alternative model 1	16.04	.00	5	3.21	.97	.81	.09	.05
Alternative model 2	4.69	.20	3	1.56	.99	.95	.04	.02
Alternative model 3	5.46	.71	8	.68	1.0	1.03	.00	.03
Alternative model 4	5.46	.71	8	.68	1.0	1.03	.00	.03
Alternative model 5	16.04	.01	5	3.21	.97	.81	.09	.05

Note. χ^2/df = ratio of chi-square to degrees of freedom; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

Discussion

Individuals' sense of power has been associated with the development and maintenance of close, intimate relationships (Dunbar, 2015). Specifically, sense of power has been linked to close relationship quality, in such a way that it predicts relationship quality and satisfaction, and well-being within the relationship (Dunbar, 2015; Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021). Experiences of elevated sense of power have also been linked to greater authenticity, self-concept consistency, and general well-being (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011). Additionally, research shows that greater authenticity is associated with healthier and happier relationships, more positive relationship behaviors, higher relationship satisfaction and commitment, and general subjective well-being (e.g., Brunell et al., 2009; Lopez and Rice, 2006; Wickham, 2012). Yet, there is little research on the potential mediating role of authenticity in the association between individuals' sense of power and the quality of their close friendships. To address this gap in the literature, the present study aimed to expand existing evidence on associations between sense of power of emerging adults and the quality of their relationships with their best friend, by examining the role of authenticity as a mediator of that association.

Based on existing literature on the effects of power on authenticity (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011), and the effects of both power and authenticity on the quality of close relationships (e.g., Brunell et al., 2009; Dunbar, 2015; Gouveia et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021; Laursen & Bukowski, 1997; Peets et al., 2017; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012; Wickham, 2012), we hypothesized that: (H1) higher sense of power is associated with better close friendship quality; (H2) higher sense of power is associated with higher levels of authenticity; (H3) higher levels of authenticity are associated with better close friendship quality; and (H4) authenticity plays a mediating role between sense of power and quality of close friendships, in that higher sense of power is associated with higher levels of authenticity, which in turn are associated with better close friendship quality.

Results showed that higher sense of power was associated with increased authenticity, indicated by higher levels of authentic living and lower levels of acceptance of external influence and self-alienation. In addition, higher levels of authenticity were associated with better relationship quality. More specifically: 1) authentic living was

associated with both closeness and discord, in that higher levels of authentic living were linked to higher closeness and lower discord; and 2) accepting external influence was associated with discord, in that higher acceptance of external influence was linked to higher discord. Results also showed significant indirect effects of sense of power on relationship quality through authentic living (on both *closeness* and *discord*) and accepting external influence (on *discord*). Specifically, higher levels of sense of power were indirectly associated with: 1) higher closeness, via higher levels of authentic living; and 2) lower levels of discord, via higher levels of authentic living and lower levels of acceptance of external influence. There was no evidence for a mediating role of self-alienation in the association between sense of power and relationship quality (neither on closeness nor discord). Finally, results showed direct effects of both age and sex on relationship quality (both *closeness* and *discord*).

Supporting H1, the results of this study showed a total association between sense of power and the quality of emerging adults' relationship with their best friend. According to existent literature examining the associations between power and relationships (e.g., Chen et al., 2001; Dunbar, 2015; Gordon & Chen, 2013; Kim et al., 2019; Körner & Schutz, 2021), it was expected that sense of power would influence close friendship quality. It has been reported that the power dynamic within any interpersonal relationship is one of its most fundamental aspects, being it power equality or inequality (Dunbar, 2015). When it comes to relationships with friends in specific, existing literature regarding this association indicates that friendships are founded on power equality (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Laursen & Bukowski, 1997). Despite this specificity in power dynamic, our results reinforce the notion that sense of power is associated to relationship quality, even within friendships.

Also supporting H2, our results showed associations between power and authenticity, in which higher sense of power was related to greater authenticity, indicated by higher levels of authentic living, lower levels of acceptance of external influence, and lower levels of self-alienation. These results are in line with existing literature on the influence of power on authenticity (e.g., Chen et al., 2009; Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011). Indeed, research has shown that a higher sense of power is related to higher levels of authenticity, self-concept consistency, and subjective well-being, more specifically, regarding greater satisfaction with life, elevated positive affect, and deflated negative affect (Chen et al., 2009; Kifer et al., 2013; Kraus et al., 2011).

The results indicating a positive association between authenticity, indicated by higher levels of authentic living and lower levels of acceptance of external influence, and relationship quality supported H3. Interestingly, these findings indicate that, when considering the concurrent effect of all three dimensions of authenticity (i.e., authentic living, accepting external influence and self-alienation), only authentic living and accepting external influence emerge as significant predictors of relationship quality. These findings support existing literature indicating that authenticity plays an important role in intimate relationships (e.g., Brunell et al., 2009; Chen, 2019; Gouveia, 2015; Lopez & Rice, 2006; Peets, 2017; Wenzel & Lucas-Thompson, 2012; Wickham, 2012). More specifically, prior research has shown that authenticity facilitates and enhances interactions within the relationship (Gouveia et al., 2015), increases trust, relationship commitment and satisfaction (Wickham, 2012), and is associated with greater self-esteem, attachment security, and positive self-views, and lower levels of depression, self-concealment, self-concept splitting, and feelings of loneliness (Lopez & Rice, 2006; Peets, 2017; Wickham, 2012).

Results also supported H4 by revealing the mediating role of authenticity in associations between participants' sense of power and the quality of their relationships with their best friend. These results are consistent with a previous study that found that, in romantic relationships, power influences authentic expression, which in turn affects relationship quality, in such a way that power inequality inhibits the capacity for authentic self-expression, which negatively impacts psychological health and relationship functioning (Neff & Suizzo, 2006). Also, results of the present study support the notion that authenticity acts as a mediator in the association between sense of power and relationship quality, even within relationships typically characterized by a higher balance in power. Therefore, our results suggest that individuals with a higher sense of power display higher levels of authenticity, thereby achieving higher relationship quality within close friendships.

Finally, the significant effects of the control variables (i.e., participants' sex and age) are also noteworthy. We found an association between participants' sex and relationship quality, in that, compared to men, women show lower levels of discord in their relationships with their best friend. Previous studies have reported higher levels of conflict and negative interaction for boys, comparatively to girls (De Goede et al., 2009; Jenkins et al., 2002), which is supported by our results. It has also been shown that,

compared to men, women report higher intimacy and support in their friendships (e.g., De Goede et al., 2009; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Noack & Buhl, 2005; Radmacher, 2006; Phillipson, 1999). When it comes to age, younger participants reported higher levels of closeness, and lower levels of discord, compared to older participants. Despite there not being much research on this topic, our results go in line with previous studies which showed that friendships tend to become increasingly positive, supportive and reciprocal during early and middle adolescence (De Goede et al., 2009; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992), but then experience a decline in support during late adolescence and early adulthood (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). This may be explained by the fact that romantic partners start to become bigger sources of emotional support for emerging adults, when compared to best friends (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992).

Limitations, strengths and future directions

The present study contributed to expand existing literature on the association between individuals' sense of power and the quality of close relationships, by providing a deeper insight into the mediating role of authenticity in that association, and by examining these associations in the context of friendship relationships. Despite these contributions to the literature in this field, there are some limitations which are worth addressing. First and foremost, the main limitation of this study is the fact that it had a cross-sectional design. Although this type of design is useful when the goal is to test a mediation model, it does not provide evidence for temporal relationships between variables. Thus, without longitudinal data, inferences about causal relationships become limited. It could be, for example, that the association between sense of power and relationship quality could have an opposite direction than the one proposed in our model, or that relationship quality could have a mediating role in the association between sense of power and authenticity. As a way to minimize this limitation, we tested five alternative models to test for the possibility of alternative hypotheses that might account for the relationships between the study variables. Results of these analyses provided a stronger support for the proposed model, based both on the model fit and support for the hypothesized direction of effects. Adding this finding to the existing evidence for the effects of both power and authenticity on relationship quality and satisfaction, the plausibility of the hypothesized direction of effects in this study is reinforced. Nonetheless, given the life transitions and instability typical of emerging adults (Arnett,

2014), as well as changes in power and relationship dynamics during this period (De Goede et al., 2009; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992), it seems relevant that future research focuses on longitudinal studies of the influence of sense of power and authenticity on emerging adults' friendships.

Additionally, this study's sample was, in itself, a limitation when it comes to its heterogeneity both in participants' sex and status. The majority of participants were female (72.1%), which presents as a significant disproportion on the collected data. Also, all participants were, at the time, attending university, which provides reports only from people in that specific context. Future investigations should try to reach more male participants (e.g., by targeting specific platforms or locations), and include emerging adults from various contexts (e.g., workers), in order to obtain a more diverse and representative sample.

Finally, even though our study controlled for the effects of participants' sex and age, in future studies, it would be interesting to analyze the moderating role of these variables in the hypothesized mediational pathways, to examine whether they influence the relationships among sense of power, authenticity and close relationship quality. Taking into account existing literature (e.g., De Goede et al., 2009; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Jenkins et al., 2002; Noack & Buhl, 2005; Radmacher, 2006), it would be expected that: 1) the relationship between authenticity and closeness would be stronger for girls and younger individuals; and 2) the relationship between authenticity and discord would be stronger for boys and older individuals. Additionally, it would also be interesting to analyze the moderating role of same-sex vs. other-sex dyads in the association between sense of power and close friendship quality, and between authenticity and close friendship quality, since previous research has shown that there are differences between the two dyads – i.e., there is higher intimacy, support and companionship in same-sex dyads, compared to other-sex dyads (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Furman & Buhrmester, 2009; Furman et al., 2002; Hand & Furman, 2009; Noack & Buhl, 2005).

Despite these limitations, a significant strength of this study was the sample size ($N = 290$), which allowed robust results and a better possibility for generalization of the findings. An understanding of the effects of sense of power and authenticity on relationship quality is important, especially given the lack of literature on the role of

authenticity as a mediator of this association. Hence, our study provides further understanding, and a good base for investigation on this topic.

Implications for practice

The present study was developed in order to further understand the role that authenticity plays in the association between sense of power and close relationship quality. Our results bring forth clear practical implications for interventions on improving the quality of individuals' friendship relationships. The fact that authenticity mediated the association between sense of power and close friendship quality suggests that interventions should focus on increasing both individuals' sense of power and their perceived authenticity, mainly when it comes to authentic living and acceptance of external influence. In earlier life stages, namely during childhood, a permission for autonomous exploration instead of a demand for strict obedience can facilitate the development of one's sense of power and the achievement of an authentic identity (Erikson, 1968). Additionally, by promoting behaviors and emotional expression that are consistent with one's true self and its conscious awareness in most situations and contexts, and by decreasing the extent to which one accepts the influence of others and conforms to their expectations, improvements in people's close friendships quality should be noticeable. In other words, interventions which focus on increasing one's authentic living and decreasing the extent to which they accept external influence should contribute to positive outcomes on relationships, more specifically, on the quality and satisfaction in one's relationship with close friends.

Conclusions

Taking into account existing evidence for effects of sense of power on close relationship quality, and interactions between these variables and authenticity, in this study we proposed to examine emerging adults' authenticity as a potential mediator of the association between sense of power and the quality of their close friendships. Our results supported our hypotheses, having shown that: 1) sense of power was positively associated with close friendship quality; 2) sense of power was positively associated with authenticity; 3) authenticity was positively associated with close friendship quality; and 4) higher sense of power was associated with better relationship quality (i.e., higher closeness and lower discord) within emerging adults' close friendships, via greater

authenticity, specifically, higher levels of authentic living and lower levels of acceptance of external influence. These findings support existing literature on the effects of power on relationship quality and expand understanding of the role that authenticity plays in this association. Taking into account our findings and the lack of research on this topic, we highlight the importance of further investigation regarding the relationship between these variables.

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Appendix A

Version of the Sense of Power Scale used to measure sense of power.

Na minha relação com os meus colegas	Discordo muito	Discordo	Nem concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo muito
Eu consigo que eles ouçam o que eu digo	1	2	3	4	5
Os meus desejos não são tidos em conta	1	2	3	4	5
Eu consigo que eles façam o que eu quero	1	2	3	4	5
Mesmo que expresse as minhas opiniões, elas não têm muita influência	1	2	3	4	5
Acho que tenho muito poder	1	2	3	4	5
As minhas ideias e opiniões são muitas vezes ignoradas	1	2	3	4	5
Mesmo quando tento, não sou capaz de fazer com que as coisas corram à minha maneira	1	2	3	4	5
Se quiser, sou eu que tomo as decisões	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Version of the Network of Relationships Inventory - Relationship Quality Version
(NRI-RQV) used to measure relationship quality.

	Nada	Pouco	Nem muito nem pouco	Muito	Muitíssimo
1. Quanto do seu tempo livre passa com esta pessoa?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Até que ponto é que você e esta pessoa se chateiam ou se zangam uma com a outra?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Até que ponto é que fala com esta pessoa sobre qualquer coisa/qualquer assunto?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Com que frequência é que recorre a esta pessoa para ela lhe dar apoio nos seus problemas pessoais?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa aponta os seus erros ou a/o diminui?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Até que ponto é que está satisfeito(a) com a sua relação com esta pessoa?	1	2	3	4	5
7. Quanto do seu tempo é que passa a divertir-se com esta pessoa?	1	2	3	4	5
8. Até que ponto é que você e esta pessoa discordam e têm pequenas discussões?	1	2	3	4	5
9. Até que ponto é que partilha os seus segredos e sentimentos com esta pessoa?	1	2	3	4	5
10. Até que ponto é que você e esta pessoa discutem uma com a outra?	1	2	3	4	5
11. Com que frequência depende da ajuda, dos conselhos ou da compreensão desta pessoa?	1	2	3	4	5
12. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa a/o critica?	1	2	3	4	5
13. Até que ponto é que a sua relação com esta pessoa é boa?	1	2	3	4	5
14. Com que frequência é que passeia e faz coisas divertidas/agradáveis com esta pessoa?	1	2	3	4	5
15. Até que ponto fala com esta pessoa sobre coisas que não quer que os outros saibam?	1	2	3	4	5
16. Com que frequência é que depende desta pessoa para se animar, quando se sente triste ou chateado(a)?	1	2	3	4	5

	Nada	Pouco	Nem muito nem pouco	Muito	Muitíssimo
17. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa lhe diz coisas más ou desagradáveis?	1	2	3	4	5
18. Até que ponto é que está feliz com a forma como as coisas estão a correr entre si e esta pessoa?	1	2	3	4	5
19. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa o/a elogia pelo tipo de pessoa que é?	1	2	3	4	5
20. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa a/o força a fazer coisas que você não quer fazer?	1	2	3	4	5
21. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa "leva a melhor" quando vocês os dois não estão de acordo em relação ao que fazer?	1	2	3	4	5
22. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa não a/o inclui em programas/atividades?	1	2	3	4	5
23. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa parece estar realmente orgulhosa de si?	1	2	3	4	5
24. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa tenta leva-lo(a) a fazer coisas que não gosta de fazer?	1	2	3	4	5
25. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa acaba por ser quem toma as decisões por vocês os dois?	1	2	3	4	5
26. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa parece ignora-lo(a)?	1	2	3	4	5
27. Até que ponto é que esta pessoa gosta ou aprova as coisas que você faz?	1	2	3	4	5
28. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa a/o pressiona a fazer as coisas que ela quer?	1	2	3	4	5
29. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa o/a leva a fazer as coisas à maneira dela?	1	2	3	4	5
30. Com que frequência é que esta pessoa parece não lhe dar a atenção que quer?	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Version of the Authenticity Scale used to measure authenticity.

	Não me descreve de todo						Descreve- me muito bem
1. Acho que é melhor sermos nós próprios, do que sermos populares.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Não sei como realmente me sinto por dentro.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Sou fortemente influenciado/a pelas opiniões dos outros.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Costumo fazer o que as outras pessoas me dizem para fazer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Sinto sempre que preciso fazer o que outros esperam que eu faça.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. As outras pessoas influenciam-me muito.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Sinto-me como se não me conhecesse muito bem.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Mantenho-me sempre fiel àquilo em que acredito.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Sou fiel a mim mesmo/a na maioria das situações	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Sinto-me desligado/a do meu 'verdadeiro eu'.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Vivo de acordo com meus valores e crenças.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Sinto-me alienado/a de mim mesmo.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7