



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

Dipartimento di Psicologia dello Sviluppo e della Socializzazione
Corso di laurea magistrale in Psicologia dello Sviluppo e dell'Educazione

Tesi di laurea magistrale

***Cultural differences
in young adults' quality of friendship:
An intercultural data collection among
China, Italy, Japan and South Korea.***

Relatrice:

Prof.ssa Tiziana Pozzoli

Laureanda: Marta Pisani

Matricola: 2052257

Anno Accademico 2023-2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to sincerely thank my Professor, Tiziana Pozzoli whose support has been invaluable in helping me shape and complete this work.

I am also grateful to thank my family, my colleagues and friends for their constant encouragement and supportive words, which have been essential throughout this journey, even during the roughest moments.

A heartfelt acknowledgment goes to those who assisted with the questionnaire translations: Ma Zhao Yue for Chinese, Takagi Ryunosuke for Japanese, and Kim Eun Hye for Korean.

A sincere thanks goes to the participants of this study, whose involvement made this research possible.

Thank you to all who have contributed to this project in various ways.

INDEX

1. Quality of Friendship:
 - 1.1 The Development of Friendship: From Pre-School to Adulthood
 - 1.2 Exploring Friendship Dynamics in Emerging Adulthood: A Concise Literature Review Highlighting this Distinctive Developmental Phase
 - 1.3 Measuring Friendship: Conceptualisation and Operationalisation of Friendship
 - 1.4 Quantifying the Qualitative: Measuring Friendship Quality
2. Friendship and Culture:
 - 2.1 Friendship in East Asia: The Influence of Buddhism and Confucianism on Interpersonal Relationships
 - 2.2 Collectivism and Individualism: How Society Shapes In-Group Relationships
 - 2.3 Language as a Barometer: Exploring Linguistic Cues of Intimacy and Closeness
3. The Current Research:
 - 3.1 Research Hypothesis and Research Questions
 - 3.2 Descriptive Analysis: Research Sample, Method and Measurements
 - 3.3 Results
4. Discussion
 - 4.1 Implications for Cross-Cultural Research, Limitations, and Future Directions
5. Bibliography
6. Appendix A
7. Appendix B

CHAPTER 1

QUALITY OF FRIENDSHIP

1.1 The Development of Friendship: From Pre-School to Adulthood

Interviewer: Why is Caleb your friend?

Tony: Because I like him.

Interviewer: And why do you like him?

Tony: Because he's my friend. (Rubin, 1980)

By the age of four, children already have the word *friend* in their vocabularies, and they already understand that this word is often closely tied to the concept of *liking*. Later in middle childhood and adolescence the concept of *best friends* also appears (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1996). Friendship has been described in various ways, but all descriptions highlight the voluntary nature of friendships, the longevity of the relationship, the mutual concern for each other's well-being, the shared activities and interests, and the emotional support that friends provide for one another.

During childhood, friendships often revolve around shared activities and proximity, with children forming bonds based on common interests and experiences. Research suggests that peer interactions play a crucial role in the development of social skills, empathy, and emotional regulation during this period (Rubin, Parker, Bukowski, & Bowker, 2008).

The theoretical frameworks highlighted by Bukowski et al. in the book "*The company they keep*" (1996) are considered crucial for understanding the complexities of friendship in childhood and adolescence. Attachment theory, proposed by John Bowlby (1969-1982), suggests that early experiences with caregivers shape individuals' attachment styles, which in turn influence their relationships throughout life, including friendships. Secure attachment is associated with the development of positive, trusting friendships, while insecure attachment may lead to difficulties in forming and maintaining friendships. Social learning theory, rooted in the work of Albert Bandura (1963), emphasizes the role of observational learning and reinforcement in shaping social behaviour. Children learn about

friendship norms, communication skills, and conflict resolution strategies through interactions with peers and observing others' social behaviours. Socioecological perspectives emphasize the interplay between individual development and the broader social and environmental contexts in which children and adolescents interact. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, for example, highlights the influence of multiple nested systems, such as the microsystem (e.g., family, school), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), and macrosystem (cultural norms, societal values), on friendship development. Social cognitive development theory, influenced by the work of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg, focuses on children's cognitive understanding of social relationships and moral reasoning. Children's increasing cognitive abilities enable them to take others' perspectives, understand social rules, and navigate complex social interactions within friendships. Social network theory offers a framework for analysing the structure, dynamics, and functions of social networks, including friendship networks. It examines how individuals are embedded within social networks, how relationships are formed and maintained, and how network structures influence social behaviours and outcomes (Bukowski, Newcomb, & Hartup, 1996).

In adolescence, friendships become more sophisticated, with a greater emphasis on intimacy, trust, and emotional support. Adolescents begin to explore their identities and seek out peers who share their values and beliefs. Longitudinal studies have shown that the quality of adolescent friendships predicts various outcomes, including psychological well-being and academic achievement (Berndt, 2002).

As individuals transition into young adulthood, friendships continue to evolve, often becoming more stable and enduring. Young adults may prioritize friendships that offer emotional support, companionship, and shared experiences as they face the challenges of adulthood, such as starting careers and forming romantic relationships (Wrzus, Hanel, Wagner, & Neyer, 2013). Studies explore how social networks change over time, including alterations in the size, composition, and structure of social connections. They investigate how individuals adapt their social networks in response to life events and transitions. Cross-sectional studies indicate that from adolescence to old-age the size of social networks generally shows a continuous shrinking (Wrzus, Hanel, Wagner, & Neyer, 2013). While the size of family networks remains mostly consistent from childhood to young adulthood, it tends to increase from adulthood onwards due to factors such as marriage

and parenthood, in contrast to the size of friendship networks. Studies emphasize the significance of friendships in young adulthood for various aspects of well-being. Research by Bagwell, Newcomb, and Bukowski suggests that friendships provide emotional support, companionship, and a sense of belonging during this transitional period (Bagwell, Newcomb, & Bukowski, 1998). Friendships in young adulthood can help individuals navigate the transition to adulthood by providing guidance, encouragement, and practical support. Research suggests that friends play a key role in shaping vocational choices, relationship decisions, and personal development during this stage of life (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). Moreover, young adults often bond with friends over shared experiences and interests, forming close-knit social circles that provide a sense of community and belonging. These shared experiences contribute to the development of identity and self-esteem during this period (Wrzus, Hanel, Wagner, & Neyer, 2013). As individuals transition into young adulthood, the quality of friendships often becomes more important than the quantity. According to Berndt (2002), young adults prioritize friendships that offer intimacy, trust, and mutual support, valuing deep connections over a large social network. This finding supports what Wrzus and colleagues (2013) suggested about the shrinking size for friendships.

1.2 Exploring Friendship Dynamics in Emerging Adulthood:

A Concise Literature Review Highlighting this Distinctive Developmental Phase

Friendship studies involving college or university students are plentiful, considering the unique social dynamics and developmental stage of emerging adulthood (Molloy, Ram, & Gest, 2011, Rahal, et al., 2020, Camirand & Poulin, 2022, Cheong, Gauvain, & Palbusa, 2019). Early adulthood is a time of intense identity exploration, as individuals seek to establish a sense of self and clarify their values, goals, and beliefs. This period is marked by questioning and experimentation as young adults navigate various social roles and identities, including those related to education, career, relationships, and personal values. Many young adults experience educational transitions during early adulthood, such as transitioning from high school to college or entering the workforce. These transitions involve adjusting to new academic demands, social environments, and expectations for independence and responsibility. College attendance, in particular, often represents a

significant developmental milestone, providing opportunities for intellectual growth, social interaction, and identity formation. For example, Rahal and colleagues (2020) investigated the interplay between early life stress, subjective social status (SSS), and health outcomes in late adolescence, particularly during the transition to college. SSS reflects an individual's perceived hierarchical standing relative to others and has robust associations with adolescent health, surpassing the effects of income and education. During adolescence, individuals develop a sense of both their family's social status in society and their own status within the school environment. Adolescents become more sensitive to social status concerns as they become more invested in peer relationships, develop a stronger self-concept, and become more autonomous.

Camirand and Poulin (2022) explored the interconnectedness of best friendships, romantic relationships, and psychological well-being during emerging adulthood. Interesting is the investigation of the association between intimacy and conflict in both best friendships and romantic relationships and their impact on psychological well-being during emerging adulthood. It explored three main hypotheses: cumulative effects, compensatory effects, and independent effects. The cumulative effects suggest that higher levels of intimacy in both best friendships and romantic relationships were expected to be associated with better psychological well-being, while higher levels of conflict in both relationships were expected to be linked to poorer psychological well-being. The measure of intimacy refers to the need for closeness, mutual trust, and loyalty in relationships, involving the sharing of private or secret information and feelings. Research indicates that intimacy in relationships is a strong predictor of psychological well-being. In adolescence, intimacy in close friendships positively correlates with self-esteem. Similarly, intimate romantic relationships are associated with better self-esteem, fewer depressive symptoms, and less loneliness during emerging adulthood. While conflict in relationships refers to the level of antagonism or quarrels and can negatively impact psychological well-being. While intimacy fosters well-being, conflict can impair it. Conflictual friendships and romantic relationships are linked to higher levels of depressive symptoms and loneliness in emerging adulthood. The presence of conflict in a relationship does not necessarily imply a lack of intimacy, and vice versa. Regarding compensatory effects it was hypothesized that having an intimate relationship with one (best friend or romantic partner) might compensate for a lack of intimacy with the other, exerting a protective effect on

psychological well-being. Lastly, is the independent effect that expects intimacy and conflict in both types of relationships to have distinct associations with psychological well-being, even when examined simultaneously. Additionally, the study considered moderating effects of relationship duration and gender. The duration of relationships and gender were expected to play moderating roles in the associations between relationship dynamics and psychological well-being. A moderating effect of relationship duration was observed: longer-lasting relationships were associated with stronger links between relationship features and well-being, suggesting that the quality of enduring relationships may have a more significant impact on individuals' psychological adjustment. In contrast to expectations, gender was not found to play a moderating role. This finding is not unanimous in the literature; a possible explanation could be given by the notion of gender role orientation: "individuals' more or less rigid adherence to gender role is linked to the quality of their friendships and romantic relationships" (p. 340).

The study by Bagwell et al. (2005) explores how the quality of friendships and perceived changes in relationships during early adulthood predict psychosocial adjustment. Psychiatric disorders outlined in the DSM often incorporate issues with social connections, like friendships, as crucial factors in diagnosis, underscoring the importance of these relationships for mental well-being. Disruptions in social support serve as both catalysts and outcomes of depression, illustrating the reciprocal link between the quality of friendships and mental health. Theoretical frameworks such as Coyne's interactional theory of depression (1991)¹ highlight how individuals experiencing depression may engage in behaviours that diminish social support, thus exacerbating their symptoms. Moreover, the quality of friendships is associated with outward expressions of symptoms such as hostility and aggression, particularly noticeable in childhood and adolescence. Friendship conflicts may contribute to a rise in disruptive behaviour over time, and peers can exert influence over each other's tendencies toward aggression. This mutual dynamic between hostility and friendship quality implies that individuals with diminished self-esteem may

¹ Psychological framework that posits a reciprocal relationship between interpersonal interactions and depressive symptoms. According to this theory, individuals who are depressed tend to engage in behaviours or communication patterns that elicit negative responses from those around them, leading to further social isolation and exacerbation of depressive symptoms. In turn, these depressive symptoms can affect the quality of social interactions, creating a cycle that perpetuates and intensifies depression. Coyne's theory underscores the crucial role of social relationships in the onset, maintenance, and exacerbation of depressive disorders (Coyne, Burchill, & Stiles, 1991).

encounter challenges in forging and sustaining positive friendships, potentially exacerbating their struggles with self-esteem (Bagwell et al., 2005).

To thoroughly examine the research conducted by Wrzus and colleagues (2013), which analyses changes in social networks across the lifespan, importance is placed on the size and composition of these networks. The study unveils a consistent trend in age-related alterations within social networks, characterized by a surge in global network size during adolescence and early adulthood, followed by a stabilization phase in the mid-20s to early 30s, and subsequent decline throughout adulthood and into old age. This trend aligns with socioemotional selectivity theory, which posits that individuals, as they age, prioritize relationships with deeper emotional significance over broader social connections, resulting in a trimming of peripheral ties. Key life milestones, such as puberty, marriage, parenthood, and entry into the workforce, correspond to specific shifts in social network dynamics. Puberty correlates with an expansion of the personal network, reflecting the broadening of social circles during the transition to adulthood. Concurrently, marriage, parenthood, and career initiation during young adulthood generate overlapping effects on network size, potentially leading to a balance between gains and losses in both global and friendship networks. Noteworthy life events, like the loss of a spouse, elicit distinct alterations in social networks. The study observes that spousal loss diminishes the size of the personal network, underscoring the profound impact of bereavement on social connections. Conversely, minimal effects are noted on the global and friendship networks, suggesting proactive efforts to replace and revive relationships following the loss of a spouse. Conversely, non-normative life events such as divorce or relocation deviate from age-related shifts in network dynamics. Divorce precipitates a contraction in the size of the family network, signifying the disruption of familial bonds following marital dissolution. Relocation primarily impacts friendship networks, highlighting the susceptibility of peripheral connections to external upheavals. Despite the influence of life events, family networks exhibit remarkable stability across different age cohorts.

According to social convoy theory (Kahn & Antonucci, 1948)², familial relationships serve as a steadfast support system throughout life's journey, guiding individuals through various transitions. Even in challenging circumstances such as divorce, family ties endure, emphasizing their resilient nature. These findings underscore the intricate interplay between age-related changes and life events, shedding light on the dynamics of social networks across different developmental stages. (Wrzus, Hanel, Wagner, & Neyer, 2013). A noteworthy observation is the discrepancy in network sizes when assessed using interviews versus standardized instruments. Global, personal, and family networks tend to appear larger in interview-based assessments due to memory bias, which favours cued-recall techniques. Conversely, standardized instruments relying on free-recall procedures often yield smaller network sizes. This underscores the critical importance of carefully selecting measurement strategies to accurately capture the dynamics of social networks. Additionally, the study reveals disparities in network sizes across different sample types. Friendship and personal networks exhibit larger sizes in student samples compared to general population-based samples. However, convenience samples show more pronounced age-related and life-event-related changes, potentially influenced by specific characteristics or living environments unique to these groups. These findings underscore the necessity of meticulous sample selection to comprehend the intricacies of social network dynamics, emphasizing the significance of representative samples for generalizability. Moreover, variations in collectivistic values among countries exert an influence on the size of global and personal networks, albeit without significant impacts on family and friendship networks or changes in network sizes. This suggests that societal values play a nuanced role in shaping specific aspects of social networks, illuminating the intricate interplay between cultural contexts and individual social dynamics.

² a theory that conceptualizes relationships as an evolving social network hierarchy of three concentric circles surrounding an individual, with each circle representing a relationship that has a different level of perceived intimacy or closeness to the individual at a given point in time. The theory attempts to account for how relationships of importance to the individual (i.e., that provide a secure base for individual functioning) change as she or he ages.

1.3 Measuring Friendship:

Conceptualisation and Operationalisation of Friendship

While studying the significance of friendship, both quantitative and qualitative features need to be considered; a wide spectrum of methods, such as interviews, questionnaires and sociometric measures have been used. These instruments have been very useful in assessing the development of friendship during children's evolution, even though they cannot be used at a very young age due to the lack of readiness (Furman, 1996). Furman (1996) explored various conceptual and methodological considerations in measuring friendship perceptions. Furman discussed the conceptualization of friendship perceptions and the challenges in defining and operationalizing key constructs such as friendship quality, intimacy, and social support. He described various measurement approaches used to assess friendship perceptions in childhood and adolescence, exploring their strengths, limitations, and implications.

Self-Report Questionnaires: commonly used to assess friendship perceptions by asking individuals to report on their own experiences, feelings, and behaviours in friendships. These measures often include Likert-type scales or open-ended questions that capture aspects such as friendship quality, intimacy, conflict resolution, and social support. While self-report questionnaires provide valuable insights into individuals' subjective experiences of friendships, they may be subject to biases such as social desirability or self-presentation.

Peer nomination: involves asking individuals to nominate their friends or peers based on specific criteria, such as who they spend time with, who they trust, or who they consider their best friend. Peer nominations provide a more objective measure of social relationships and allow researchers to examine friendship networks and social hierarchies within peer groups. However, they may be influenced by factors such as popularity or social status, and the interpretation of nominations can vary depending on the criteria used.

Observational methods: involve direct observation of individuals' interactions with their friends in naturalistic or controlled settings. Researchers may use coding systems to assess behaviours such as positive engagement, conflict resolution, and emotional expres-

sion during social interactions. Observational methods provide rich, detailed data on actual behaviours and dynamics within friendships, but they can be time-consuming and may not capture individuals' subjective experiences or perceptions.

Multi-Informant approaches: Furman emphasizes the importance of using multi-informant approaches to assess friendship perceptions, which involve gathering data from multiple sources, such as self-reports, peer nominations, and observer ratings. By triangulating data from different perspectives, researchers can obtain a more comprehensive understanding of friendships and validate findings across different measurement methods. Multi-informant approaches help mitigate biases inherent in any single measurement approach and provide a more nuanced picture of friendship dynamics.

The author discussed how researchers often combine these measurement approaches to gain a more holistic understanding of friendship perceptions, addressing both subjective experiences and objective social interactions within peer groups. He highlighted the need for methodological rigor, careful consideration of measurement validity and reliability, and integration of developmental perspectives to advance research on friendships in childhood and adolescence.

Parker and Asher (1993) examined the characteristics of children's friendships (attending third, fourth, and fifth grade), focusing on factors such as reciprocity, intimacy, and conflict resolution. Their study provided insights into the development of peer relationships and the importance of mutual understanding and support in friendships among children. In this study they used a sociometric measure called "roster-and-rating" for assessing the level of acceptance. The procedure consists of giving children the possibility to rate all their classmates from 1 to 5, where 5 represents the highest level, subsequently through the means children were classified in high, average and low-accepted. As for the measure of friendship assessment a two-step sociometric procedure was used; through it, children were asked to first nominate their "best friends" for a maximum of three choices, and secondly their "very best friend".

Friendship quality was also taken into account thanks to the "Friendship Quality Questionnaire" (Parker & Asher, 1993) where children could express their agreement or disagreement through a 5-point Likert scale. As for friendship satisfaction a more visual scoring method was used to answer the questions for this measure: a line, which was divided in 15 ticks, going from a sad to a happy face, was presented to kids, and they had to point

the tick showing their level of agreement. Loneliness and social dissatisfaction were measured to a questionnaire developed by Russell (1978), and slightly modified to fit the study. A meaningful result was displayed by the finding that not all the highly accepted children had friends, and that not all the low-accepted children didn't have friends, especially boys. Moreover, since the study had a focus on the relationship among friendship and loneliness, it emerged that children without a best friend, even if highly accepted felt lonelier than those with best friends. According to most of the previous studies that compared female and male friendship, girls reported higher level of validation and support, help and guidance, conflict resolution, and intimate exchange (Parker & Asher, 1993). Another article that provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between friendship dynamics and loneliness during early adolescence was written in 2015 by Lodder and colleagues. The study investigated how both the quantity and quality of friendships, as well as specific dyadic processes within friendships, are associated with feelings of loneliness during this developmental stage. More specifically the article examined how the number of friendships young adolescents have influences on their experience of loneliness. It also compared this measure to the quality of friendship: is it more important to have more friendships or to have more qualitatively high relationships? Quality of friendships includes factors such as feelings of trust, intimacy, and support within friendships. The study highlighted three key factors influencing loneliness in early adolescence: friendship quantity, friendship quality, and dyadic processes within friendships. Firstly, having more friendships was linked to lower levels of loneliness among adolescents. Secondly, higher-quality friendships, characterized by trust and support, were associated with reduced loneliness compared to lower-quality relationships. Lastly, positive dyadic processes, including effective communication and emotional support, were linked to lower loneliness levels. Overall, fostering meaningful and supportive friendships during early adolescence can be crucial in mitigating feelings of loneliness and promoting social well-being (Lodder, Scholte, Goossens, & Verhagen, 2015). Both articles combined methods such as questionnaires, peer nominations and observations, following Furman's guidelines.

Schofield and colleagues (1983) compared two methods for assessing children's peer preferences: peer nomination and rating scale measurement. Due to discrepant findings in research on peer preference conducted using the peer nomination technique and the

roster-and-rating technique (the former leading to stronger in-group preferences), the current study strives to examine the reliability and validity of these two methods in assessing children's peer preferences. The researchers aimed to determine which method yielded more accurate and consistent results. After conducting two studies, it was found that both the peer nomination and roster-and-rating methods revealed significant effects of racial similarity on peer preferences, indicating the influence of race on children's social interactions. However, the peer nomination method consistently yielded larger effect sizes compared to roster-and-rating, suggesting a stronger preference for same-race peers. This disparity could be attributed to the emphasis on close friendships inherent in the peer nomination process, potentially leading to a more pronounced expression of in-group preferences. Additionally, the newcomer status of black students in desegregated schools may have contributed to the heightened same-race preferences observed in peer nomination studies. This highlights the complexity of social dynamics within desegregated educational settings and underscores the importance of considering contextual factors in sociometric research.

The study provided compelling evidence that the method employed to assess peer preferences exerted a substantial influence on the measured magnitude of these preferences. Specifically, the peer nomination method consistently revealed larger disparities in same-race preferences when compared to the roster-and-rating approach. This discrepancy underscores the importance of methodological considerations in sociometric research, suggesting that the framing of questions and response options can significantly impact outcomes. Moreover, the study identified sex as a more influential factor than race in shaping peer preferences among sixth-graders, highlighting the nuanced dynamics involved in social interactions during adolescence. Such findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between individual characteristics and peer relationships within school environments. The findings from these studies emphasize the critical role of measurement techniques in evaluating peer preferences, particularly within contexts such as school desegregation. It is evident that researchers need to employ a diverse array of methods to comprehensively assess intergroup preferences, thereby capturing the complexity of social dynamics. By doing so, they can ensure that operational definitions accurately reflect conceptual definitions, leading to more robust

and nuanced interpretations of the data. Specifically, the study suggests that peer nominations may offer greater utility in gauging the depth of close friendships, where the emphasis lies on specific relationships. Conversely, roster-and-rating methods may be better suited for capturing broader patterns of intergroup acceptance, providing insights into overall social dynamics within peer groups. Such methodological considerations are vital for advancing our understanding of social integration processes and facilitating informed interventions in diverse educational settings (Schofield & Whitley, 1983). Even this study finds accordance with Furman's suggestion that mixing methods are the most reliable.

1.4 Quantifying the Qualitative: Measuring Friendship Quality

The term "quality of friendship" refers to the characteristics that make a friendship positive and beneficial for the children involved. High-quality friendships typically encompass features such as companionship and recreation, where friends spend time together and engage in shared activities, and conflict and betrayal, which involves the frequency and resolution of disagreements or conflicts. Additionally, high-quality friendships include help and guidance, where friends assist each other and offer support when needed, and intimacy and trust, which involves the sharing of personal thoughts and feelings, indicating a deeper level of connection. Validation and caring are also crucial, as friends show appreciation and care for each other, reinforcing a sense of value and self-worth, along with effective and amicable conflict resolution. To measure the quality of friendships among young children, Ladd and Kochenderfer (1996) employed several methods. These included teacher ratings using the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (TCRS), where teachers provided assessments of children's social behaviour, including the quality of their peer interactions and relationships, with items assessing prosocial behaviours such as sharing and helping, as well as antisocial behaviours like aggression and withdrawal. They also conducted child interviews using the Friendship Quality Questionnaire (FQQ) to gather children's perspectives on their friendships, assessing dimensions such as companionship, help, intimacy, and conflict. Peer nomination and rating were employed through sociometric techniques, where children were asked to nominate peers they liked and enjoyed spending time with and to rate the quality of their friendships, helping to

identify reciprocal friendships and assess the child's social standing and friendship quality within the peer group. Finally, direct observation was utilized, with researchers observing children's interactions during school activities to gain insights into the nature and quality of their friendships, providing an objective measure of how children interacted with their friends in natural settings. Ladd and Kochenderfer (1996) found that high-quality friendships were positively associated with better school adjustment. Children with high-quality friendships exhibited better academic performance, higher levels of school liking, and fewer school avoidance behaviours. They were also better adjusted socially, showing fewer behavioural problems and higher levels of peer acceptance.

The Teacher-Child Rating Scale is a widely used measurement developed and validated by Hightower et al. in 1986, designed to measure various aspects of a child's social, emotional, and academic functioning based on teacher observations. As part of a larger research framework aimed at understanding and supporting children's development in educational settings, the TCRS provides a structured method for teachers to evaluate a child's behaviour and performance in the classroom, contributing to a comprehensive view of the child's adjustment and needs. The scale comprises several subscales that collectively cover a broad range of behavioural and emotional domains. These include Task Orientation, which assesses a child's ability to stay focused, complete tasks, and demonstrate academic engagement; Behaviour Control, which measures the child's ability to regulate behaviour, follow classroom rules, and exhibit self-control; Assertiveness, which evaluates the child's social initiative, confidence in interacting with peers and adults, and ability to express needs and desires; Peer Social Skills, which assesses how well the child interacts with peers, including cooperation, sharing, and positive social behaviours; and Shyness/Anxiety, which measures levels of social withdrawal, timidity, and anxiety in social interactions. Teachers rate each item on the TCRS using a Likert scale, typically ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much), and these ratings are aggregated to produce scores for each subscale, providing a detailed profile of the child's strengths and areas needing support. The TCRS is employed in various contexts, including research to study relationships between children's behaviours and their academic and social outcomes, intervention planning to identify children who might benefit from specific support services, and progress monitoring to track changes in a child's behaviour over time and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. The TCRS is valued for its

comprehensiveness and ease of use, offering reliable data that can inform both educational practices and psychological interventions. However, some limitations include potential bias in teacher ratings and the need for supplementary data sources, such as parent reports and direct observations, to provide a more rounded picture of the child's behaviour and needs (Hightower, et al., 1986).

The Friendship Quality Questionnaire (FQQ), developed by Parker and Asher in 1993, serves as another valuable tool in assessing the multifaceted nature of friendships among children and adolescents. By delving beyond the mere presence of friendships, the FQQ provides researchers with a nuanced understanding of friendship dynamics, including dimensions such as companionship, intimacy, conflict resolution, and support provision. This comprehensive assessment allows for a deeper exploration of the quality and depth of relationships, shedding light on the emotional closeness, reciprocity, and supportive behaviours within friendships. However, despite its strengths, the FQQ is not without limitations. One such limitation lies in its reliance on self-report measures, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability or limited self-awareness, particularly among younger participants. Additionally, the FQQ's effectiveness may vary across different cultural contexts, as the interpretation of friendship quality may differ based on cultural norms and values. Furthermore, the questionnaire may not capture the full complexity of friendships, as some aspects of friendship quality, such as nonverbal cues or subtle social dynamics, may be challenging to assess through self-report measures alone. Despite these limitations, the FQQ remains a widely used and valuable tool in research examining the social and emotional development of children and adolescents, providing valuable insights into the nature and implications of friendships for individuals' well-being and adjustment (Parker & Asher, 1993).

The Friendship Qualities Scale (FQS), developed by Bukowski, Hoza, and Boivin in 1994, is a widely utilized tool for assessing the multifaceted dimensions of friendship quality among children and adolescents. It aims to comprehensively capture various aspects of friendships, including companionship, conflict resolution, help and guidance, validation and caring, and security. Typically comprising a series of items or statements, participants rate their agreement or disagreement with each statement, allowing for a detailed examination of friendship dynamics. The FQS is praised for its comprehensive assessment, offering researchers detailed insights into friendship dynamics with demonstrated

reliability and validity across diverse populations and cultural contexts. Its ability to delve beyond the mere presence of friendships and explore the depth and quality of relationships makes it particularly valuable for researchers. However, the FQS also has limitations, notably its reliance on self-report measures which may introduce biases such as social desirability or limited self-awareness, especially among younger participants. Additionally, it may not fully capture the complexity of friendships, as certain aspects such as nonverbal cues or subtle social dynamics might be challenging to assess through self-reports alone. Moreover, interpretation of friendship quality could vary based on individual differences and cultural norms, potentially impacting the scale's generalizability across different populations. Despite these limitations, the Friendship Qualities Scale remains a valuable tool for understanding the nature of friendships in childhood and adolescence, provided researchers consider its strengths and limitations when utilizing it in their studies (Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin, 1994).

Several limitations are commonly associated with tools used for measuring the quality of friendship in the literature. Firstly, many friendship quality measures rely heavily on self-reporting, which can introduce various biases such as social desirability, response tendencies, or limited self-awareness, especially among younger participants. This over-reliance on self-reports may also overlook the intricate nuances in friendship dynamics that cannot be adequately captured through subjective responses alone. Additionally, assessments of friendship quality inherently involve subjectivity, as they rely on individuals' perceptions and interpretations of their friendships, leading to variability in responses and potential inconsistencies in measurement. While many friendship quality measures demonstrate acceptable levels of validity and reliability, concerns about the accuracy and consistency of the data obtained still persist, influenced by factors such as wording of items, cultural differences, or developmental disparities among participants. Moreover, friendship quality measures may not be universally applicable across different age groups or cultural contexts, as developmental differences in cognitive abilities, social skills, and cultural norms can impact the validity and reliability of the measures. Furthermore, these measures often have a limited scope, focusing predominantly on specific dimensions or aspects of friendship quality, such as companionship or conflict resolution, potentially overlooking other crucial dimensions of friendship. Additionally, contextual factors such as family relationships, school environment, or socio-economic status

may not be fully accounted for in these measures, thus limiting their generalizability and validity. Lastly, friendship dynamics are inherently complex and multifaceted, involving numerous factors such as reciprocity, trust, loyalty, and social support, which may not be adequately captured by existing measures, leading to oversimplification or incomplete assessments of friendship quality. Despite these limitations, researchers can mitigate some of these concerns by employing multiple methods and data sources to provide a more comprehensive understanding of friendship quality in their studies.

CHAPTER 2

FRIENDSHIP AND CULTURE

2.1 Friendship in East Asia:

The Influence of Buddhism and Confucianism on Interpersonal Relationships

In Western philosophy, the concept of Friendship was identified already by Plato, who named the four cardinal virtues: courage, temperance, justice, and wisdom. Aristotle then added to these virtues such as magnificence, liberality, friendship, and self-respect. Aristotle classified friendships into three types based on motivation: pleasure, utility, and virtue. Friendships of pleasure arise from enjoying each other's company. Friendships of utility are based on mutual benefit. Friendships of virtue are founded on mutual respect and shared ideals. Perfect friendships occur when both individuals are equally virtuous and engage in activities that exercise their virtues together. Imperfect friendships exist when there is a significant moral disparity, as seen between parents and young children or husbands and wives.

In Eastern philosophy, Confucius outlined six types of friendships: three harmful - those who flatter, are overly compliant, or inflexible - and three beneficial - those who are upright, truthful, and well-formed. In Indian tradition, the concept of friendship dates back to the Rig Veda³, with terms like Mitra (intimate friend) and Sakha (one who shares meals) representing strong bonds, with Mitra and Varuna being protectors of moral law. In Buddhism, a good friend (Kalyana Mitta) aids in moral and spiritual growth, while a bad friend (Pæpa Mitta) promotes negative traits. The Buddha's teachings emphasize the importance of associating with good friends who offer protection, support in adversity, good counsel, and understanding. True friends guide one along the path to enlightenment, as

³ Rig Veda is one of the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism and one of the four Vedas, which are a collection of ancient Indian scriptures. Composed in early Sanskrit around 1500–1200 BC, the Rig Veda is a compilation of hymns, chants, and prayers dedicated to various deities. It is organized into ten books, known as Mandalas, and contains over a thousand hymns. These hymns address a wide range of topics, including cosmology, rituals, and the nature of the divine. The Rig Veda is not only a religious text but also a significant historical and cultural document, providing insights into the early Indo-Aryan civilization and its beliefs, practices, and social structure.

illustrated by stories such as that of Angulimala⁴, who transformed from a violent man to a good person through his association with the Buddha. Friendship in Buddhism involves a mutual commitment to helping each other progress spiritually and ethically, which is integral to personal development and social harmony. The concept of Metta (loving-kindness) is central to Buddhist friendship, extending compassion and kindness to all beings. Good friends are seen as essential for living a virtuous life and achieving inner peace and enlightenment. Friendships also play a crucial role in various societal relationships, such as between parents and children (in contrast with what described by Plato), teachers and students, and spouses. Good friends support each other, share wisdom, and maintain trust and respect. Leaders, too, benefit from wise and supportive friends, leading to better governance and societal well-being (New, 2013).

Other than Buddhism, also Confucianism plays a significant role in shaping interpersonal relationships in society. Confucian values exert a profound influence across East Asia, including China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Japan. These values permeate societal standards, individual decision-making, and how people interact with one another. Rooted in the teachings of Confucius, who lived more than 2500 years ago during the Zhou Dynasty, Confucianism has been fundamental in shaping Chinese society, offering guidelines for ethical conduct and societal structure. Confucianism stresses the importance of education and self-discipline, especially in East Asian cultures such as China. Values like respect for elders, hard work, and family obligations deeply influence behaviour and the approach to education. Moreover, Confucianism emphasizes virtues such as kindness (仁 ren), proper conduct (礼 li), and honesty (义 yi), which are crucial in personal relationships and governing society. Overall, Confucianism's lasting impact lies in its emphasis on continuous learning, honouring tradition, and upholding moral values. These principles remain integral to East Asian culture, shaping various aspects of life even today. Even in contemporary Chinese society, Confucian values remain prominent, coexisting with modern principles and practices. Asian cultures, deeply rooted in moral values and collectivism, continue to uphold Confucian ideals, shaping interpersonal relationships and societal dynamics (Lynn-Sze & Yin, 2021).

⁴ The story of Angulimala is a powerful example of the possibility of transformation and redemption, no matter how far one has strayed from the path of righteousness. It underscores the potential for change within every individual and the importance of compassion and forgiveness.

During the Chosŏn dynasty in Korea, which reigned from 1392 to 1910, Confucianism became the official philosophy and played a central role in shaping moral principles. Even today, it remains a cornerstone of Korean society, with dedicated schools and spiritual leaders imparting Confucian teachings, particularly emphasizing the importance of "filial piety." This is supported by the results of the cross-cultural study on Confucian values conducted by Tamai and Lee in 2002. Unique to Korean students was the quality of "altruism," characterized by compassion and a tendency to contribute to the welfare of others. This altruistic tendency may stem from a belief that part of the self exists for the benefit of others, explaining their self-sacrificing behaviour and potentially influencing differences in public manners between Japanese and Koreans.

In contrast, Japan's adoption of Confucianism during the Tokugawa Shogunate era from 1603 to 1867 had a more limited societal impact. While it was integrated into some private schools, it never achieved widespread influence. However, during the Meiji government period from 1868 to 1911, Confucian ideas were instrumentalized to promote nationalism. The Imperial Rescript on Education (see Appendix A)⁵ in 1890 illustrated this by likening the emperor's relationship with the people to that of a father and son, emphasizing loyalty. Following World War II, the US Occupation Army imposed a complete ban on Confucian education in Japan, and subsequent waves of Westernization further eroded traditional values. While there is a tendency to attribute Asia's economic success to Confucian morals, the role of Confucian values in Japanese society has become increasingly ambiguous, with their influence gradually diminishing over time.

In the above-mentioned study, Japanese students exhibited a strong inclination to conform to authority and identify with the group, a tendency not as prominently observed among Koreans. This conformity in Japan may be linked to the emphasis on harmony, where self-expression is suppressed in favour of maintaining group cohesion. Differences in attitudes toward harmony between the two countries may influence their re-

⁵ The Imperial Rescript on Education (教育ニ関スル勅語, Kyōiku ni Kansuru Chokugo) was signed by Emperor Meiji on October 30, 1890. It was distributed to every school in the Japanese empire, along with a portrait of the Emperor. The Rescript pushed traditional ideals of Confucianism, and in many ways contributed to the rise of militarism during the 1930s and 40s. The 315 [character](#) document was read aloud at all important school events, and students were required to study and memorize the text (Appendix A) (Sekicho, 2002).

spective views on self-expression. Moreover, Japanese sensitivity to mutual social positions is closely tied to hierarchical group relationships that demand rigid conformity (Tamai & Lee, 2002).

2.2 Collectivism and Individualism: How Society Shapes In-Group Relationships

In the article “Individualism and Collectivism: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Self-In-group Relationships” written by Triandis et al. in 1988, the core of the discussion lies in the contrast between individualistic cultures that prioritize personal goals and independence, and collectivist cultures that emphasize group harmony and adherence to ingroup norms. Psychologically, these orientations manifest as allocentrism in collectivist cultures and idiocentrism in individualist cultures. Allocentric individuals prioritize group goals and norms, whereas idiocentric individuals focus on personal goals and independence. This distinction underscores how cultural norms shape individual psychological orientations. Individualism and collectivism significantly shape social behaviour, relationships, and attitudes towards ingroups and outgroups. In collectivist cultures, relationships are characterized by enduring interdependence and intense social interactions within ingroups, fostering deep, enduring bonds. In contrast, individualist cultures prioritize independence and voluntary social interactions with smaller groups, leading to a greater emphasis on personal autonomy and choice in relationships (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988).

Friendships differ in quality between individualist and collectivist cultures, with collectivist societies fostering deeper, more intimate relationships. In individualist cultures, such as those in North America and Western Europe, people often have a larger number of friends and acquaintances, resulting in relationships that tend to be broader but less deep. Friendships are typically based on personal choice and mutual interests rather than necessity or obligation, allowing for a diverse social network but often leading to less intimate connections. These friendships are more voluntary and subject to change, with individuals forming and dissolving relationships based on changing circumstances, interests, and personal growth, leading to a higher turnover in friendships and cycling through different social circles throughout their lives. Emphasis is placed on personal

autonomy and privacy, with friends respecting each other's need for space and independence, which can sometimes result in more superficial interactions. Individuals prioritize personal goals and achievements, which can sometimes conflict with the time and emotional investment required for deeper friendships. In contrast, in collectivist cultures, such as those in Asia and Latin America, friendships are fewer but more profound, built on mutual trust, loyalty, and long-term commitment. These relationships foster deep emotional bonds and a strong sense of obligation, leading to enduring support and loyalty. Characterized by a high degree of interdependence, individuals in these cultures rely on their friends for emotional, social, and sometimes financial support, with friends often assuming roles similar to extended family members, thereby providing a robust support network. Friendships in collectivist societies are stable and less subject to change; once formed, these relationships tend to be long-lasting and resilient to life changes, with the social framework discouraging the dissolution of friendships and reinforcing their stability over time (Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988).

Collectivism is the result of Confucian influence, prioritizing the needs of the group over individual desires. This collective mindset significantly impacts social interactions and communication styles, emphasizing group harmony and consensus. In order to maintain group harmony, East Asians often use indirect communication. This involves avoiding direct confrontation and using subtle, non-verbal cues to convey messages. For instance, instead of directly declining a request, one might use ambiguous language to prevent causing offense. Similarly, rather than expressing negative emotions directly, which could disrupt others' inner peace or suggest a lack of interpersonal harmony, one might use gentler language and subtle nuances to convey their feelings. Communication in Confucian cultures emphasizes trust, loyalty, and maintaining harmonious relationships. This leads to a preference for polite, respectful, and tactful interactions, aimed at preserving relationships and minimizing conflicts. Indirect communication is a common strategy to avoid conflict and preserve face. This includes the use of euphemisms, non-verbal cues, and implied meanings rather than direct statements, which could be perceived as rude or confrontational. This communication style is deeply rooted in the cultural context of maintaining social harmony and preventing embarrassment for oneself and others, reflecting the high value placed on interpersonal harmony in Confucian societies (Yum, 1988).

In South Korea, for example, the importance given to being part of a group is embedded in the language itself. For example, I will always remember, while studying Korean at Yonsei's University, a classmate of mine who was asked to describe his house. He started with "my house". To us Western people, nothing would seem odd, but the Korean professor stopped him immediately and corrected the sentence to "our house". My classmate, baffled, asked for an explanation since it was *his* house, not *ours*. The professor explained him that the possessive "my" is usually replaced by "our" in general because of the importance given to community and unity. What's notably intriguing about this Korean term (우리 *uri*, mostly used for *our* nation, *our* house, and *our* mother) is that even in interactions with individuals outside one's immediate family circle, Koreans seamlessly incorporate this linguistic expression as if they were part of the familial unit. The sense of collective identity captured in the word "우리" is best exemplified in the Korean extended family. Traditions like the annual autumn festival "Chuseok" (추석) where families come together to pay homage to their ancestors, highlight this consciousness. During these gatherings, family members are reminded that their lives are interconnected not only with the present generation but also with past and future ones. This connection extends beyond their immediate family to include their extended family, clans, nation, and even the world (Moon, 2018).

Jin et al. (2010) highlight how cultural differences can also influence the choice of partners and the stability and longevity of the relationship. In South Korea, friends play a crucial role as intermediaries or matchmakers in romantic relationships, a practice deeply embedded in the collectivist cultural framework. Friends actively participate in introducing and vetting potential romantic partners, often organizing blind dates (known as "sogeting" in Hangeul "소개팅") and group dating events to facilitate initial meetings and ensure that the partners are socially acceptable and compatible within the network's standards. The approval of friends is essential for the acceptance and progression of a romantic relationship, as their opinions carry significant weight, being seen as extensions of one's social and familial networks. The collective endorsement of friends provides a sense of security and social validation crucial for the relationship's stability, whereas disapproval can lead to reconsideration or termination of the relationship to maintain group

harmony and avoid social discord. Additionally, friends in South Korea provide ongoing support and mediation in romantic relationships, often acting as mediators when conflicts arise, helping resolve misunderstandings and facilitating communication between partners. This mediation helps maintain harmony within the social network and supports the couple in navigating challenges without resorting to relationship dissolution. Moreover, integrating a romantic partner into one's friend group is a significant step, involving social gatherings, introductions to wider social circles, and participation in group activities. Successful integration signifies social acceptance and strengthens the bond between partners, reinforcing the relationship within the broader social context. Thus, friends play multifaceted roles in South Korean romantic relationships, from matchmaking and validation to ongoing support and social integration, reflecting the importance of collective harmony and social cohesion in the culture. As for the United States, the role of friends in romantic relationships is primarily focused on providing emotional support and advice rather than direct involvement in the formation of these relationships. Friends act as sounding boards, offering a space to discuss romantic interests, concerns, and conflicts. This means that while friends may offer their opinions on potential partners, these opinions are generally considered secondary to personal preferences and feelings. Friends tend to support individuals' choices, even if they do not fully agree, reflecting the cultural emphasis on personal freedom and individual decision-making. The role of friends in romantic relationships is less formalized and institutionalized in the US compared to South Korea. Structured social practices such as matchmaking or group dating events organized by friends are uncommon. Instead, introductions to potential partners occur in more casual, informal settings without the explicit expectation of influencing romantic outcomes. When it comes to conflict and mediation, friends in the US may offer support during relationship conflicts, but typically do not act as formal mediators. Their involvement is generally limited to providing advice and emotional support, allowing the individuals involved to work through their issues independently. This approach aligns with the individualist cultural norm of personal responsibility and self-reliance. While the acceptance of a romantic partner by friends can enhance the relationship experience, it is not a decisive factor in the US. Couples often prioritize their mutual compatibility and personal happiness over the collective approval of their social network. Thus, while the

integration of a partner into one's friend group is valued, it is not essential for the continuation of the relationship. This dynamic highlights the US cultural emphasis on individualism, personal choice, and the importance of direct personal fulfilment in romantic relationships (Jin & Oh, 2010).

Another notable cross-cultural study (Argyle, 1986) examines cultural differences in social relationships, extending a British study to include comparative analyses in Italy, Hong Kong and Japan. In this study on Italy's social relationship rules, several key characteristics emerge that define Italian social interactions. Italian culture is marked by a high level of expressiveness and emotional warmth, with individuals frequently using gestures, facial expressions, and body language to convey their feelings, making interactions vibrant and engaging. Family holds a central place in Italian social life, with close family ties and friendships being deeply valued. Loyalty to family and friends is of utmost importance, and social gatherings often centre around family events and communal meals, which serve to reinforce these bonds. Italians are known for their direct and open communication style, unafraid to express their emotions, whether it is joy, anger, or sadness. This directness, which may sometimes seem confrontational to those from more reserved cultures, is actually a sign of sincerity and engagement. Furthermore, personal connections are crucial in Italian society, where building and maintaining relationships involves regular social interactions and a strong sense of community. Trust and mutual support play significant roles, and Italians often rely on their social networks for assistance and advice, highlighting the importance of interpersonal relationships in everyday life. Argyle's observations on Japanese social norms reveal a distinct set of principles that guide interpersonal relationships, emphasizing formal etiquette, respect for hierarchy, and the importance of harmony. Japanese culture places a high value on proper manners and showing respect to those of higher status or older age, reflecting a deep-seated respect for social hierarchy. This respect is manifested in various aspects of daily life, including language, body language, and social interactions. Central to Japanese social interactions is the concept of "wa" (和 harmony), which prioritizes maintaining group harmony over individual expression. People often go to great lengths to avoid conflict and ensure that their actions do not disrupt the social balance, thereby fostering a cooperative and peaceful social environment. Another notable aspect of Japanese social norms is the

distinction between "tatemae" (建前 public behaviour) and "honne" (本音 true feelings). Tatemae refers to the mask people present in public to conform to social expectations, while honne represents their true thoughts and feelings, typically reserved for close friends and family. This distinction allows individuals to navigate social interactions smoothly, adhering to societal norms while maintaining their personal authenticity in private settings. Additionally, non-verbal communication plays a significant role in Japanese interactions. Subtle gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice are often used to convey respect and intentions without direct verbalization, which helps maintain harmony and prevent misunderstandings. This indirect communication style is integral to Japanese culture, as it enables individuals to express themselves while preserving the social equilibrium. In Hong Kong can be identified a dynamic interplay between traditional Chinese values and modern influences that shape the intricacies of social interactions. Central to Hong Kong's social fabric is the concept of "face," known as "mianzi" (面子) in Chinese culture, which holds utmost importance in maintaining social harmony and personal reputation. Individuals strive to safeguard their own face while also being mindful of preserving the face of others, often making extensive efforts to avoid causing embarrassment or loss of face. Similar to Japan, indirect communication is highly valued in Hong Kong, with people relying on subtle hints and non-verbal cues to convey messages, thereby sidestepping confrontations and fostering polite social exchanges. Moreover, a deep-seated deference to authority and hierarchical relationships permeates Hong Kong's social norms, evident across family, workplace, and social settings, where individuals are expected to show respect and deference to those in positions of power or seniority. However, Hong Kong's social landscape is not static; it reflects a dynamic blend of traditional Chinese values and contemporary practices. While ancient principles like filial piety and reverence for elders remain integral, there is a discernible influence of Western individualism and modernity, particularly among the younger generation, underscoring the nuanced evolution of Hong Kong's cultural norms in response to changing societal dynamics (Argyle, 1986).

2.3 Language as a Barometer: Exploring Linguistic Cues of Intimacy and Closeness

In Lee Eun Mi's study (2018) on Japanese and Korean conversations, several key characteristics of speech levels and their shifts emerge, reflecting how social dynamics and hierarchies are managed through language. In Japanese social interactions, different speech levels convey varying degrees of intimacy, respect, and formality. Plain, or casual, speech is typically used among close friends, family members, or peers of the same age and status, indicating intimacy, familiarity, and sometimes solidarity, as seen in the use of “食べる” (taberu) for "to eat". Polite speech is employed in more formal interactions, such as between acquaintances, colleagues, or when addressing someone of higher status, maintaining a level of respect and distance; for instance, “食べます” (tabemasu) for "to eat". Honorific speech is reserved for addressing or referring to individuals of significantly higher status, such as superiors at work or elders, conveying high respect and humility, exemplified by “召し上がる” (meshiagaru) for "to eat".

Similarly, Korean conversations reveal distinct characteristics of speech levels and their shifts, illustrating how social dynamics and hierarchies are managed through language. Informal, or casual, speech is typically used among close friends, younger people, or within the family, reflecting intimacy and a relaxed attitude towards hierarchical concerns, exemplified by “먹어” (meogeo) for "to eat". Polite speech is essential in formal settings, among strangers, or when addressing someone of higher status, maintaining decorum and showing respect; for instance, “먹어요” (meogeoyo) for "to eat". Honorific speech is reserved for highly respectful interactions, such as speaking to elders, superiors, or esteemed guests, indicating high regard and humility, as seen in “드세요” (deuseyo) for "to eat" (see Appendix B for a comprehensive table of formal and informal levels of Japanese and Korean language). These nuanced uses of speech levels in both cultures highlight the intricate interplay between language and social relationships.

In both Japanese and Korean conversations, speakers frequently adjust their speech levels based on the context and evolving dynamics of the interaction, reflecting the complex

interplay between language and social relationships in both cultures. In Japanese conversations, contextual adjustments are common, with shifts from polite to plain speech occurring as the context becomes more casual or as the relationship between interlocutors becomes more intimate. This shift can happen within a single conversation if the social dynamics change, such as moving from a formal meeting to a casual discussion. Shifting to plain speech can signal a desire to reduce social distance and express camaraderie, while a shift to a more polite or honorific level can re-establish boundaries and demonstrate respect or formality. Dynamic politeness management is a crucial aspect of Japanese conversations, where speakers frequently adjust their speech levels based on real-time feedback from their interlocutors. For instance, if a superior uses polite speech with a subordinate, the subordinate might match the level to reflect mutual respect, helping maintain harmony and appropriateness in social interactions.

Similarly, in Korean conversations, speakers frequently adjust their speech levels to negotiate relationship status or reflect changing social dynamics. Shifts from polite to informal speech often signify growing familiarity or friendship, helping to build closer connections. Additionally, shifts in speech levels can indicate the speaker's emotional state or intentions, with inappropriate use of informal speech in a formal setting potentially expressing anger or frustration. Maintaining or shifting to honorific speech can reinforce existing social hierarchies and demonstrate respect for authority. A sudden shift back to polite or honorific levels can correct any perceived breaches in decorum, ensuring that respect and proper conduct are upheld. These dynamic adjustments of speech levels highlight the intricate ways in which language is used to navigate and maintain social relationships in both Japanese and Korean cultures

In Japanese conversations, the way people speak at the end of sentences can show who's older or younger. However, overall, they still use polite forms to show respect. They change how polite they speak depending on the situation. Korean conversations are different. They use polite language a lot, especially when talking to older people. This shows respect according to Confucian beliefs. Japanese people are more flexible with how they speak, while Koreans stick more closely to their cultural norms (Lee, 2018).

CHAPTER 3

THE CURRENT RESEARCH

3.1 Research Hypothesis and Research Questions

This research aimed to investigate gender and cultural differences in friendship quality among young adults from Italy, China, Japan, and Korea. The study hypothesized that cultural factors would shape friendship quality, with variations reflecting cultural norms around emotional support, closeness, and conflict resolution. Additionally, significant gender differences were expected in the number of friends and best friends, with cultural differences anticipated, particularly in East Asian countries. Due to the collectivistic nature of these cultures, participants were expected to report a higher number of friends overall but more selective networks when it came to best friends. The research questions explored how gender and culture influence friendship dimensions, network size, and conflict across these diverse contexts.

3.2 Research Sample, Method and Measurements

Participants were recruited online through a link leading to the questionnaire. The total sample consisted of 192 young adults, divided as follows: Italian participants totaled 99 (30 males, 69 females), Chinese participants totaled 33 (7 males, 26 females), Japanese participants totaled 37 (11 males, 26 females), and Korean participants totaled 23 (13 males, 10 females) [see Table 1]. The mean age for each group was as follows: Italians, $M = 22.91$ years (range = 18–30, $SD = 2.74$); Chinese, $M = 26.09$ years (range = 21–30, $SD = 2.99$); Japanese, $M = 22.76$ years (range = 19–27, $SD = 1.98$); and Koreans, $M = 24.39$ years (range = 18–30, $SD = 3.37$) [see Table 2].

TABLE 1

Total Sample

	Male	Female	Full sample
Italian	30	69	99
Chinese	7	26	33
Japanese	11	26	37
Korean	13	10	23
Total	61	131	192

TABLE 2

Age Distribution in the Total Sample

	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Italian	18	30	22.91	2.74
Chinese	21	30	26.09	2.99
Japanese	19	27	22.76	1.98
Korean	18	30	24.39	3.37

The questionnaire was structured into three main sections. The first section collected sociodemographic information from the participants. The second section focused on relationships with friends and best friends. The third section addressed a person whom participants considered close but did not regard as a friend. However, data from this third section were excluded from the analysis, as the instructions provided may have been unclear, leading to participant confusion and a lack of consistent understanding.

The second section of the questionnaire included 18 items [see Table 3] designed to measure the quality of friendship across six subscales: Validation ($\alpha = .78$), Conflict ($\alpha = .67$), Intimacy ($\alpha = .63$), Conflict Resolution ($\alpha = .65$), Help ($\alpha = .83$), and Companionship

($\alpha = .68$). The overall internal consistency of the Friendship Quality⁶ scale was strong, with a Cronbach's alpha of .83. This reliability was consistent across different nationalities: Italian participants ($\alpha = .83$), Chinese participants ($\alpha = .80$), Japanese participants ($\alpha = .81$), and Korean participants ($\alpha = .78$) [Abbreviated version of Friendship Quality Questionnaire (FQQ) from Parker & Asher, 1993 (Nangle et al. 2003)].

The subscales within the Friendship Quality measure were assessed using specific items that reflected each construct. The Validation subscale was measured with items such as "My friend makes me feel good about my thoughts." The Conflict subscale included items like "My friend and I argue a lot." The Intimacy subscale was assessed with items such as "My friend and I always talk about our problems." The Conflict Resolution subscale included items like "My friend and I easily reconcile after arguing." The Help subscale was measured with items such as "My friend and I would help each other in times of need." Finally, the Companionship subscale was assessed with items like "My friend and I spend all of our free time together."

TABLE 3

Items

Items
1. My friend makes me feel well regarding my thoughts
2. My friend and I argue a lot
3. My friend and I always talk about our problems
4. My friend and I easily make peace after arguing
5. My friend and I show each other appreciation for what with we do
6. My friend and I discuss a lot
7. My friend and I talk about things that make us sad
8. My friend and I can overcome discussions very quickly
9. My friend and I make each other feel important and special
10. My friend and I get angry a lot with each other
11. I talk with my friend when I'm angry for something that happened to me

⁶ The items' scores of the Conflict sub-scale were reversed.

12. My friend and I talk about how to overcome anger
 13. My friend makes me feel well regarding my thoughts
 14. My friend and I argue a lot
 15. My friend and I always talk about our problems
 16. My friend and I easily make peace after arguing
 17. My friend and I show each other appreciation for what with we do
 18. My friend and I discuss a lot
-

3.3 Results

The first research question examined whether there were gender differences in the reported number of friends and best friends. To address this, a descriptive analysis of the frequency distributions for both variables was conducted [see Tables 4 and 5].

TABLE 4

Number of Friends Frequency Distribution across the Total Sample

Number of Friends	Frequency	Percentage
1-2	4	2.1
3-4	13	6.8
5-6	20	10.4
7-8	13	6.8
9-10	26	13.5
>10	116	60.4
Total	192	100.0

TABLE 5

Number of Best Friends Frequency Distribution across the Total Sample

Number of Best Friends	Frequency	Percentage
None	2	1.0
1-2	57	29.7
3-4	66	34.4
5-6	33	17.2
7-8	11	5.7
9-10	12	6.3
>10	11	5.7
Total	192	100.0

Since the responses were initially collected in intervals, it was necessary to recode the data into discrete values for statistical analysis [see Table 6].

TABLE 6

Conversion of Discrete Values in the Dataset

Value	Label
0	None
1	1-2
2	3-4
3	5-6
4	7-8
5	9-10
6	>10

Using the recoded discrete values, the mean number of friends and best friends was calculated separately for males and females [see Table 7]. An independent-samples t-test

was subsequently performed to assess gender differences. It is important to note that the means presented in Table 7 correspond to the recoded discrete values, not the actual number of friends, as labelled in Table 6. For example, if the mean number of friends for males is 5.13, this does not indicate that males have, on average, 5.13 friends. Rather, it suggests that males fall between the two previously defined intervals of 9–10 and >10 friends.

TABLE 7

Gender Differences in Mean Values for Total Number of Friends and Best Friends

	Gender	N	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Number of Friends	Male	61	5.13	1.45
	Female	131	5.00	1.42
Number of Best Friends	Male	61	2.48	1.51
	Female	131	2.34	1.41

The results indicated a ceiling effect in the reported number of friends, with insufficient variability observed across participants. In contrast, the number of best friends doesn't show this effect, demonstrating that the scale was wide enough to capture the real answers of the sample.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences in the reported number of friends and best friends. As anticipated from the means presented in Table 7, no significant differences were found between males and females in either the number of friends or the number of best friends (N. Friends: $t = .59$, $p = .55$; N. Best Friends: $t = .59$, $p = .56$).

The second research hypothesis investigated cultural differences in the reported number of friends [see Table 8]. As with previous analyses, the means in this table reflect the discrete values presented in Table 6.

TABLE 8

Cultural Differences in Mean Values for Total Number of Friends and Best Friends

		N	M	SD
Friends	Italian	99	4.93	1.38
	Chinese	33	4.67	1.55
	Japanese	37	5.49	1.28
	Korean	23	5.35	1.53
Best Friends	Italian	99	2.31	1.40
	Chinese	33	1.94	1.30
	Japanese	37	2.84	1.52
	Korean	23	2.61	1.56

To address this hypothesis, a one-way ANOVA was conducted, comparing the four cultural groups. While the results were not statistically significant (Number of Friends: $p = .055$; Number of Best Friends: $p = .054$), the analysis approached significance, prompting the use of a post-hoc test to explore potential trends for future research. A Tukey test revealed a significant difference in the number of best friends between Chinese and Japanese participants.

The final research question comprised two key components, examining the mean scores for each friendship quality subscale, as well as the overall scale. First, the relationship between gender and friendship quality was analyzed [see Tables 9 and 10]. Second, the mean scores were explored across cultural groups [see Tables 11 through 15].

TABLE 9

Gender Differences in Mean Values for each Sub-Scale across the Total Sample

	Gender	N	M	SD
Validation	Male	61	3.84	.82
	Female	131	4.35	.69
Conflict	Male	61	2.32	.91
	Female	131	1.83	.87

Intimacy	Male	61	3.58	.91
	Female	131	4.01	.82
Conflict Resolution	Male	61	3.74	.84
	Female	131	3.84	.87
Help	Male	61	4.19	.89
	Female	131	4.49	.69
Companionship	Male	61	3.73	.84
	Female	131	3.75	.71
Quality of Friendship (Total)	Male	61	3.79	.57
	Female	131	4.10	.49

The means presented in the previous table were used to conduct independent-samples t-tests for each subscale, in order to assess gender differences across the constructs of friendship quality. The results are summarized in the following table (Table 10), showing significant differences between males and females. Females scored significantly higher than males on the overall Quality of Friendship scale and on the subscales of Validation, Intimacy, and Help. Conversely, males scored significantly higher than females on the Conflict subscale.

TABLE 10

Independent Samples T-Test for Gender Differences Across the Total Sample

	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Validation	-4.44	<.001
Conflict	3.61	<.001
Intimacy	-3.31	.001
Conflict Resolution	-.75	.23
Help	-2.56	.01
Companionship	-.23	.41
Quality of Friendship (Total)	-3.88	<.001

For the cultural analysis, the data were stratified by country, resulting in the creation of descriptive tables for each respective group. These tables provide an overview of the mean scores for each subscale and the overall friendship quality scale across the different cultural contexts.

TABLE 11

Countries' Specifics for each Sub-Scale across the Total Sample

	Nationality	Gender	N	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Validation	Italian	Male	30	4.02	.66
		Female	69	4.41	.66
	Chinese	Male	7	3.24	1.18
		Female	26	4.32	.77
	Japanese	Male	11	3.57	.99
		Female	26	4.18	.77
	Korean	Male	13	3.97	.63
		Female	10	4.40	.41
Conflict	Italian	Male	30	2.34	.91
		Female	69	1.69	.94
	Chinese	Male	7	3.24	1.18
		Female	26	4.32	.77
	Japanese	Male	11	1.97	.66
		Female	26	1.91	.61
	Korean	Male	13	2.41	.99
		Female	10	1.80	.50
Intimacy	Italian	Male	30	3.92	.80
		Female	69	4.21	.70
	Chinese	Male	7	3.14	1.17
		Female	26	4.00	.75
	Japanese	Male	11	3.21	1.00
		Female	26	3.64	.98
	Korean	Male	13	3.33	.67
		Female	10	4.40	.41

		Female	10	3.63	.93
Conflict Resolution	Italian	Male	30	3.99	.68
		Female	69	4.07	.68
	Chinese	Male	7	3.28	1.18
		Female	26	3.85	.98
	Japanese	Male	11	2.91	.68
		Female	26	3.17	.98
	Korean	Male	13	4.01	.50
		Female	10	3.97	.64
Help	Italian	Male	30	4.44	.67
		Female	69	4.74	.48
	Chinese	Male	7	4.19	1.10
		Female	26	4.50	.79
	Japanese	Male	11	3.24	1.02
		Female	26	3.85	.69
	Korean	Male	13	4.41	.61
		Female	10	4.47	.69
Companionship	Italian	Male	30	3.77	.72
		Female	69	3.72	.64
	Chinese	Male	7	3.62	1.03
		Female	26	3.87	.75
	Japanese	Male	11	3.03	.94
		Female	26	3.42	.68
	Korean	Male	13	4.28	.49
		Female	10	4.53	.48
Quality of Friendship (Total)	Italian	Male	30	3.97	.48
		Female	69	4.24	.43
	Chinese	Male	7	3.48	.72
		Female	26	4.07	.48
	Japanese	Male	11	3.33	.60
		Female	26	3.72	.47

Korean	Male	13	3.95	.41
	Female	10	4.20	.41

An independent-samples t-test was then run for each country to see if there were differences between the single country and the total sample, and also to see if the significance found in the total sample was only due to Italian answers that were the leading group as for sample size.

TABLE 12

Italian T-Test Results

	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Validation	-2.68	.004
Conflict	3.22	.001
Intimacy	-1.84	.03
Conflict Resolution	-.53	.30
Help	-2.47	.008
Companionship	.32	.37
Quality of Friendship (Total)	-2.84	.003

TABLE 13

Chinese T-Test Results

	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Validation	-2.94	.003
Conflict	1.16	.13
Intimacy	-2.38	.01
Conflict Resolution	-1.29	.10
Help	-.85	.20
Companionship	-.73	.24
Quality of Friendship (Total)	-2.59	.007

TABLE 14

Japanese T-Test Results

	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Validation	-2.01	.03
Conflict	.26	.40
Intimacy	-1.20	.12
Conflict Resolution	-.79	.22
Help	-2.10	.02
Companionship	-1.43	.08
Quality of Friendship (Total)	-2.11	.02

TABLE 15

T-Test Results

	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Validation	-1.85	.04*
Conflict	1.77	.04*
Intimacy	-.90	.19
Conflict Resolution	.57	.29
Help	-.21	.42
Companionship	-1.24	.11
Quality of Friendship (Total)	-1.44	.08

As anticipated, the Italian sample showed no significant deviations from the overall sample's results, as referenced in Table 10. However, notable gender differences emerged within the Asian countries across various subscales. In the Chinese sample, females scored significantly higher than males on the Validation, Intimacy, and overall Quality of Friendship scales. Similarly, the Japanese sample displayed significant gender differences on the Validation, Help, and Quality of Friendship scales, with females scoring higher than males, mirroring the trend observed in China. In contrast, the Korean sample showed significant gender differences, with females scoring higher only on the Validation

scale. Unlike the other East Asian countries but in line with the Italian sample, males in Korea scored higher than females on the Conflict subscale.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

4.1 Implications for Cross-Cultural Research, Limitations, and Future Directions

This study investigated gender and cultural differences in friendship quality among young adults from Italy, China, Japan, and Korea. The analysis revealed significant findings concerning gender differences in friendship quality and cultural variations across the sampled countries. Females consistently reported higher scores than males in validation, intimacy, and help, reflecting a greater emphasis on emotional support and relational closeness. This observation aligns with broader literature suggesting that women prioritize and engage in more emotionally supportive and intimate friendships compared to men. In contrast, males reported higher levels of conflict, indicating that their friendships, while potentially less emotionally expressive, involve more direct conflict or competition. This supports existing research suggesting that men's friendships often revolve around shared activities and less verbal communication, which can lead to more overt conflict.

Interestingly, the study did not find significant gender differences in the Help subscale, which contradicts some previous studies. This discrepancy might be attributed to cultural variations, as East Asian cultures often emphasize modesty and indirect forms of support, potentially influencing responses and masking expected gender differences in help and support. This highlights the complexity of cross-cultural comparisons and the need for further investigation into how cultural norms shape the expression of support and help in friendships.

Cultural context emerged as a crucial factor influencing friendship quality. The Italian sample did not show significant deviations from the overall results, suggesting that their perceptions of friendship quality align closely with general trends, likely reflecting Italy's expressive and relationship-oriented culture. Chinese females reported higher scores for validation, intimacy, and overall friendship quality compared to males, indicating that female friendships in China might involve deeper emotional connections and mutual support. The lower conflict scores among Chinese females suggest a preference for harmony

and conflict avoidance, reflecting Confucian values of relational harmony. In Japan, significant gender differences were observed in validation, help, and overall friendship quality, with females scoring higher, aligning with Japan's emphasis on relational harmony and emotional support. The lower scores for conflict resolution and companionship among Japanese males suggest that male friendships may focus more on shared activities rather than emotional support. The Korean sample displayed a unique pattern, with females scoring higher on validation but males scoring higher on conflict. This deviation from other East Asian cultures could reflect specific cultural practices or social expectations within Korea, where traditional Confucian values intersect with contemporary social changes.

Regarding the number of friends and best friends, the study found no significant gender differences, suggesting that both males and females maintain similar levels of social networks. This might be due to the small sample size and the ceiling effect observed in the number of friends reported. Cultural differences in the number of friends approached statistical significance but did not reach it. Japanese participants reported the highest mean number of friends, potentially reflecting a cultural emphasis on broad social networks, while Chinese participants had the lowest mean number, possibly due to a more selective approach to forming close relationships.

The findings underscore the importance of considering both gender and cultural context in understanding friendship quality. Future research should involve larger, more diverse samples to validate these results and further explore cultural nuances. Qualitative studies could offer deeper insights into the cultural meanings of friendship, and future research should particularly focus on East Asian countries to investigate observed differences between China and Japan. The unique findings from the Korean sample regarding conflict warrant additional investigation into how conflict is managed and expressed in Korean friendships compared to Western contexts.

The study's limitations include a relatively small sample size, especially among Asian participants, and potential response biases due to the online recruitment method. The exclusion of data from the third section of the questionnaire also limited the analysis scope. Future studies should address these limitations with larger, more representative samples and refined data collection methods to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings.

Overall, this study contributes valuable insights into the dimensions of friendship quality across different cultures and genders. The significant gender differences in emotional support and conflict, alongside cultural variations, highlight the complex interplay between relational norms and social context. These findings pave the way for more nuanced explorations of social relationships across diverse populations, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive approaches in both research and practice.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Argyle, M. (1986). Rules for Social Relationships in Four Cultures. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 38(3), 309-318.
- Argyle, M., Henderson, M., Bond, M., Iizuka, Y., & Contarello, A. (2007). Cross-Cultural Variations in Relationship Rules. *International Journal of Psychology*, 287-315.
- Bae, Y.-S. A. (2003). Differences in Friendship Qualities of Korean and American College Students. *Illinois Wesleyan University*, 1-40.
- Bagwell, C. L., Bender, S. E., Andreassi, C. L., Kinoshita, T. L., Montarello, S. A., & Muller, J. G. (2005). Friendship Quality and Perceived Relationship Changes Predict Psychosocial Adjustment in Early Adulthood. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22(2), 235-254.
- Bagwell, C. L., Newcomb, A. F., & Bukowski, W. M. (1998). Friendship Quality and Social Development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 144-148.
- Bagwell, C. L., Newcomb, A. F., & Bukowski, W. M. (2008, September 16). Preadolescent Friendship and Peer Rejection as Predictors of Adult Adjustment. *Child Development*, 69(1), 140-153.
- Berndt, T. J. (2002). Friendship Quality and Social Development. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 11, 7-10.
- Buhrmester, D., & Furman, W. (1987). The Development of Companionship and Intimacy. *Child Development*, 1101-1113.
- Bukowski, W. M., Hoza, B., & Boivin, M. (1994). Measuring Friendship Quality During Pre- and Early Adolescence: The Development and Psychometric Properties of the Friendship Qualities Scale. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 11(3), 471-484.
- Bukowski, W. M., Newcomb, A. F., & Hartup, W. W. (1996). Friendship and its significance in childhood and adolescence: Introduction and comment. In W. M. Bukowski, A. F. Newcomb, & W. W. Hartup, *The Company They Keep. Friendship in Childhood and Adolescence* (pp. 1-18).
- Camirand, E., & Poulin, F. (2022). Links Between Best Friendship, Romantic Relationship, and Psychological Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 328-344.
- Carlson Jones, D. (1991). Friendship Satisfaction and Gender: an Examination of Sex Differences in Contributors to Friendship Satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 8, 167-185.
- Choi, S., Kim, U., & Choi, S. (1993). Indigenous Analysis of Collective Representations: A Korean Perspective. In U. Kim, & J. W. Berry, *Indigenous Psychologies: Research and Experience in Cultural Context* (pp. 193-210). Sage Publications.
- Collins, W., & Van Dulmen, M. (2006). Friendship and Romance in Emerging Adulthood: Assessing Distinctiveness in Close Relationships. *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century*.
- Coyne, J. C., Burchill, S. A., & Stiles, W. B. (1991). An Interactional Perspective on Depression. In C. R. Snyder, *Handbook of Social and Clinical Psychology* (p. Chapter 17).
- Damon, W. (1996). The lifelong transformation of moral goals through social influence. In W. Damon, *Interactive Minds* (pp. 198-220).

- French, D. C., Bae, A., Pidada, S., & Lee, O. (2006). Friendships of Indonesian, South Korean, and U.S. College Students. *Personal Relationships*, 69-81.
- Furman, W. (1996). The measurement of friendship perceptions: Conceptual and methodological issues. In W. M. Bukowski, A. F. Newcomb, & W. W. Hartup, *The Company They Keep. Friendship in Childhood and Adolescence* (pp. 41-65).
- Goodwin, R., & Lee, I. (1994). Taboo Topics among Chinese and English Friends: A Cross-Cultural COmparison. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 325-338.
- Hays, R. B. (1985). A Longitudinal Study of Friendship Development. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48(4), 909-924.
- Hightower, D. A., Work, W. C., Cowen, E. L., Lotyczewski, B. S., Spinell, A. P., Guare, J. C., & Rohrbeck, C. A. (1986). The Teacher-Child Rating Scale: A Brief Objective Measure of Elementary Children's School Problem Behaviors and Competencies. *School Psychology Review*, 15(3), 393-409.
- Ito, K., Masuda, T., Komiya, A., & Hioki, K. (2014). Seeking Help from Close, Same-Sex Friends: Relational Costs for Japanese and Personal COsts for European Canadians. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 529-554.
- Jin, B., & Oh, S. (2010). Cultural Differences of Social Network Influence on Romantic Relationships: A Comparison of the United States and South Korea. *Communication Studies*, 156-171.
- Kashima, Y., Yamaguchi, S., Kim, U., Choi, S., Gelfand, M., & Yuki, M. (1995). Culture, Gender, and Self: A Perspective From Individualism-Collectivism Research. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 925-937.
- Keller, M. (2004). A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Friendship Research. *ISSBD Newsletter*, 1-4.
- Kim, H.-J., Min, J.-Y., Min, K.-B., Lee, T.-J., & Yoo, S.-H. (2018). Relationship Among Family Environment, Self-Control, Friendship QUality, and Adolescents' Smartphone Addiction in South Korea: Findings From Nationwide Data. *PLoS ONE*, 1-13.
- Lee, E. (2018). Analysis of Politeness Strategies in Japanese and Korean Conversations Between Males. Focusing on Speech Levels and Speech Level Shifts. *Pragmatics*, 61-92.
- Li, H. Z. (2002). Culture, Gender and Self-Close-Other(s) Connectedness in Canadian and Chinese Samples. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 93-104.
- Liu, Y., Wang, Z., & Lü, W. (2013). Resilience and Affect Balance as Mediators Between Trait Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 850-855.
- Lodder, G. M., Scholte, R. H., Goossens, L., & Verhagen, M. (2015). Loneliness in Early Adolescence: Friendship Quantity, Friendship Quality, and Dyadic Processes. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Pssychology*, 1-12.
- Lynn-Sze, C. J., & Yin, P. (2021). The Impact of Confucianism on Interpersonal Communication Among Younger Generations. *7th International Conference on Communication and Media*. The European Proceedings of SOcial and Behavioural Science.
- Matsumoto, D. (2007). Culture, Context, and Behaviour. *Journal of Personality*, 1285-1320.
- Mesch, G., & Talmud, I. (2006). The Quality of Online and Offline Relationships: The Role of Multiplexity and Duration of Social Relationships. *The Information Society*, 22, 137-148.

- Molloy, L. E., Ram, N., & Gest, S. D. (2011). The Storm and Stress (or Calm) of Early Adolescent Self-Concepts: Within- and Between-Subjects Variability. *Developmental Psychology*, 47(6), 1589-1607.
- Moon, H. (2018, September 24). *오리(Uri) – The Korean Notion of the Collective Self*. Retrieved from One Family Under God: <https://www.hyunjinmoon.com/uri-the-korean-notion-of-the-collective-self/>
- Naseri, S. (2018). Cross-Cultural Perceptions and Challenges of Students' Friendship Formation. *International Academic Conference on Humanities and Social Science*, (pp. 1-15). Leipzig.
- New, L. (2013). The Concept of Friendship in Theravāda Buddhist Thought. *Journal of The Myanmar Academy of Arts and Science*.
- Obeyesekere, G. (1990). The Illusory Pursuit of the Self: A Review of "Culture and Self: Asian and Western Perspectives". *Philosophy East and West*, 239-250.
- Oishi, S., Diener, E. F., Lucas, R. E., & Suh, E. M. (2009). Cross-Cultural Variations in Predictors of Life Satisfaction: Perspectives from Needs and Values. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 109-127.
- Oyserman, D., Coon, H. M., & Kemmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking Individualism and Collectivism: Evaluation of Theoretical Assumptions and Meta-Analyses. *Psychological Bulletin*, 3-72.
- Parker, J. G., & Asher, S. R. (1993). Friendship and Friendship Quality in Middle Childhood: Links With Peer Group Acceptance and Feelings of Loneliness and Social Dissatisfaction. *Developmental Psychology*, 29, 611-621.
- Rahal, D., Chiang, J., Fales, M., Fuligni, A., Haselton, M. G., Slavich, G., & Robles, T. F. (2020). Early Life Stress, Subjective Social Status, and Health During Late Adolescence. *Psychology and Health*, 1-19.
- Rubin, K. H., Parker, J. G., Bukowski, W. M., & Bowker, J. C. (2008). Peer Interactions, Relationships, and Groups. In W. Damon, & R. M. Lerner, *Developmental Psychology: An Advanced Course*.
- Rubin, Z. (1980). *Children's Friendships*. Harvard University Press.
- Schofield, J. W., & Whitley, B. E. (1983). Peer Nomination vs. Rating Scale Measurement of Children's Peer Preferences. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 46, 242-251.
- Sekicho. (2002, September 29). *Imperial Rescript of Education*. Retrieved from Everything2: https://www.everything2.com/index.pl?node_id=1366527
- Shiffman, S., Stone, A. A., & Hufford, M. R. (2008). Ecological Momentary Assessment. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 1-32.
- Smart, A. (1999). Expressions of Interest: Friendship and Guanxi in Chinese Societies. In S. Bell, & S. Coleman, *The Anthropology of Friendship* (pp. 119-136). Berg Publisher.
- Tamai, K., & Lee, J. (2002). Confucianism as Cultural Constraint: A Comparison of Confucian Values of Japanese and Korean University Students. *International Education Journal*, 3(5), 33-49.
- Triandis, H. C., Bontempo, R., Villareal, M. J., Asai, M., & Lucca, N. (1988). Individualism and Collectivism: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Self-Ingroup Relationships. *Journal of Personal and Social Psychology*, 323-338.
- Verkuyten, M. (1996). Culture and Gender Differences in the Perception of Friendship by Adolescents. *International Journal of Psychology*, 31(5), 207-217.

- Wheeler, L., Reis, H., & Harris Bond, M. (1989). Collectivism-Individualism in Everyday Social Life: The Middle Kingdom and the Melting Pot. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(1), 79-86.
- Wrzus, C., Hanel, M., Wagner, J., & Neyer, F. J. (2013). Social Network Changes and Life Events Across the Life Span: a Meta-Analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 53-80.
- Yan, W., Yang, K., Wang, Q., You, X., & Kong, F. (2020). Subjective Family Socioeconomic Status and Life Satisfaction in Chinese Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem and Social Support. *Youth & Society*, 1-19.
- Yucel, E., & Dincer, D. (2024, January 5). Transformative Power of Friendships: Examining the Relationships Among Friendship Quality, Self-CHange, and Well-Being. 1-32.
- Yum, J. (1988). The Impact of Confucianism on Interpersonal Relationships and Communication Patterns in East Asia. *Communication Monographs*, 55(4), 374-388.
- Zhang, H. (2024). Psychological Wellbeing in Chinese University Students: Insights into the Influences of Academic Self-Concept, Teacher Support, and Student Engagement. *Frontiers in Psychology*.

APPENDIX A

The Text in Classical Japanese

朕惟フニ我カ皇祖皇宗國ヲ肇ムルコト宏遠ニ德ヲ樹ツルコト深厚ナリ我カ臣民克ク忠ニ克ク孝ニ億兆心ヲ一ニシテ世世厥ノ美ヲ濟セルハ此レ我カ國體ノ精華ニシテ教育ノ淵源亦實ニ此ニ存ス爾臣民父母ニ孝ニ兄弟ニ友ニ夫婦相和シ朋友相信シ恭儉己レヲ持シ博愛衆ニ及ホシ學ヲ修メ業ヲ習ヒ以テ智能ヲ啓發シ德器ヲ成就シ進テ公益ヲ廣メ世務ヲ開キ常ニ國憲ヲ重シ國法ニ遵ヒ一旦緩急アレハ義勇公ニ奉シ以テ天壤無窮ノ皇運ヲ扶翼スヘシ是ノ如キハ獨リ朕カ忠良ノ臣民タルノミナラス又以テ爾祖先ノ遺風ヲ顯彰スルニ足ラン

斯ノ道ハ實ニ我カ皇祖皇宗ノ遺訓ニシテ子孫臣民ノ俱ニ遵守スヘキ所之ヲ古今ニ通シテ謬ラス之ヲ中外ニ施シテ悖ラス朕爾臣民ト俱ニ拳々服膺シテ咸其德ヲ一センコトヲ庶幾フ

明治二十三年十月三十日

御 名 御 璽

English Translation

Know ye, Our subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein lies the source of Our education.

Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious; as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth.

So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers. The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may thus attain to the same virtue.

APPENDIX B

These charts provide a useful reference for understanding the complex systems of honorifics and speech levels in both Korean and Japanese. Honorifics are vital in both languages, as they help express social hierarchy, respect, and relationships between speakers. Each chart below details the nuances of these cultural-linguistic systems.

Korean Honorifics' Chart

Person	Honorific (Female)	Honorific (Male)
Older Brother	오빠 (Oppa)	형 (Hyung)
Older Sister	언니 (Eonnie)	누나 (Noona)
Mother	엄마 (Eomma) or 어머니 (Eomoni)	
Father	아빠 (Appa) or 아버지 (Abeoji)	
Grandmother	할머니 (Halmeoni)	
Grandfather	할아버지 (Harabeoji)	
Middle-aged Man	아저씨 (Ajussi)	
Middle-aged Woman	아줌마 (Ajumma)	
Teacher	선생님 (Seongsaengnim)	
Senior	선배님 (Seonbaenim)	
Junior	후배 (Hoobae)	
Generic	-씨 (-ssi)	

Japanese Honorifics' Chart

Person	日本語	Romaji
Mr./Mrs./Ms	Name さん	San
For boys	Name く ん	Kun
For girls	Name ちゃん	Chan
For Business scenes	Name さ ま	Sama
For Teacher	Name 先生	Sensei
Senior at school/Work	Name 先輩	Senpai
NewsPaper (Formal)	Name 新聞	Shinbun
Company CEO	Name 社長	Shachou
Mentor, Master	Name 師匠	Sishou
Old Japanese suffix	Name 殿	Dono

Korean Speech Levels' Chart

Level of Speech	Name	Present tense of '하다'		Formality	When is it used?
		Non-Honorific	Honorific		
1	하소서체	하나이다	하시나이다	Extremely formal & polite	Toward royalty and high officials. Now only in historical dramas and the Bible
2	함쇼체	합니다	하십니다	Formal & polite	Used by TV reporters, hosts, and in professional environments
3	하오체	하오	하쇼, 하시오	Formal, neutral politeness	Generally only used among older generation
4	하게체	하네	하시네	Formal, neutral politeness	In some novels, sometimes spoken by older generation to younger people (but not to blood relatives or children)
5	해라체	한다	하신다	Formal, neutral politeness or impolite	In reported speech, written materials
6	해요체	해요	하세요	Informal & polite	Mainly between strangers of equal or older age
7	해체	해 (in speech), 하여 (in writing)	하셔	Informal, neutral politeness or impolite	Between close friends, relatives and to younger people/children

Japanese Speech Levels' Chart

Predicates \ Styles		Informal		Formal	
		Present	Past	Present	Past
Verbals	Verb	食べる Taberu (eat)	食べた Tabeta (ate)	食べます Tabemasu (eat)	食べました Tabemashita (ate)
	Adjective (i)	広い Hiroi (is wide)	広かった Hirokatta (was wide)	広いです Hiroidesu (is wide)	広がりました Hirokattadesu (was wide)
Nominals	Adjective (na)	きれいだ Kireida (is pretty)	きれいだった Kireidatta (was pretty)	きれいです Kireidesu (is pretty)	きれいでした Kireideshita (was pretty)
	Noun	本だ Hon da (is a book)	本だった Hon datta (was a book)	本です Hon desu (is a book)	本でした Hon deshita (was a book)