

## **Bachelor's thesis review – Opponent's evaluation**

Title: *Reciprocal Friendships in Children Grow with Age*

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The author of this thesis investigated how self-esteem correlated with reciprocal friendships in children and adolescents. The author was also interested in the question whether children have more reciprocal friendships as they age. The author also hypothesized that self-esteem would decrease between the ages of 8 to 14 and this decline was going to differ between boys and girls.

### **Theoretical part**

The theoretical part was structured around the main proposed topics: friendships, self-esteem, and friendships correlating with self-esteem. While the main structure of the thesis was appropriate, the table of contents did not correspond to the actual content, and the thesis did not have its own page numbers, which made it difficult to orient in the thesis itself. The part on friendships was redundant, pages 11-16 (in the pdf) seem superfluous. The description of theories on self-esteem was stronger than the part on friendships, although the whole theoretical part was overall too long for a half theoretical, half empirical thesis. The strength of the thesis were some ideas independently explained (which parts were generally of better quality), and the critical thinking of the bi-directional nature between friendships and self-esteem.

### **Empirical part**

The structure of the empirical part followed the IMRaD structure. The language of the Methods section was appropriate and professional. The Rosenberg test used to measure self-esteem yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.67, which I would not evaluate as appropriate, much rather as questionable internal consistency. I would be curious what the author thinks as possible explanations for the low internal consistency of the questionnaire items. May it be that the test is not appropriate for this age group? May it come from the translation or the application?

The tables and figures were nicely presenting the results and the analyses were appropriately executed. I commend that the author diligently inspected multicollinearity and residual normality in all models. It is not entirely clear to me how age was included as a predictor. Did all children get imputed the same age within each class? I could consider alternative analyses that could handle this anomaly. For example, through ANOVA that can compare groups of classes and test contrasts (e.g., expecting liner or non-liner associations between classes and self-esteem or number of friends). I think this could be an interesting addition, because the focus of the thesis was age too besides friendships and self-esteem. While I agree that during adolescence even half a year can mean a large jump in the development, class/grade differences could be interesting too to explore, as different grades experience different learning focuses and external pressures (e.g.,

preparations for tertiary education). I could also imagine that adding the interaction between sex and age, or stratifying the data by sex and test the relationships in boy and girls independently could be informative. This would be a good addition as the author pointed out in previous research self-esteem was shown to differ between boys and girls as a function of age. These additional analyses could have elongated the Results section which was generally too short.

In the discussion, the author refers to the power of the study and emphasizes that the findings were not due to insufficient statistical power, which was very smart to mention. The limitations mentioned were very good, critical, and appropriate. It is a very good idea that children probably have friendships outside their classroom. Since the author suggested that having at least one reciprocal friendship is already beneficial, maybe additional analyses could be added to test this.

### **General comments**

The thesis has a lot of punctuation and spelling mistakes, spaces were missing throughout. The APA referencing style was also not completely following the guidelines: Citations in brackets were not in alphabetical order, but perhaps more importantly, exact quotations were often missing page numbers. There were at least ten places in the text where the author could have made the writing more original, expressing the contents in her own words (e.g., pages 11, 12, 15, 20, 21, 25, 31, 33, 38, 56 in the pdf).

I also have a comment concerning the explanation for girl's lower self-esteem. It is true in today's society that some ideals for women's body require a slender shape, but on the other hand, the body fat that girls acquire during adolescence is the one responsible for feminine features. I disagree that girls have lower self-esteem because they get more curvy, because that body fat is also making them look more feminine (e.g., starting to have breasts, hip, buttock). I much rather think that girls can associate adult feminine traits with male attention that can often be or feel like harassment. This is especially true in young age in girls who mature too early. Also, it is not unnatural that girls start to pay attention to their appearance in their adolescents when their sexual maturation accelerates. It is an evolutionary heritage and I would generally recommend an alternative perspective where this is something that (at least in part) naturally emerges in girl's mind.

### **Summary**

Overall, the research question was reasonable. The used data would allow to test so many important questions and I think it would be worth pursuing them in a more detailed fashion. The theoretical part was redundant and disproportionate to the number of variables tested. The empirical part could have been extended for a better balance between the theoretical and empirical parts. For these reasons, I recommend the grade to be very good (2), depending on the oral defense.

In Prague, January 30<sup>th</sup> 2024

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