

Bachelor's thesis review (supervisor's evaluation)

February 2, 2024

Thesis title: *Reciprocal Friendships in Children Grow with Age*

Author: Ekaterina Shiyanova

Supervisor: Ellen Zakreski

Opponent: Zsófia Csajbók

Supervisor's recommended grade (pre-defence): 2

Overview

Using a cross-sectional research design, in a sample of Czech school children, this thesis examines how the number of reciprocal friendships changes from preschool to adolescence, and whether the number of reciprocal friendships is associated with self-esteem. The investigation found no effect of age on the number of reciprocal friendships. Self-esteem was non-significantly associated with the number of reciprocal friends but was significantly correlated with the total number of friends, and also significantly higher in boys than girls.

Theoretical section

The student provides a very broad and detailed account of self-esteem and friendship and how they develop, bringing in relevant theories. Ms. Shiyanova explains why these phenomena are important to study; showing how they relate to numerous health and developmental outcomes. She was able to find relevant sources with little guidance. She accurately interprets the literature, but there are sections where research findings could be better synthesized, and where additional sources could have been integrated. I would have appreciated some more discussion on reciprocal friendships. The introduction includes sections that are repetitive or not immediately relevant to the research questions. Some parts could be better connected. Overall, the introduction demonstrates an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the phenomena of interest (especially self-esteem), provides a rationale for the study, clearly states the hypotheses, but could be more cohesive and focused.

Empirical section

It is important to note that the data were already collected. The student is thus not responsible for methodological issues that arose (e.g., missing age data). Ms. Shiyanova adequately described the materials and procedures, providing sufficient detail to replicate the study. Despite being new to statistics, the student learned how to use multiple regression (a challenging statistical method for undergraduate students). She learned to interpret and visualize multiple regression results and how to check the assumptions. The analyses are relevant to the research questions. The results are reported appropriately.

The student's conclusions are all supported by the data. While the hypotheses of the study were not confirmed, the student provides several compelling explanations for the null findings. She also provided interesting interpretations of other findings (e.g., the relationship between gender and self-esteem). She effectively identifies limitations and suggests how these limitations can be addressed in future research.

General comments and summary

The student put forth a good effort and showed initiative. The language of the thesis was professional, her claims were supported by evidence, and the aims and results are clear. She developed a rich understanding of the topic and improved her scientific writing skills. Those skills could be improved upon further. This includes better formatting, word choice, spelling, and grammar. For instance, sentences could be phrased using simpler, more direct language. More importantly, the student should not just summarize literature, but synthesize literature to form her own conclusions. Notwithstanding, the thesis was very good overall.

Questions

1. If you were to further investigate the relationship between reciprocal friendships, self-esteem, or age, what would be your next study?

2. You did not find a significant association between self-esteem and the number of reciprocal friendships. Do you think the association between these two variables might be different for girls and boys? For example, reciprocal friendships may be especially important for girls' self-esteem?