An investigation of friendship quality development in Taiwanese and Vietnamese children

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Abstract

The present study attempted to investigate the differences in between friendship quality of children in Taiwan and Vietnam. 757 children aged 8-12 years-old participated, including 395 Taiwanese and 362 Vietnamese children. Results found significant differences on sex, age, country, and the interactions between sex and age, and age and country on the friendship quality. Girls were higher than boys, older children were higher than younger children, and Taiwanese children were higher than Vietnamese children. For the interaction, it was found older girls had better friendship quality than boys on the companionship and recreation and also intimate exchange. In addition, it was also found that for older children, Taiwanese children were higher than Vietnamese children on conflict and betrayal, validation and caring, and intimate exchange. Both younger and older Taiwanese children were higher than their counterparts of Vietnamese children on their scores of help and guidance. Finally, for companionship and recreation, Vietnamese younger children were higher than Taiwanese young children but the Vietnamese older children were lower than Taiwanese older children. Taken together, the differences on friendship quality in between of Taiwanese and Vietnamese children can be explained under a general trend in development as well as the cultural influences in their experience of friendship.

Keywords: Friendship quality, Vietnamese, Taiwanese, children, gender, social development.

Introduction

The interpersonal interactions have gradually changed from family to peers during middle childhood. Children' friendship with peers plays extremely important roles in their emotional and cognitive development. Different from the nature in parent-child and sibling relationships (i.e., people behave in different ways that complement each other in their interaction) is complementary, friendships are more likely to engage in a nature of reciprocity (i.e., friends engage in similar behaviors). And, the complementary nature and reciprocity work together and pave a unique context for children's development[1]. Typically, friendship is generally defined as a positive affective relationship between peers involving availability in offering companionship, support, and help when necessary for each other[2].

During middle childhood, children tend to share interest and activities, engage in intimate relationship, and spend time together with crescent self-disclosure with their friends[3]. Rose and Asher[4] suggested friendship is like reliable alliance, it can provide much of companionship, self-identity and support, emotional security, self-disclosure, help, and guidance. The high-quality friendship is usually benefit to children. On the other hand, lack of close friendship would result poorer adaptation in school relative to other children. They were more likely to involve about judicial issues and experience mental health problems in childhood and adulthood.

Friendship is considered as a buffer to protect children from the adverse consequences associated being isolated and to reduce the occurrence of isolation and maladjustment. However, for children with difficulty in having friends, their social isolation was likely to be linked to increases in either internalizing or externalizing problems[5].

In addition, interactions involve active social communication and affiliation in their social-emotional exchanges is likely to promote and maintain a communal quality in between friends[6]. Friendship can provide instrumentality (e.g., helping to complete tasks) and emotional support (e.g., when facing things with challenge, children can be encouraged to continuing in working on to solve problems), and create more opportunity to enjoy their school life[7]. It has been supported that children who were rejected by peers would reduce the consequences and buffer the difficulty of adaptation when they have a least one close friend[5]. From early childhood, successfully making friends contribute to children's quality of life as well as to their life adjustment[8].

Friendship quality: Friendship quality is basically established by evaluation of an individual's perception about a specific friend[9]. A high-quality friendship is usually involving pro social interaction and intimate relationships and low levels of conflicts and rivalry. And, therefore, high friendship quality has been associated to self-esteem and social adjustment and other aspects of children's social development[10].

Friendship quality can be divided into several aspects of important factors including i. the extent to which offering opportunity for companionship and entertainment; ii. the intimate disclosure and exchange in communication; iii. degree of share, help, and guidance; iv. children's self-value and validation[11]. The present study assumed that childhood is very important as a developmental stage which can shape and deeply affect people's behavior and their later development.

For example, Bukowski, Hoza, and Boivin[12] explored friendships among pre-adolescence and found psychological supports from companionship, help, and security as important components for maintaining friendship. In another example, Bollmer, Milich, Harris, and Maras[13] studied 99 children regarding the regulating role of friendship quality in their peer relationship of bullies and victims. It is found that the externalization problems (e.g., aggressive behaviors) that are positively correlated to bullying can be mitigated through the friendship. Victims are having more the internalization behaviors (e.g., withdrawal) and positively associated with low friendship quality. High-quality friendships can reduce bullying and protect children who are victims of bullying. For many children, friendship is also a promotive factor for healthy peers' relationship.

The relationship between friendships is not always positive and friendly. Berndt[10] found most children reported sometimes having conflicts with their best friends. Children usually considered themselves as having similar status as their friends, they may experience competition from their friends or engage in rivalry. It is likely the co-occurrence of positive and conflicts are both in children's experience with their even best friends. Conflicts may lead to damage of friendship, but it also may allow opportunities to establish commonality and help clarify the boundaries of the behaviors with their friends. Furthermore, children can learn to adopt the viewpoints of others and adjust the self-behavior to maintain friendship[14,15]. Similar results in Parker and Asher[16] studied the responses of 484 children about their friendship qualities and found six factors about friendship, including conflict resolution, conflict and betrayal, validation and caring, intimate exchange, help and guidance, and companionship and recreation.

Gender difference in friendship: The close same-sex friendship is important in childhood and preadolescence. Girls expressed and received greater communal needs greater than boys. In contrast, Boys work with their close male friends to promote their social prominence more often than females in same age group[17]. Gender difference is a common pattern found in empirical studies with friendship in middle childhood. Boys concerned more about their dominant positions and don't want to show weakness in front of other boys. Relatively, girls are more likely to communicate each other's opinions, provide assistance maintaining their relationship, and develop more intimate and close relationships[18].

Boys and girls show different ways in solving conflicts with friends. Parker and Asher[16] pointed that boys perform more aggression in interactions and in seeking for achieving specific extrinsic goals and are less adept in solving conflicts than girls. Girls are more concerned about association than are boys, and they are less likely to behave in such ways that might jeopardize their relationship with friends[16]. On the other hands, Tomada and Schneider[19] suggested that boys are having more verbal and physical aggression and girls are more often to have covert aggression in their interpersonal relationship. Therefore, competition was more likely to be seen in boys but not in girls.

Several researches suggested that significant difference in between gender is found in their social-cognitive functioning including perception of social problems and solving interpersonal conflicts[20]. Girls seem to have better social competence with peers in understanding of other people's mental state than boys[21]. The difference in social-cognitive competence are often observed in early childhood which could predict the disruptive and aggressive behavior in boys and prosocial behavior in girls[22].

Previous studies have explored the gender differences that may be found in a single culture. It is assumed that different cultures may have significant impacts on certain aspects of gender difference of children's friendship that can be identified. The present study attempts to explore the possible gender differences in the contexts of two cultural backgrounds and the cultural influences on friendship in middle childhood.

Culture and friendship: Culture affects the cognitive and social development of children. Cross-cultural literature has widely examined differences between individualistic (ego-oriented) and collectivistic (group-oriented) cultures. People in the individualistic cultures value the concepts as autonomous, separate and independent, whereas people in the collectivistic cultures emphasize on interdependent, ensemble, communal, and relational with their group members[23-25]. Individualistic cultures (such as Europe, America and Australia) focus on primarily on personal internal attributes and the concern for maintaining and enhancing individual's self-esteem, self-worth and self-fulfillment through their interpersonal relationships. Cultures such in Asia, the Pacific Islands, South America and Africa, focusing on the priority of the group goals and other personal goals are identified as collectivism[26,27].

Friendship is one of the social relations. Some of attributes of individualism and collectivism can affect people's perception about friendship. In individualist cultures, the concept of the self is more elaborative, people in those cultures emphasize more on self and percept themselves are different from their friends. On the contrary, people in the collectivistic cultures focus more on the relationship between self and friends, consider themselves as more alike their friends, and pay more attention to others which results in much more elaborated representation of relationship of self with respect to others[25]. However, it should be noted that

people who embrace collectivism are more likely than those who embrace individualism to have more but shallow, less intimate relationship.

Consensual validation is fundamental to establish and maintain friendship quality which is more likely to be achieved by having friends with similar characteristics. Consensual validation can be affected by the similarity that defined by the economic, personal, cultural, and other aspects of an individual's background. Culture, for example, people are likely to define similarity as in terms of social or ascribed attributes in collectivistic cultures. However, in the individualistic cultures, people define similarity based on personal abilities, beliefs, attitudes, and values. Therefore, people's impression of others can be affected by culture. They are more frequently describing friends using social rather than personal attributes in collectivistic cultures emphasizing more of personal characters of friends in individualistic cultures[28,29]. Maintaining the stability of friendships could be related to rules specify what should or should not be done. Argyle and Henderson[30] investigated failed friendships and suggested the rules for friendship can be classified into four types namely, rules about intimacy and self-disclosure, coordination of behavior, exchange and reward, and rules about relations with third parties[30]. These rules were found to be applied to friendship similarly across cultures[31,32]. Argyle et al.[32] compared differences related to rules of friendship in four cultures including Hong Kong, Japan, Britain, and Italy. Their finding showed in Hong Kong and Japan, in comparison to Britain and Italy, there is more endorsement for conserving harmony in groups, for guidelines of obedience, for restraining emotional expression, and for avoiding loss of face[32]. The difference in cultural influence of friendship might not be necessarily collectivism or individualism, suggesting in a concept of spectrum with the two as anchors indicating a range of similarity and difference degrees of combination of the two anchors[33].

Development of the friendship: Friendships have significant influence in the social and developmental aspects of individuals throughout the lifespan. Bae[34] investigated the difference of friendship in samples of Korean and American college students. Koreans emphasized on high levels of interdependence in their in-groups members which is consistent with the values of collectivistic culture[34]. As a result, it is difficult to share the affection from outside of the group than Americans[35]. The influence of culture about friendship can also be traced to childhood. Benjamin, Schneider, Greenman and Hum[36] explored cross-cultural differences on friendships especially the conflictual behaviors between the third and fourth grades of Taiwan and Canada. They found that companionship is a significant predictor about friendship continuity of Taiwanese children. Taiwanese children have lower frequencies of conflicts in relations and they are keep harmony with their friends than Canadian children.

Generally, the cultural influence in adolescence is less than in the adulthood. French, Pidada, and Victor[37] examined adolescents' friendship between Americans and Indonesians. They found Indonesian youths didn't show the typical collectivism where they exhibit weaker friendship closeness and stronger extensive and less exclusive than US youths. The results suggested an inconsistency with literature that Indonesian children were taught to keep harmonious relationships with friends and social hierarchies, and to display politeness, group conformity obedience and sharing, suggesting models of collectivism and friendship need to modify[38,39]. As mentioned earlier, according to the concept of cultural spectrum, each country may be placed at a position in the middle of the spectrum[33,34]. Asian cultures are more likely to be placed at the side closed to collectivism, and the quality of friendship promotes and links each other at various degrees. However, how the qualities of friendship may vary across different Asian cultures has not been thoroughly investigated.

A comparison between the Taiwanese and Vietnamese cultures: Taiwan has considered as having a culture deeply rooted in collectivistic values of Confucianism, which put great emphasizes on group interest, interpersonal relationships and morality. The Confucian ideas influence all aspects of Taiwanese society, involving socialization in childhood[40] and children learn at an early age to conform to expectations, objectives, and goals of the culture. Children are rewarded for their conformity to the group norms and punished for deviation in both family and school[41,42]. Therefore, group conformity is considered as a prominent characteristic of social interaction among Taiwanese children, where the needs and interest of the group always has higher priority than those of the individual[40,43].

Over the past decades, Taiwan has undertaken rapid economic and social development with much influence of Western cultures, despite its Eastern collectivistic root[44]. More women are working and more nuclear families which led to an increasing similarity to the Western cultures[45,40]. Moreover, western cultures also profoundly affect socialization of youth in Taiwan. Tam and Bond[6] also proposed that Taiwanese culture emphasizes close interpersonal relationships like friendship, and Taiwanese children and adults are more likely to discuss openly or confront perceived insolent behaviors directed from others.

The present study attempts to investigate children's friendship in two Asian cultures, namely Taiwan and Vietnam. Both societies have been influenced by Eastern and Western cultures with different combinations and to different degrees for more than centuries in the past. Taiwan and Vietnam are both in the Asia-Pacific regions, but the two countries have many contrasting differences, for example, economically Taiwan is more developed than Vietnam and culturally Taiwan is more diverse and less cohesive than Vietnam[46]. They may have different source and composition of background from their past colonial countries, and currently they have different structure of

national policies (e.g., democracy and communist party) and educational systems (e.g., Inconsistent years of school grade).

Furthermore, Taiwan aims to become a major global player economically. In contrast, Vietnam is considered as less developed economically and as result has limited resources for all levels of education. In Vietnam, it is likely that there are differences about friendships in different social and ethnic groups, and the impact of policies and practices. Taken together, the available resources in each culture may affect the development of children's friendship, the present study delved into the cross-cultural comparisons between Taiwanese and Vietnamese children's friendship quality in children between the two cultures to identify whether certain friendship characteristics are culturally specific.

Methodology

Participants: 757 children aged 8-12 years-old participated, including 395 Taiwanese children ($M = 10.35$ years, $SD = 1.136$, 201 boys) from schools of both Northern and Southern cities of Taiwan and 362 Vietnamese children ($M = 10.50$ years, $SD = 1.533$, 187 boys) from schools of Southern Vietnam.

Measurements: The Friendship Quality Questionnaire (FQQ)[16] including 40 items and an initial "warm-up" item was used in the present study. The child first listed at the beginning of the questionnaire with his/her best friend and then answered each question with reference to that particular friend. This was done to encourage children to complete the FQQ based on their real experience rather than an idealized friendship or a mental prototype of integrated across many friends.

The questionnaire was to evaluate children's perceptions of several qualitative dimensions of the friendship with their best friend. The items required children to respond in according to how true (or how likely) on a 5-point scale that a certain quality occurred in the relationship with their best friend. The scale varied from really true (5) to not at all true (1). FQQ measures the friendship characterized includes six orientations: Validation and Caring subscale has 10 items; Conflict and Betrayal subscale has 7 items; Conflict Resolution subscale has 3 items; Companionship and Recreation subscale has 5 items; Intimate Exchange subscale has 6 items; and Help and Guidance subscale has 9 items. In terms of reliability, the internal consistency of each subscale (Cronbach's α) is between .73 and .90. The structural coefficient of each question is between .55 and .88 for the validity. These inter-correlations of six subscales are moderate to high degree correlated. Conflict and betrayal is the only subscale found to be negatively related with the other subscales. The general information form included age, gender and country of participant.

Procedure: Participants and their parents voluntarily agreed to participate and then signed consent forms regarding their rights in completion the study. In the beginning, participants are

required to complete the General Information form, including age, gender and country. Then, researchers introduced the instructions of FQQ. Children were informed that other peers wouldn't know their responses and the questionnaire didn't have a wrong answer. They were asked to answer and complete each and every question based on their own experience.

Results and discussion

Participants are 757 children, including 395 Taiwanese children (113 boys and 107 girls aged of 8-10; 88 boys and 87 girls aged 11-12) and 362 Vietnamese children (102 boys and 97 girls aged of 8-10; 84 boys and 79 girls aged 11-12). The means and SDs about participants on each subscales of the FQQ in Taiwanese and Vietnamese are shown in Table-1. Pearson correlations of the subscales of FQQ were calculated for Taiwanese (Table-2) and Vietnamese (Table-3) samples. Except for Conflict and Betrayal, on the other five subscales positive correlations were found similarly in both samples.

MANOVA analyses: We conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with Friendship quality as dependent variables, while sex, age and country were treated as the independent variable. The omnibus MANOVA found significant main effects on sex, age, country, the interaction of sex and age, and the interaction of age and country. The sex difference ($F=8.241$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.938$, $p<.001$, partial $\eta^2= 0.062$) suggested that girls were significantly higher than boys on Validation and Caring ($F_{(1,749)}= 9.579$, $MSE=0.407$, $p<.002$), Conflict Resolution ($F_{(1,749)} = 7.931$, $MSE=0.808$, $p<.005$), help and guidance ($F_{(1,749)}=18.161$, $MSE=0.523$, $p<.001$), companionship and recreation ($F_{(1,749)}=5.638$, $MSE=0.543$, $p< .017$), Intimate Exchange ($F_{(1,749)} = 45.676$, $MSE=0.632$, $p< .001$). The no significantly was Conflict and Betrayal ($F_{(1,749)} = 1.075$, $MSE=0.433$, $p>.300$).

The results also found a significant age difference with 11 to 12 years old children were higher than 8 to 10 years old children ($F = 2.480$, Wilks' $\lambda = 0.980$, $p <.022$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.020$) on Conflict Resolution ($F_{(1,749)} = 8.621$, $MSE = 0.808$, $p< .003$), Help and Guidance ($F_{(1,749)} = 6.366$, $MSE=0.543$, $p< .012$), Intimate Exchange ($F_{(1,749)} = 4.512$, $MSE = 0.632$, $p< .034$). The no significantly were Companionship and Recreation, Conflict and Betrayal, and Validation and Caring (F's$_{(1,749)}<0.322$, $MSE>0.407$, p's$>.571$).

The results found a significant difference between Taiwan and Vietnam on friendship quality ($F=16.802$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.881$, $p<.001$, partial $\eta^2= 0.119$). These results showed to Taiwanese children have significant higher scores than Vietnamese children on Validation and Caring ($F_{(1,749)}=28.283$, $MSE=0.407$, $p< .001$), Conflict Resolution ($F_{(1,749)} = 24.040$, $MSE=0.808$, $p< .001$), Conflict and Betrayal ($F_{(1,749)} = 15.818$, $MSE=0.433$, $p< .001$), Help and Guidance ($F_{(1, 749)} = 61.436$, $MSE=0.523$, $p< .001$), and Intimate Exchange ($F_{(1, 749)} = 8.930$, $MSE=0.632$, $p< .003$). The

no significantly was Companionship and Recreation ($F_{(1, 749)}$ =   1.674, *MSE*=0.542, *p*> .196).

Table-1: The means and SDs of the six subscales of FQQ.

		Validation and Caring	Conflict Resolution	Conflict and Betrayal	Help and Guidance	Companionship and Recreation	Intimate Exchange
Taiwan 8-10 years old	Boys	3.503 (0.715)	3.584 (0.920)	2.807 (0.668)	3.562 (0.812)	3.372 (0.786)	3.273 (0.869)
	Girls	3.690 (0.670)	3.807 (0.841)	2.573 (0.697)	3.861 (0.765)	3.391 (0.764)	3.567 (0.835)
10-12 years old	Boys	3.661 (0.547)	3.932 (0.634)	2.805 (0.713)	3.913 (0.539)	3.643 (0.582)	3.496 (0.694)
	Girls	3.877 (0.607)	4.042 (0.760)	2.795 (0.614)	4.232 (0.545)	3.841 (0.671)	3.914 (0.768)
Vietnam 8-10 years old	Boys	3.485 (0.633)	3.520 (1.036)	2.559 (0.626)	3.505 (0.678)	3.702 (0.804)	3.293 (0.803)
	Girls	3.503 (0.621)	3.423 (1.077)	2.641 (0.638)	3.543 (0.729)	3.619 (0.698)	3.522 (0.818)
10-12 years old	Boys	3.295 (0.653)	3.314 (0.974)	2.526 (0.628)	3.307 (0.956)	3.133 (0.720)	3.054 (0.839)
	Girls	3.453 (0.619)	3.819 (0.821)	2.488 (0.666)	3.553 (0.637)	3.514 (0.818)	3.689 (0.670)

Table-2: Pearson correlations between the variables for Taiwan sample (N = 757).

Variable	Validation and Caring	Conflict Resolution	Conflict and Betrayal	Help and Guidance	Companionship and Recreation	Intimate Exchange
Validation and Caring	-	.544[**]	-.061	.665[**]	.580[**]	.631[**]
Conflict Resolution		-	.045	.590[**]	.398[**]	.538[**]
Conflict and Betrayal			-	-.023	.087	.071
Help and Guidance				-	.629[**]	.695[**]
Companionship and Recreation					-	.507[**]
Intimate Exchange						-

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table-3: Pearson correlations between the variables for Vietnam sample (N = 757).

Variable	Validation and Caring	Conflict Resolution	Conflict and Betrayal	Help and Guidance	Companionship and Recreation	Intimate Exchange
Validation and Caring	-	.365[**]	-.072	.545[**]	.413[**]	.513[**]
Conflict Resolution		-	.027	.343[**]	.193[**]	.395[**]
Conflict and Betrayal			-	.078	.005	.062
Help and Guidance				-	.409[**]	.573[**]
Companionship and Recreation					-	.434[**]
Intimate Exchange						-

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The interaction effect of sex and age were found on the FQQ (*F*= 2.254, Wilks' λ=0.982, *p*<.037, partial η²= 0.018) on Companionship and Recreation ($F_{(1,749)}$ =8.888, *MSE*=0.543, *p*< .003) and Intimate Exchange ($F_{(1,749)}$ = 5.097, *MSE*=0.632, *p*< .024). Follow-up univariate analysis found that 11-12 years-old girls' scores were higher than 8-10 years-old girls ($F_{(1,368)}$ = 5.673, *MSE*=0.561, *p*<.018) on Companionship and Recreation, but there was no difference between younger and older boys.

The similar results also found that 11-12 years-old girls were higher than 8-10 years-old girls ($F_{(1,368)}$ =10.034, MSE=0.614, $p<$ .002) on Intimate Exchange.

It was found an significant interaction effect of age and country on the FQQ (F=7.996, Wilks' λ=0.939, $p<$.001, partial $η^2$= 0.061) on Validation and Caring ($F_{(1,749)}$ = 9.830, MSE=0.407, $p<$ .002), Conflict and Betrayal ($F_{(1,749)}$ = 4.450, MSE=0.433, $p<$ .035), Help and Guidance ($F_{(1,749)}$ = 18.544, MSE=0.523, $p<$ .001), Companionship and Recreation ($F_{(1,749)}$ = 41.834, MSE=0.543, $p<$ .001) and Intimate Exchange ($F_{(1, 749)}$ = 7.692, MSE=0.632, $p<$ .006). Follow-up univariate analysis found that Taiwanese children at 11-12 years-old were higher than their

Vietnamese counterparts on Validation and Caring ($F_{(1, 336)}$ = 35.431, MSE=0.375, $p<$ .001), on Conflict and Betrayal ($F_{(1, 336)}$ = 16.857, MSE=0.428, $p<$ .001), on Help and Guidance ($F_{(1, 336)}$ = 71.548, MSE=0.492, $p<$ .001), on Companionship and Recreation ($F_{(1,336)}$ = 29.755, MSE=0.510, $p<$ .001), and Intimate Exchange ($F_{(1,336)}$ = 15.977, MSE=0.625, $p<$ .001). Furthermore, the Taiwanese children at 8-10 years-old were higher than their Vietnamese counterparts ($F_{(1,417)}$ = 6.144, MSE=0.572, $p<$ .014) on Help and Guidance. Relatively, the Vietnamese children at 8-10 age were higher than their Taiwanese counterparts ($F_{(1,417)}$ = 14.074, MSE=0.584, $p<$ .001) on Companionship and Recreation.
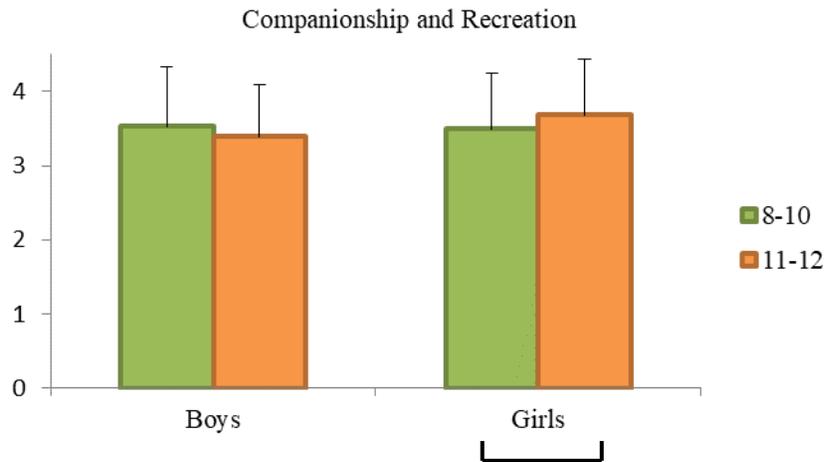

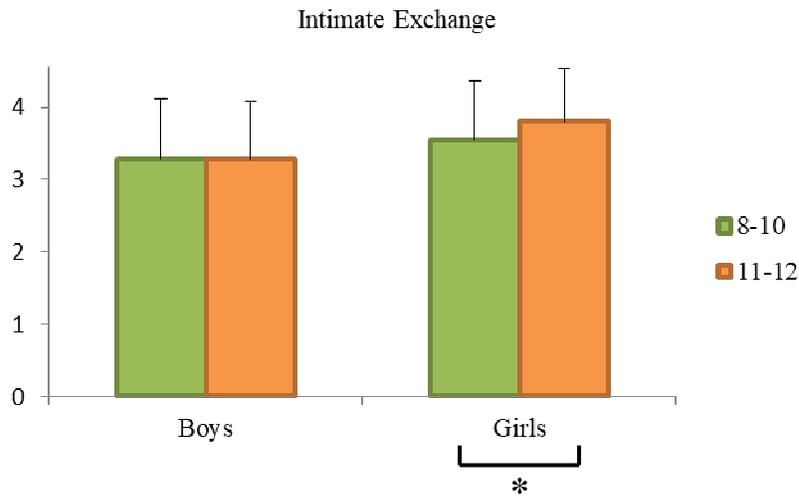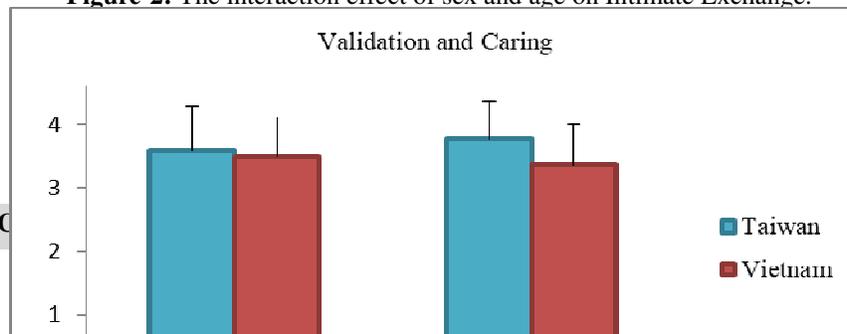**Figure-1:** The interaction effect of sex and age on Companionship and Recreation.
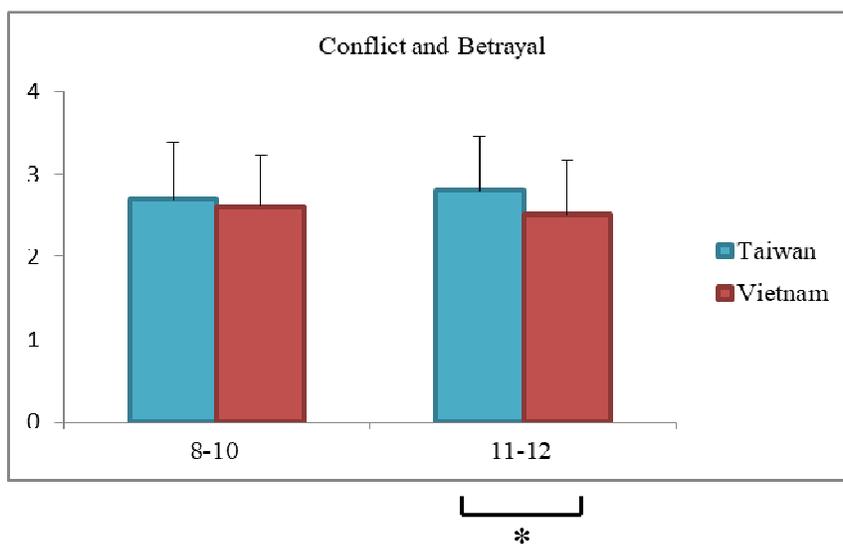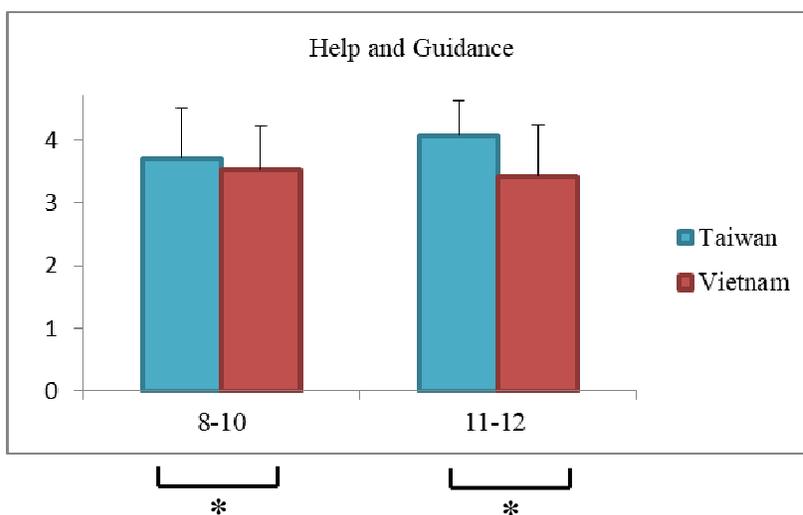

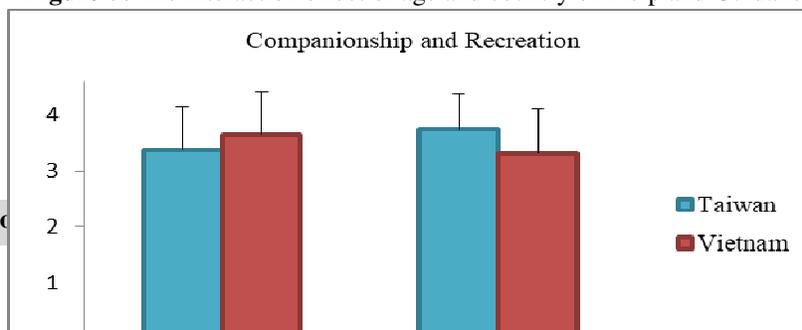**Figure-2:** The interaction effect of sex and age on Intimate Exchange.

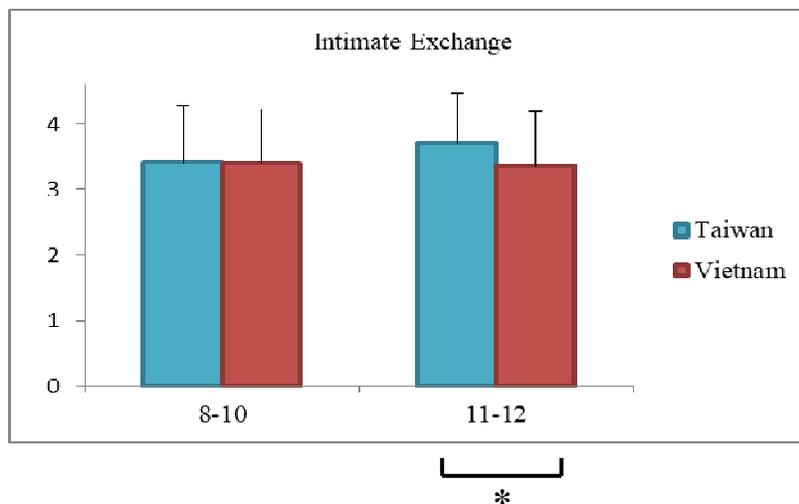**Figure-3:** The interaction effect of age and country on Validation and Caring.

Figure-4: The interaction effect of age and country on Conflict and Betrayal.

Figure-5: The interaction effect of age and country on Help and Guidance.

Figure-6: The interaction effect of age and country on Companionship and Recreation.

Figure-7: The interaction effect of age and country on Intimate Exchange.

The present study investigated children's friendship in two Asian cultures between Taiwanese and Vietnamese cultures. Our results suggested, except Conflict and Betrayal, girls seemed to score higher than boys on the five other subscales of FQQ. Parker and Asher[16] pointed that boys are more frequently to engage in certain aggression in interactions when seeking for achieving specific extrinsic goals and are less adept in finding conflicts resolution than girls. Furthermore, Putallaz et al.[21] suggested that girls were more capable to understand the intentions of other people and to perform effective resolutions to conflicts with friends than boys. The aggressive or disruptive behavior and lower shyness or withdrawal in boys and prosocial behavior in girls are often observed in early childhood[22].

The age difference with 11-12 year-old children were higher than 8-10 year-old on Intimate Exchange, Help and Guidance, and Conflict Resolution. These results were similar to von Salisch[47] who found that old children although have more conflicts events, but they were also better in conflict resolution, and therefore they were able to keep their friendship quality than young children. From the perspective of social development, specific social needs surfaces during different ages and stages. For example, the need for companionship appears in middle childhood while the need for intimacy often seen in early adolescence[48]. Accordingly, children's concept of friendship would vary over time based on how they perceive the

shared common activities in fulfilling their own needs in the interaction with friends[49,50].

In addition, Berndt[10] found that adolescents' friendships are qualitatively different from those of young children. Adolescents often said that they could tell each other everything to their best friend indicating self-disclosure can be regarded as a hallmark in an intimate friendship. They also will stick up for each other in a fight, demonstrating loyalty for their friend. Research suggested that the stability in friendship appears to increase as time passes. For example, first graders preserve about 50% of their friendships during one school year and fourth graders continue almost 75% of their friendships in the same period of time[51-53]. These results were similarly to our findings in that children's friendship quality and stability improved significantly with age.

Research has found that interpersonal relationships among boys and girls differed from each other in many respects throughout development[54]. The boys' interactions tend to play sports and games involving multiple participants usually with larger groups consisting of acquaintances or playmates who are not necessarily friends[55,56]. Girls, on the other hands, are more likely to interact with friends in small groups and tend to interact in a more exclusive fashion[57]; they are more often to establish their

friendship on intimacy and personal disclosure[14,19,55,56]. As a result, girls' friendships were more intimate and less conflictual than boys. Girls in general, were ahead about two years on intellectual and social-cognitive function through faster development of cerebral cortex during early adolescence[58-61]. The interaction between sex and age we found not only a similar typical pattern of girls but also an increase of quality with age in girls, especially in companionship and recreation as well as intimate exchange.

Taiwan is considered as an opened society, not necessarily as only collectivism or as individualism. The Taiwanese culture fosters the variations of individual development, allows having view points on different things and may be located in the middle of cultural spectrum ranging from the two anchors of individualism and collectivism. Relatively, Vietnam is a communistic oriented country. The cultural style is more collectivism, and there are more rules to be obligated. The scope of people's relationship might be narrower, focus on the in-group in friendship. The results of this study found children's friendship quality were different in between Taiwan and Vietnam that indicating significant impact of cultures on friendships. The impact may accumulate with the development trajectory of children or it may be the mixture of multiple cultures, rather than the previous categorization that a country only belongs to either collectivism or individualism[37].

Finally, the present study found an age and country interaction effect demonstrating culture has influence on children's friendship quality with different ages. Education in each culture would build diverse daily experiences to shape students' learning and cognitive and social development[33]. In Vietnam, the sixth grade is structured in the junior high school in their educational system. When children enter the junior high school, the relationship with peers is unlike from those in elementary school. This academic structure may lead to developmental differences on children of friendship. Research has demonstrated that the structure and organization of the school environment can affect how children interact with their friends[62]. Therefore, cultural contexts, including its educational environment, may play a role in the experience and furthermore the development of a child's friendship network[63].

Conclusion

The comparisons on friendship quality in between of Taiwanese and Vietnamese children can be explained under a general trend in development as well as the cultural influences. The current research further deepened our understanding on how the friendship quality may be affected by ages and cultures. The samples of this present study came from certain regions of Taiwan and Vietnam so that may not be sufficient to represent the entire country and/or culture influences. However, results suggested studying differences between two countries at different positions in the cultural spectrum would be markedly important, such as to compare between two Asian cultures.

Future research will be noted further development and evaluation in order to validate the concept of cultural spectroscopy or to more accurately define the composition of the spectrum.

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