



Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science (JAHSS)

ISSN: 3006-9491 (Online)

Volume 1 Issue 3, (2024)

 <https://doi.org/10.69739/jahss.v1i3.168>

 <https://journals.stecab.com/index.php/jahss>

 Published by
Stecab Publishing

Research Article

International Students' Relationship Formation in a Multicultural Setting: A Phenomenological Inquiry

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About Article

Article History

Submission: October 07, 2024

Acceptance : November 08, 2024

Publication : November 20, 2024

Keywords

Friendship Formation, International Students, Philippines, Transcendental Phenomenology

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ABSTRACT

International students who do not build meaningful friendships have psychological and social issues, as well as weak academic and decision-making skills. The study investigated international students' relationship formation in a multicultural setting in the Philippines, using psychoanalytic transference theory and the functional model of friendship formation. Using transcendental phenomenology, audio-recorded one-on-one interviews were conducted with 12 enrolled students from 12 nations. The data was transcribed and analyzed. According to the findings, co-national friendships were favored for psychological and emotional support, as well as the perpetuation of home cultures. Students who favored host-national friendships over multicultural home ties reported higher levels of life satisfaction, fewer social issues, and a greater appreciation for culture. Students who favored host-national connections overcame home ties and had more life satisfaction, fewer social issues, and a greater appreciation for culture and were more likely to marry and work in host nations. Furthermore, friendships enhance one's lifestyle and psychological well-being, provide enjoyment and satisfaction, enhance critical thinking, and reduce stress as well as criminal activity. The implications of the findings were examined.

Citation Style:

Juma, M. (2024). International Students' Relationship Formation in a Multicultural Setting: A Phenomenological Inquiry. *Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science*, 1(3), 18-37. <https://doi.org/10.69739/jahss.v1i3.168>



1. INTRODUCTION

Relationship formation among international students in a multicultural setting is a crucial component of living in host countries for acculturation, social support, and the facilitation of academic and professional goals. This study, hinged on the Psychoanalytic theory of transference (Thompson, 1998) associated the transference phenomena with what is being transferred such as feelings, thoughts, and behavior as a broad category of phenomena. The study aimed to determine how international students transferred their sentiments, beliefs, and behaviors to other persons in the country of study. Furthermore, using Bochner *et al.*'s (1977) Functional Model of Friendship Formation, the researcher classified international students' friendship formation as co-national, multi-national, and host national. Furthermore, DeVito (2013) used seven theories to increase our understanding of why and how people form, grow, and end relationships: attraction, relationship, relationship dialectics, social penetration, social exchange, equity, and politeness. The goal is to help international students achieve their academic and professional goals, as well as to improve their quality of life. Previous research has demonstrated the benefits of relationship development for overseas students.

According to Freud (1912), the earliest experience of love with whom people share this experience becomes the hallmark of what people, from that point onward, anticipate and expect to be repeated. This experience becomes ingrained, analogous to a stereotype plate. This stereotype is constantly repeated afresh—during the person's life, so far as external circumstances and the nature of the love objects accessible to the person permit. Parents are usually the original figures from whom such emotional patterns are displaced, however, siblings, grandparents, teachers, friends, physicians, and childhood heroes also act as frequent sources. Although transference was linked to childhood experiences, (Lewkowich, 2015) while studying the transference among young adults in schools, found out that transference reemerges and is experienced as immediate.

Other authors looked at transference and countertransference in sundry areas among adults: Shim (2014) among students, Nolan (2010) among clergy, and Gavin (2010) on moral masochism. One study pointed out that 'although transference and countertransference are made from psychoanalytic theory, they are useful in counseling and psychotherapy and to relationships in general' (Correy *et al.*, 2015). It is through transferences, that relationships are affected. "If someone's need for love and friendship is not entirely satisfied by reality, a person is bound to approach every new person whom he meets with libidinal anticipatory ideas" (Freud, 1912).

The benefits included friendship prevention of homesickness (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007), increased well-being (Finkenauer & Righetti, 2011), psychological well-being (Helgeson & Lopez, 2010) and created a protective mechanism that supported resilience and safeguarded students from criminal actions (Brass, 2015). Furthermore, the students reported higher levels of pleasure, less loneliness (Church, 1982), greater flexibility (Ward & Kennedy, 1993b), favorable views about the host culture (Pruitt, 1978), and facilitated adjustment processes (Maundeni, 2001).

Nonetheless, Messina (2007) discovered that students' lack of meaningful friendships caused serious physical and psychological health concerns, poor decision-making and study skills, and increased anxiety in social circumstances. Although these students had greater completion rates and took less time to complete their studies (Curtin *et al.* 2013), friendship concerns caused some to transfer to different institutions, lengthening their study period. Rehal (2013) identified a gap in which institutions prioritized education above facilitating social issues and multicultural diversity during student orientations.

Given the growing number of international students worldwide (Hendrickson *et al.*, 2011; Rajani *et al.*, 2018; Rehal, 2013; Sung, 2023), as well as in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Philippines (Narbarte & Balila, 2018; Shafaei *et al.*, 2016). McKenzie and Baldassar (2017) emphasized the need for more research on students' perspectives and friendship experiences. The purpose of this study was to learn about international students' common experiences with friendship creation in a multicultural setting in the Philippines. This study was based on the Psychoanalytic theory of transference. Thompson (1998), quoting the American Psychoanalytic Association's glossary of psychoanalytic terms and nomenclature, defined transference as "the displacement of patterns of feelings, thoughts, and behavior originally experienced about significant figures during childhood onto a person involved in a current interpersonal relationship". The author linked the content of transference phenomena as being feelings, thoughts, and behavior, which encompasses a wide spectrum of phenomena. However, there is a scarcity of research on shared experiences in friendship formation through the lens of an international student.

The study sought to establish how the international students transferred their feelings, thoughts, and behavior of friends to other people in the country of study. Specifically, it answered the research questions: 1) What are the experiences on friendship formation of international students in the Philippines? 2) How do their experiences of friendship formation affect the life of international students in the Philippines?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section investigates the friendships with co-nationals, cross-cultural, and host-national friendships of international students.

2.1. Co-national friendships

According to survey results and in-depth interviews conducted by Robinson *et al.* (2020) at a Canadian institution, international students formed their closest ties with other international students and co-nationals. That clarified why the foreign students were not utilizing the chance to establish friendships with their host countrymen and/or why the existing friendship opportunities were insufficient to foster lasting partnerships. The cost/benefit analysis underpinned the justifications. Although it was acknowledged that Canadian institutions offered possibilities for connection, the restrictions on such interactions were perceived as expensive for overseas students and served to strengthen cultural boundaries and obstruct the development of cross-cultural friendships. In addition to promoting cultural exchange, which has been linked to



improved academic achievement and personal fulfillment (Rienties & Tempelaar, 2013; Robinson *et al.*, 2020), international friendships also helped international students feel like they belonged in their new settings (Hayes & Lin, 1994).

The literature indicates that racial and ethnic diversity in the United States is fast expanding. According to Mahzad and Moyer (2016), by 2043, non-Hispanic Whites will be a minority in the United States. Besides, in the United States, friendships are frequently formed between people of the same race and ethnicity, as well as people of the same age, gender, social class, sexual orientation, and culture. As a result, international students will find it easy to develop friendships with kids of similar race, ethnicity, and culture. Other studies (Burlinson *et al.*, 1994; Burlinson *et al.*, 1992) found that friendship based on the likeness principle meant that friends looked, acted, and thought alike. According to DeVito (2013), people are more willing to help others who share their race, attitude, overall appearance, and even first name.

The literature (Monin, 2003) demonstrated that reinforcements, such as well as gifts and gestures of compassion, improved friendships. Furthermore, Byrne and Clore's (1970) reinforcement-affect theory asserted that learning by association caused people to prefer those who were around when they felt good. They discovered that even if they were not participating in helping others feel good, they would eventually identify them with a positive feeling, so that whenever they saw them, they would feel happy. Learning by consequences (operant conditioning) causes people to like others who reward them. This theory posits that the rewards can include being friendly to people, smiling, and overall acting pleasantly toward them. According to this hypothesis, politicians, public figures, and candidates for office will always attend public gatherings, parties, and award ceremonies. In practice, it is best to learn what makes other people happy and simply be present. It's amazing to tell them how much fun it is to be in their presence. Although being present when others are having a good time does not imply that you are friends or that friendship will emerge, the premise is that the finest test of friendship is when individuals have nothing to lose and gain.

Similarly, the data findings are consistent with research conducted by Bochner *et al.* (1977), who discovered that students build bonds with their countrymen. According to various studies (Bochner *et al.*, 1977; Maundeni, 2001; Pruitt, 1978; Sudweeks *et al.*, 1990), this friendship serves an important function in sustaining the culture of the place of origin. The co-national friendship has both advantages and disadvantages. First and foremost, such friends experience the same emotions. They can expand their understanding of the new culture through talks, social engagement, and intellectual exchange with other students from their home countries (Woolf, 2007). Second, Kim (2001) confirmed that this friendship type reduced the tension that students felt while visiting various countries. Third, Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998) demonstrated how such friendships boost the self-esteem of overseas students. Finally, Maundeni (2001) argued that co-national friendships provided a sense of cultural identification as well as emotional support. However, co-national friendships have several drawbacks. According to Ward and Searle (1991), the foundations of their

cultural identity made them less eager to conform to local conventions, preventing the creation of connections with people from the host culture. According to Pruitt (1978), students who create co-national friendships are generally dissatisfied with their social and physical environments.

Another detrimental effect on students was language acquisition, which had a negative impact on adjustment (Maundeni 2001). According to Kim's (2001) cross-cultural adaptation hypothesis, co-national connections provided only short-term help and hampered long-term adaptation efforts. Finally, the author demonstrated that the higher the co-national interpersonal communication, the lower the intercultural transformation in terms of functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity.

In psychological terms, friendship creation with nationals runs counter to the Differentiation Association theory. Edwin Sutherland founded it in 1939, proposing that people learn the beliefs, attitudes, tactics, and motivations that drive criminal action. If they are reinforced for deviant acts, they will undergo Bandura's social learning process and operant conditioning. According to the hypothesis, people learn to be criminals from their surroundings based on how frequently they associate with others who support crime. Unlike differentiation association theory, friendship formation acts as a barrier to aberrant behaviors learned from other internationals and host nationals. As a result, international students who made friendships with fellow countrymen did not impose home patterns of feelings, attitudes, and conduct on anybody other than their countrymen. In psychological terms, friendship creation with nationals runs counter to the Differentiation Association theory. Edwin Sutherland founded it in 1939, proposing that people learn the beliefs, attitudes, tactics, and motivations that drive criminal action. If they are reinforced for deviant acts, they will undergo Bandura's social learning process and operant conditioning. According to the hypothesis, people learn to be criminals from their surroundings based on how frequently they associate with others who support crime. Unlike differentiation association theory, friendship formation acts as a barrier to aberrant behaviors learned from other internationals and host nationals. As a result, international students who made friendships with fellow countrymen did not impose home patterns of feelings, attitudes, and conduct on anybody other than their countrymen.

2.2. Cross-cultural friendships

The difficulties and insights of fostering cross-cultural connections between domestic New Zealand Palagi students and overseas Pacific Island students studying in Aotearoa, New Zealand, were examined by Vaccarino *et al.* (2021). According to the findings, New Zealand Palagi students wanted to have study alongside Pacific Island students in elementary and high school so they could engage with them and become more used to cultural differences. To foster cultural understanding, these international Pacific Island students realized that universities were in a unique position to support and encourage systemic interventions that would help both domestic and international students engage with one another. To overcome the obstacles associated with the development of intercultural friendships, significant intercultural spaces, and campus friendship



activities would boost cross-cultural contacts, increase cross-cultural awareness among domestic students, and promote reciprocal intercultural learning.

Using the contact and diversity theory as a guide, Yu and Moskal (2019) examined the intercultural experiences of Chinese students in business and non-business programs at a single UK university. They also looked at how these students responded to their social surroundings and what they thought quality intercultural contact meant. According to the results, the large proportion of Chinese students, especially in business schools, and the challenges these students encountered when trying to make friends with people from different cultural backgrounds on campus may have encouraged them to explore interacting with the larger host community (such as Christian churches). Due to a lack of a diversified environment, intercultural contact was denied, which resulted in unequal chances for personal development and cross-cultural learning. International students benefited from high-quality intercultural contact, while native students' intercultural competency in the global marketplace was also improved.

According to Kim (2001), overseas students begin looking for new partnerships as soon as they arrive in a new country. The fact that both groups are 'strangers in a strange land' strengthens their bonds with other global students. Bochner *et al.* (1985) discovered that friendships with multinationals were widespread in friendship networks. Multinational friendships have several advantages. Yum (2001) states that international students form bonds with students from other countries throughout the world. Second, the learner would be able to learn about not only the host-culture, but also other cultures. Third, kids gain a sense of belonging and community in a new situation, allowing them to feel less alone. According to Yeh and Inose (2003), many international students felt ashamed and self-conscious about their accents, making conversing with multinationals less frightening while still allowing for language study.

According to the survey, the multi-national category of friendships emerged because of reinforcement, facial attractiveness, and having too many topics to discuss enhanced ties. The report supported prior research (Aronson *et al.*, 2007), which found that people are drawn to others who offer rewards or reinforcements. Reinforcements range from a modest supplement to a costly cruise. People are drawn to those whom they reward (Jecker & Landy, 1969).

2.3. Friendship with host nationals.

International students find it most challenging to form friendships in this category (Robinson *et al.*, 2020). Friendships with students from the host country were beneficial for academic and professional orientation and cultural adaptation (Bochner *et al.*, 1977). Additionally, international students were given access to cultural resources, local knowledge, and social support by the host-national students, which helped them adapt to their new surroundings. To make up for the lack of social support they receive when traveling overseas and to have the opportunity to participate in local culture, international students both desired and preferred friendships with host-national students, according to Hayes and Lin (1994).

International students frequently experienced disappointment and despair if they were unable to form friendships with local students (Zhang & Brunton, 2007).

In another Canadian study (Walsworth *et al.*, 2021), international students who had a higher percentage of host national friends (Canadians) reported higher levels of cultural and social satisfaction. Surprisingly, most of the positive effects resulted from having a higher percentage of host-nationals in the weakest friendships, indicating the significance of weak ties. Additionally, international students who have a higher percentage of co-national friends—friends who are from the same nation as the respondent—report poorer levels of social and cultural happiness, with the weakest relationships accounting for most of the effect.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study utilized qualitative research methodology particularly phenomenology to explore the shared friendship formation of international students in a multi-cultural setting in the Philippines. According to Denscombe (2014) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) phenomenology is a method that focuses more on lived experiences from a first-person point of view. The design seeks to understand the essence of the experiences. Phenomenology (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) describes things and experiences to perceptions and meanings that awaken one's consciousness and awareness. Specifically, this research utilized transcendental phenomenology that aimed at describing the phenomenon precisely without interference from the researcher. The study aimed to describe the shared lived experiences of international students in friendship formation.

3.2. Selection of Participants

The study used purposive sampling specifically the maximum variation sampling technique as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012) which was achieved by having samples drawn from different countries, academic disciplines, both genders, ages, and different numbers of years of stay in the Philippines. Criteria were set in selecting the participants: must be an enrolled international student, must be above 18 years old, from any academic discipline, must have been in the country for at least 12 months, articulate and expressive in English, and willing to participate. They must be from any of these countries: Myanmar, Indonesia, Anglo-phone East Africa, Franco-phones West Africa, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and PNG. These countries are chosen because they make the most common cultures that comprise the international students in the Philippines (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2011; Shafaei *et al.* 2016).

The sample size was supposedly 12 because Creswell, 2018) recommended 5 to 25 individuals; Creswell (2014) recommended 5 – to 20 participants for phenomenological studies. This study utilized 12 since they were heterogeneously diverse in culture.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The following steps were the data collection procedures:

1. Prepared the interview guide.
2. Recruited participants.



3. Practiced interviewing with friends.
4. Conducted a pilot study. Based on the results of the pilot study, interview questions and probes were modified
5. Conducted the face-to-face interview.
6. Transcribed the interview data
7. Analyzed the data for each participant simultaneously with data collection. The researcher collected data from one participant before moving to the next case until all the cases were done.

Open-ended questions were used. All interviews were recorded using digital recorders with varying duration from 10 minutes to 40 minutes. Data triangulation (Creswell, 2014) was done on the data. Horizontalization was done where significant statements were taken from transcripts to describe the experience in friendship formation. The notes were also written while listening to taped interviews, handwrote the transcripts, and reflected upon themes.

3.4. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The following analytical stages as posited by Creswell (2014) were followed to answer the research questions:

1. Prepared and organized the data from audio and face-to-face interviews. This was transcribed and made into a folder and labeled.
2. Read and recorded all the data. The purpose was to be acquainted with the thoughts in all the materials and reflect on the meaning.
3. Identified significant phrases or sentences that pertained to the experience.
4. Coded all the data. Bracketed the chunks. Categorized and got concepts. From the codes, the researcher developed themes and sub-themes.
5. Validated findings with participants and incorporated their feedback into the final description.

3.5. Ensuring Rigor and Trustworthiness

Creswell and Creswell (2018) proposed a model to assure rigor and reliability. It included data triangulation, member checking, a rich and detailed description, and bias clarification. Peer review provides an outside review of the study process. The researcher requested three experts in the field to review the study process and criticize the techniques, meanings, and interpretations.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality was kept. Each participant was safeguarded against physical danger, loss, and psychological well-being and dignity. Before the procedure, participants were informed of their responsibilities and contributions and were given information on the study's objectives. They signed informed forms to participate. Pseudonyms were employed to keep participant information secure. All recorded notes, both digital and written, were kept secure and locked. Given the sensitive nature of the study, respondents' well-being was of the utmost importance.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Experiences of International Students in Friendship Formation

This is the first study question that explores international students' common experiences with friendship formation in a multicultural setting in the Philippines. The data from the participants revealed that the shared experiences on friendship building could be classified into three categories: 1) relationship with their countrymen, 2) friendship with other international students, and 3) friendship with students from the host country. There were emergent themes that would be addressed in each category.

4.2. Category 1: Friendship with Countrymen

This is the initial type of friendship formation. This is a friendship created between fellow countrymen or students from a neighboring country. Similarity, proximity, and having too many topics to discuss were some of the emergent shared themes that enriched this friendship.

Similarity. This first theme emerged from the data on the issue of who they were closest to. VeNatu stated that her closest pals were her countrymates. They attended the same academy in her own country and have developed trust amongst themselves. They choose to study in the Philippines, and they share physical proximity and comparable emotional issues. She said:

Oh okay, my friends are my country mates or.... from Africa, my continent, but usually my country mates.... We come from the same school. We studied together and came together here.

(VeNatu, 22, Undergraduate, Nutrition and Dietetics, East Africa, Lines 4, 10).

Similarly, Dano chose his acquaintances based on cultural similarities. Even though he had other international students in his flat, he preferred to spend time with his Asian buddies rather than those from other cultures. Dano said:

You see, I chose a PNG friend because he cared for me and still does. With my Myanmar and PNG friends, I share some similarities....in sports and food. Culturally, we have similarities.... (Laughing). We eat spicy food, full of chilly. Our friend from Africa does not enjoy our food, so he does not enjoy coming with us for social events. We like sports, he doesn't. My Myanmar friend and I like watching soccer; he doesn't. My PNG friend loves basketball, but our friend from Africa doesn't. (Dano, 24, Male, Graduate, Indonesia, Business, Line 18).

VeNatu and Dano became friends because of their similarities. They shared comparable nationality, race, abilities, and attitudes. It's easy to keep such buddies. This research result supports the psychological law of attraction, which states that people with similar attitudes form friendships. Byrne (1971), the more we share similar attitudes with other individuals, the more attracted we are to them. There is a linear relationship here. 'Birds of a feather flock together' is stronger than 'opposites attract'. Professional societies, religious organizations, and sports clubs are examples of practical applications. All are possibilities for birds of a feather to meet one another. In consonance, the attraction theory (DeVito, 2013), holds that people create connections based on factors such as similarity,



proximity, reinforcement, physical beauty, and personality, as well as socioeconomic and educational position. Pornpitakpan (2003), asserted that people prefer others who share their nationality, race, abilities, physical qualities, IQ, and attitudes. In general, people share their love and friendship with those who are similar in many ways.

Proximity. The second theme is the friendship that was created through proximity. Johnsou made his initial acquaintances in the same place of residence, and the others met through religious meetings. He said:

The first was a kind man who helped me the first time...and since then we have been friends....then the monitors.... in the dormitories....I also met West African friends on a Sabbath at church who even told me he would assign me some part to play at church and..... my first friends from Angola and Liberia...

Many of my current friends are people from...because of the culture, trust, and confidence.... my home, Senegal in... Africa....like Junior K from Congo...and like you as soon as you arrived....and Tony from Liberia....because of the culture. (Johnsou, 32, Male, Africa Franco-phone, Graduate, Nursing, Lines 8, 34)

In the absence of graduate countrymen, Nana claimed to have picked her closest buddy from a neighboring country. She expressed feeling at home and together. They faced similar challenges. She also stated that she felt comfortable discussing her difficulties with a student from her nearby country. She said:

Ah..... (smiling)...my closest friend is my neighbor here... from Taiwan, near China. She is my friend as well as my neighbor. We study together and talk together.it looks like we have the same mind being mothers. She has 3 sons and I have one son. Sometimes we share how to educate our children. ... and those from China moreI talk to her through my window and she responds from her sitting room. You know I have difficulty with English....that I cannot talk very well with others. I have found it more beneficial this way than having friends from other nations... It helps me more (Nana, 35, Graduate, Education, China, Lines 4 -10).

Powder, like VeNatu, Dano, Johnsou, and Nana, related his experience at the University of the Philippines when he claimed to frequent and spend most of his time in another University to meet his fellow Africans and countrymen. Powder said:

Yes....the rest of the week I am just on my own. Here at UP, I don't have local friends. That's why I spend most of my time at AUP where I can find friends, and Africans there....and we eat together....otherwise, I stay alone in my room all through.... There is another African, one other African Pastor, Pr. Christian, an African who married a Pinay, is also my friend...He is studying here at UP...he is done with all his course works... and now collecting his data. He invites me to his house; we talk together at his house....in..... (Sushila).... (Powder, 42, PhD in Public Administration, West Africa, Lines 16, 25, 34).

VeNatu, Dano, Johnsou, Nana, and Powder developed a friendship based on their proximity and commonalities. This form of companionship provided them with comfort and a sense of being connected to home. VeNatu felt at ease around fellow countrymen who had attended the same school. Dano preferred comparable culinary items at social gatherings. Johnsou's initial buddies were from his dormitory. Nana seems

to love socializing with her acquaintances from the neighboring country. Powder valued cultural identification and intellectual contact with his countrymen.

DeVito (2013) observed that proximity as an additional component in friendship creation. People are drawn to others with whom they spend much of their time, work, live nearby, or have physical contact, particularly in schools, classrooms, or households. As proximity attraction increases, the ability to interact with individuals who are further away decreases. In terms of reinforcement, the literature (Aronson *et al.*, 2007; Jecker & Landy, 1969) asserted that people are drawn to others who reward or reinforce them.

In concinnity with the exposure friendship theory (Kunst-Williams *et al.*, 1980), when people have more exposure to others, they tend to like them more. Although familiarity breeds contempt, in friendship theory, familiarity breeds liking more. The pivot is around developing similar tastes over time and repeated exposure. This applies to commercial products. Viewers who are repeatedly exposed to commercial advertisements, eventually develop a liking for the product without even trying it. Over time, repetition makes individuals prefer unpleasant things, and even inmates miss the jail. This exposure effect appears to be strongly linked to the disgraced realm of subliminal messages that boost liking (Zajonc, 1968). Therefore, as international students stay in proximity to others, they will form friendships.

Too many common topics to share. The data showed that people become friends based on the numerous topics they share. Too few topics limited friendship. Powder also shared various topics with his friend. That made him so pulled to his friend: from politics to academics, religious topics, and life in general. He said:

There is another African, one other African Pastor, Pr. Christian, an African who married a Pinay, is also my friend... He is studying here at UP...he is done with all his course works... and now collecting his data. We talk about politics, but more about academics. He is very concerned....like you used to be when you were here. (I laughed). When you were here you told me to go for meals, let us go jogging....for meals...to church.... those were good days...for me. Not anymore. (Powder, 42, PhD in Public Administration, West, Lines 34- 39 Africa)

The experiences of Powder showed that the deeper the topic the closer people became. Sauti shared freely with her friends and took time to share topics ranging from food to challenges in life, and values. Powder ate, and shared on academics, and politics with his friend. This broadened their friendship.

The literature (Monin, 2003) demonstrated that reinforcements improved friendships. Besides, Byrne and Clore's (1970) reinforcement-affect theory asserted that learning by association caused people to prefer those who were around when they felt good. According to this hypothesis, politicians, public figures, and candidates for office will always attend public gatherings, parties, and award ceremonies. This is in consonance with research (Bochner *et al.*, 1977), which discovered that students build bonds with their countrymen and this friendship serves an important function in sustaining the culture of the place of origin (Bochner *et al.*, 1977; Maundeni, 2001; Pruitt, 1978; Sudweeks *et al.*, 1990).



The co-national friendship has both advantages and disadvantages. First, this friendship type reduced the tension that students felt while visiting various countries (Kim, 2001). Additionally, these friendships boost the self-esteem of overseas students (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998). Finally, Maundeni (2001) argued that co-national friendships provided a sense of cultural identification as well as emotional support.

However, co-national friendships have several drawbacks. This friendship makes students less eager to conform to local conventions, preventing the creation of connections with people from the host culture (Ward & Searle, 1991) as well as creating general dissatisfaction with their social and physical environments (Pruitt, 1978). Besides, language acquisition, which is essential for adjustment, is impaired (Maundeni 2001). According to Kim's (2001) cross-cultural adaptation hypothesis, co-national connections provided only short-term help and hampered long-term adaption efforts. Finally, the author demonstrated that the higher the co-national interpersonal communication, the lower the intercultural transformation in terms of functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity.

Making friends with natives is psychologically contradictory to the Differentiation Association idea, credited to Edwin Sutherland's establishment in 1939. This theory suggests that people should be taught the attitudes, ideas, strategies, and incentives that motivate criminal behavior. They will experience operant conditioning and Bandura's social learning process if they receive reinforcement for acting in a deviant manner. The hypothesis states that people pick up criminal behavior from their environment based on how often they interact with criminals. Unlike differentiation association theory, friendship formation serves as a deterrent to abnormal habits learned from other internationals and host nationals. As a result, overseas students who formed friendships with their countrymen did not impose their home patterns of sentiments, attitudes, and behavior on anybody other than their countrymen.

Friendship with other international students. This is the second type of friendship formation. This is the friendship created by international students and students from other countries. Religious occasions, collaborative activities, prizes and gifts, facial attractiveness, willingness to discuss worries and acts of kindness, and exposure were among the emerging shared themes that enriched this partnership.

Experiences from religious activities. Religious activities encouraged students of various nationalities to interact easily. Friendships formed as they engaged in these activities and grew to appreciate one another. AnneParia described her interactions with acquaintances from other nations as mutually and socially gratifying. AnneParia said:

Ah, for me ...I don't belong to any specific group...not even my countrymates. My friends are from different countries...And the friends that I have... I made them from a Bible study group. ..What we have in common creates friendship... They are from Angola, the Philippines, Indonesia, from China, either first or third world. My friends influenced me on how to be dependent. I learned how to study the Bible personally. When it comes to health.....I learned how to eat, and exercise....When I came I was not like this. (AnnaParia, 22, Female, France, Undergraduate,

MedTech, Lines 4-7, 18, 28 -33)

Similarly, Sidushia's interest in religious activities enabled her to meet people of other nationalities. Sidushia said:

Yeah. (Laughing). In PNG, cooking is something for women. I feel because I am involved in Master Guides....and another Small Group, I see we work together...we need to help each other. (Sidushia, 28, Female, Graduate, Papua New Guinea, Psychology, Lines 139 -141)

Religious activities are open to all students and provide the best opportunities for self-disclosure and freedom to debate topics. Bible studies, youth activities, and small groups are all tools for developing friendships. People gain confidence in their friends when they communicate casually.

Joint social activities. Joint activities facilitate relationships, networks, and interactions, as well as alleviate loneliness and homesickness. Dano described his experiences with international pals as mutually satisfying. He has received a sense of connection and care from another overseas acquaintance. Dano stated:

Before, my friends were from Myanmar. But we separated because they were young, and I was older than them. We had different interests Also they were undergrads.....with different class schedules.....Now; my friend is from Papua New Guinea (PNG)..... The reason is that when I first came here, he was the first person I met, and greeted me...he was interested in me...He showed interest in talking to me...I felt like there was someone who cared.....He was willing to talk to me since my first months as early as August 2017; we are still friends. You see, I chose a PNG friend because he cared for me and still does. (Dano, 24, Male, Graduate, Indonesia, Business, Lines 2-8, 18).

Dano responded that he valued friendships with other overseas students. Dano now has caring international graduate buddies, as opposed to his previous co-national undergraduates. The propinquity effect has been mentioned in the literature. This hypothesis contends that meeting and interacting increases the likelihood of friendship (Festinger, 1954). It appears that birds of a feather flock together since birds that only chance to be near one other grow similar feathers. They discovered that most neighbors were friendly. It was also shown that those on different floors were the least likely to experience this. People who lived near ground-floor staircases and mailboxes had friends on both floors (Festinger *et al.* 1950). As a result, friendships will emerge in neighborhoods, businesses, college classes, and other areas where people gather.

Reward and gift. This is when friends exchange gifts, provide financial support, or appear to complement one another. Dano stated:

I borrow money from my Myanmar friend and so we help each other. We in Asian countries have some similarities. Although we are all doing business administration, I share more class assignments with my Myanmar friend more often. The reason is that my African friend is always busy for us and doesn't join us. (Dano, 24, Male, Graduate, Indonesia, Business, Lines 2-8, 23-27)

Similarly, this reinforcement resulted in Johnsou being a friend. His earliest pals assisted

him, and he also helped others who later became his buddies. Johnsou stated:



The first one was a kind man (Filipino) who helped me the first time...and since then we have been friends...then the monitor...

Yes...there are many who I have helped...not that I have much but what God has allowed me to have from the small amount....like my roommate we were staying together. He is a working student who is expected to have a scholarship. But since it was not coming, he had a financial problem....He was unable to pay the bill. Since I had paid my bills, I decided to pay his bill..... for the month...He is a Filipino. Also, my other friend who was supposed to graduate....He didn't have. At that time, my sponsors had sent me some money, so I decided to pay...I took ten thousand and paid his remaining amount,He graduated and today, he calls me 'My big brother'....He is not Filipino but international. (Johnsou, 32, Male, Africa Franco-phone, Graduate, Nursing, Lines 45-53)

Nana, like Dano and Johnsou, reported a reinforcing bond. Her friend's spouse helped her. They participate in collaborative efforts to help each other. She said:

We go out to buy things together. At times....her husband gives us a lift to the market; we sometimes just go to eat out with our children....She also helps me with my problems. ...like recently, I was moving out there.....(pointing through her window)...I was trying to put my clothes on the.....on the.... hanging line. I didn't know, so I stepped on something.....a nail and it pierced me under my foot.... (Showing me the underfoot, which now had a scar)...She (neighbor) helped me to clean the wound, put some...medicine...because I can't walk.... so she helped me do something.....collected water for me.....carried water ...the water...(the water can)...yes the water can from downstairs and delivered here. I was happy. We talk so much with her. (Nana, 35, Graduate, Education, China, Lines 13-15, 17-24)

The experiences of Dano and Johnsou, as well as Nana, demonstrated that friendships may be built based on benefits offered and received. According to the proverb, a friend is a friend in need. Helping others is an aspect of relationship development.

Facial attractiveness. The facial appearance reveals so much about the emotional stance of an individual. AnnaParia was attracted to and made friends with people who looked charming. She said:

Ahhh. There is....it is naturally in man, judging from what I see....it is also my challenge...when you look at themmm.... outward of a person, the way a person acts, the face....as for me such a face pulls me to the person....Yes, if a person's face is too serious, ... you would feel like.... (AnnaParia, 22, Female, France, Undergraduate, MedTech, Lines 38-40, 43, 44)

In a like manner, Sauti from Taiwan expressed her affection towards people who showed a bright face. Even with her exposure to three other countries, she is attracted to attractive faces. Such become her friends easily. She said:

You know I like people whose faces are bright. I like people who talk. However, I have found it hard to talk to people who reply briefly as though they are not interested. I have not found this in other countries I have visited. I have gone to three countries already. But students from other countries are more

outgoing than here. The facial appearance talks much about the inside of someone. I like to see bright faces...they are friend making than gloomy ones. (Sauti, Married. Graduate Female, Taiwan, Education, Lines 54-59)

AnnaParia and Sauti reported similar experiences as having been attracted to people who had bright faces. Faces are the opening into the heart of a person. A brighter face was welcoming and friendlier than a gloomy faces. Therefore, more friendships will be formed as more students show a welcoming face.

Open to sharing concerns and helping acts. The data showed that people become friends based on the numerous topics they share. Too few topics limited friendship. Nana said:

If you were to be my friend, I want someone who talks to me. I prefer people who talk to each other. I want a person to talk to me...not just a small talk of hi, hi...I want someone I share the same values, and hobbies, someone with time to share time and stay together....That is why after lunch, I sleep on my sofa with my neighbors and talk about all that comes to my mind... I need someone to comfort me. Yes...some people... are good...and others are not good....I also consider people who can understand me, probably people of the same language for communication....That is it. (Nana, 35, Graduate, Education, China, Lines 41-47).

Johnsou reported having started friendships with host nationals, then had friends with co-nationals, and eventually had multi-nationals. He has essentially friends from all countries regardless of nationality. Johnsou said:

I have many friends from many countries...Philippines, Africa, Europe, Myanmar, and Indonesia....I made friends when I arrived in this countrysince my arrival in January 2016. The first one was a kind man from the Philippines who helped me the first time...and since then we have been friends.... The majority of my current friends are people from ...because of the culture, trust, and confidence.... my home, Senegal in... Africa....like Junior K from Congo...and like you as soon as you arrived....and Tony from Liberia.... because of the culture and because of my helping hand. I have helped many students and that made them friends now from all over the world. (Johnsou, 32, Male, Africa Franco-phone, Graduate, Nursing, Lines 4, 6, 8-11; 18-21, 40-42)

Nana and Johnsou made friendships with students from other nations by being able to share challenges and helping acts. A problem shared is halved. It is a bonding strategy. Helping others is a gesture of friendliness while acts of kindness break barriers in society. Based on the Ben Franklin Effect, which maintains that friendships are formed when one person helps another, literature portrays the development of friendships. According to Jecker and Landy (1969), a personal request for a favor increases liking, whereas an impersonal one decreases liking.

Exposure. This is a result of having interacted with numerous people from various cultures.

The potential to form multifaceted friendships was demonstrated by international students who had interacted with cultures outside of their home nations. Sidushia stated:

I have gone to many places.....and for myself, I have gone to many places, I have visited and gotten to know their families.



In terms of nationality, oh, Korea, Philippines....Trinidad and Tobago, and of course, India, Kenya, and yeah..... I am the one who introduces my international friends to them; I am like a bridge to connect to the other international students... (Sidushia, 28, Female, Graduate, Papua New Guinea, Psychology, Lines 13-14, 98-101)

AnnaParia from France confidently responded to a question on how much she had traveled, stating that she knew how to relate to others because of her extensive travel. She stated:

Yes, I have been to other countries too. That has made me appreciate how to relate (AnnaParia, 22, Female, France, Undergraduate, MedTech, Lines 64, 65).

Sidushia made many friends and quickly learned the local lingo. She was willing to work and marry a man from the host country. Sidushia's outgoing demeanor led her to become friends with students from all over the world if they spoke to her. AnnaParia's religious beliefs and exposure to extensive travel make her friendly and responsive to all students, despite the cultural differences. Johnsou's helpful hand has enabled him to establish friends with students from across the world. The experience helped them develop a comprehensive level. They strike a balance in their friendships. Such students reported visiting numerous different nations. This finding supported Bochner *et al.*'s (1977) functional model, which described such friendships as multi-national. The authors demonstrated the significance: it creates a multinational network with a recreational purpose.

According to Kim (2001), overseas students begin looking for new partnerships as soon as they arrive in a new country. The fact that both groups are 'strangers in a strange land' strengthens their bonds with other global students. Bochner *et al.* (1985) discovered that friendships with multinationals were widespread in friendship networks with several advantages. The learner would be able to learn about not only the host culture, but also other cultures (Yum, 2001). They will have a sense of belonging and reduce the feeling of being ashamed and self-conscious about their accents, making conversing with multinationals less frightening while still allowing for language study (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Face beauty is a universal sign of attraction, according to Brody (1994). Charming personalities will draw more attention than others. Because they may show the importance of physical characteristics by prioritizing rapport and the development of emotional intimacy above self-disclosure and physical proximity, even online relationships are flourishing nowadays.

Social penetration theory is another relationship theory that was discovered through the literature. The quantity of topics covered and the level of "personalness" of those topics determine this notion (Altman & Taylor, 1973). Social penetration theory has two components: depth and breadth. The quantity of topics that friends or partners discuss is referred to as the breadth. How well people understand each other's basic essence, or core, determines the depth of a connection. A circle should be used to symbolize the five levels of proximity and the width of eight themes. The idea is that friends ought to talk about more topics and interact with the center more frequently (DeVito, 2013). When subjects are diminished and the breadth is on the

outer rings, de-penetration takes place. Because of this, foreign students who missed their home influences changed the way they felt, thought, and behaved to show affection, concern, and a sense of belonging. Students from other nations became friends with them. Countertransference took place.

Friendship with host country students. This is the third type of friendship formation. This is the friendship created between overseas students and students from the country in which they study. This is typically for social engagement. Common experiences that strengthened this bond included appreciating the host culture, which led to a desire to marry and work, as well as socializing.

An appreciation for the host culture. This theme arose from the data, which showed how the building of friendships motivated them to marry and work in the host country. The international students were able to adjust to the social life of the host country. As a result, they encountered fewer social issues. The establishment and presence of strong bonds with host nationalities substantially aided the adjustment. Johnsou stated:

When I arrived here, I was open to new friendships. For a long time, I was praying for someone and found her here...It was part of the ways of getting her...God used people like you to get me acquainted with others. I found someone already. I mean a sweetheart. (Johnsou, 32, Male, Africa Franco-phone, Graduate, Nursing, Lines 73-76)

Similarly, Sidushia appreciated the host country's culture. She had fun. She discovered that males in the host country were better helpers to their ladies than guys in her own country. She would marry a man from the host country. She said:

I have friends, not only from my country but also from Filipinos and other countries. I make friends with shopkeepers and gate people. The Philippines is fun. (Laughing) Yes. Yeah. The Philippines. One thing I have seen is that Filipino men work (They work). Yes. They work. They are good at helping ladies. They are supportive of women. I could marry her. (Sidushia, 28, Female, Graduate, Papua New Guinea, Psychology, Lines 129-131, 134-136)

Johnsou and Sidushia adjusted to their new surroundings as intimacy grew. According to Walter *et al.* (1966), individuals who end up falling in love have comparable physical attractiveness. This also applies to regular buddies. Physical attractiveness is typically taken into consideration by those seeking a companion. Looking past appearances is the best advice. Beauty is superficial. Before committing to a long-term relationship, friends should be advised to determine compatibility beyond physical attractiveness.

Social interactions. This theme arose from the data and demonstrated how overseas

students developed friendships with students from the host country through social contact. They gained a better understanding of the new culture through talks and intellectual interchange with others. This bond reduced the tension that students felt while visiting various countries. It provided emotional support. Johnsou described himself as a student who enjoys exploration and adventure with people from many backgrounds. Johnsou said:

I am a person who likes to discover....and I like adventure.



I like making new friends of other origins...It is part of my wish.....my dream. Yes...lifelong commitments begin with friendship. I love the Philippines.

I find a lot of similarities.... Here the Filipinos are family-oriented. Also back in Africa, I am family-oriented, and my people are family-oriented. Also ...we have a similar passion for missions.... ..she is engaged in missions. We share the same goal and same vision....and the same God....Not only cultural similarities but eh...eh... spiritual similarities. I have found the family good also. (Johnsou, 32, Male, Africa Franco-phone, Graduate, Nursing, Lines 23-24, 78-82)

Similarly, Sidushia described feeling at ease and free around most of the host-nationals.

The host nationals added another level of engagement for her; otherwise, she would remain lonely and eventually sleep due to boredom.

Of course, I have many Filipino friends mmh, because when I go around..... mmm, we go around together, I go out with them... I can learn Tagalog...when we go out to buy things, I speak Tagalog or Taglish. They take you to Tagaytay, Quezon...I have gone to many places and for myself, I have gone to many places, and I have visited and gotten to know their families..... I have friends, not only from my country but also from Filipinos and other countries. I make friends with shopkeepers and gate people. The Philippines is fun. (Laughing) Yes. Yeah. The Philippines.

I would miss happiness...with friends, you talk and become happy otherwise it is boring.....if I don't have friends...I would do...sleeping. (Sidushia, 28, Female, Graduate, Papua New Guinea, Psychology, Lines 88-92, 120-124).

Johnsou and Sidushia expressed satisfaction with the host-nationals. Johnsou enjoyed exploring, assisting people, and getting along with everyone. He admired the culture, including food, language, and clothing. His adaptability to different circumstances helped him discover a sweetheart. Sidushia was eager to work and even marry a man from her host country. The literature supports the Ben Franklin Effect, which states that helping others makes us like them more. Jecker and Landy (1969) discovered that an impersonal request for a favor reduces liking while a personal request for a favor boosts liking.

Furthermore, the communication accommodation theory states that people tend to talk and act like others they admire. Giles and Wiemann (1987) and Street and Giles (1982) argued that when people converse with others, they subconsciously adjust their speech style (accent, tempo, word types, etc.) to match the listener's. They also prefer to mimic nonverbal behaviors. This matching indicates agreement and liking. This matching enhances rapport. The sole precaution is to avoid being a chameleon—a conformer. This can benefit linguists.

According to the literature, in addition to host nationals and multi-national friendships, Bochner *et al.*'s (1977) functional model addressed the important role that host national friendships, or friendships formed with host members in countries of study, play in the lives of students studying abroad. The host national's category serves as a tool for facilitating academic and professional goals. Men are more attracted to women's physical characteristics than their socioeconomic level (Whitty, 2003b). Men are more likely to have a romantic

relationship with a woman who has a lower socioeconomic class, while women with a higher educational level (which correlates to higher socioeconomic status) are less likable and fidelity (Greitemeyer, 2007). According to Eastwick and Finkel (2009), people are drawn to those they believe are attracted to them. Public speakers are urged to compliment audiences and convey their affection for them with the expectation that the liking will be reciprocated. According to DeVito (2013), individuals prefer 'likers' (p. 240).

Developing ties with host nationals has both benefits and drawbacks for overseas students. Church (1982) asserts that the more interactions international students had with the host people, the more satisfied, less homesick, and less lonely they felt during their study abroad experience. Additionally, these students had greater communication skills, less social challenges, and were better equipped to adjust to living abroad (Ward & Kennedy, 1993b). Students tended to feel more positively about the host culture, according to Pruitt (1978). The transition process was significantly aided by the presence of close ties with host nationals (Maundeni, 2001).

Additionally, the students reported feeling more satisfied, less alone (Church, 1982), more adaptable (Ward & Kennedy, 1993b), pleased with the host culture (Pruitt, 1978), and encouraged to adjust (Maundeni, 2001). According to Ward and Masgoret (2004), friendship with the host country was a predictor of returning to study nations for professional advancement, and these cross-group affiliative links were a crucial means of attaining relational variety (Mendoza-Denton & Page-Gould, 2008). 'The frequency of interaction with US American students was the most important factor in international students' adjustment to US American culture,' according to Zimmerman (1995).

The engagement was also beneficial to the international students since it helped them become more proficient in host communication and was essential to the process of cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001). Additionally, Kim mentioned that the contacts allowed them to learn more about the thoughts and actions of the local population. For international students, such information provides explanations and insight into the reasons behind people's actions, speech, and interactions. On the other hand, the author demonstrated that intercultural transformation increases with the number of international students' interpersonal communication with host-nationals. Kim's theory would contend that friendships with citizens of the host nation were more significant and equally advantageous to the adaption process.

Despite the benefits of forming friendships with host nationals, there have been several difficulties that have made building these relationships more challenging (Sam, 2001). First, it has been challenging for international students to make friends in the host country because many of them struggle with the language (Yamazaki *et al.*, 1997). Kudo and Simkin (2003) assert that the development of intercultural friendships is significantly impacted by spoken English proficiency. Likewise, Gudykunst *et al.* (1991) documented numerous instances when a lack of language proficiency prevented people from interacting with one another. Second, most international students reported feeling discriminated against (Leong & Ward, 2000) and/



or discovering that people in the host environment had racial or ethnic biases (Kim, 1994; Rajani *et al.*, 2018; Redden, 2012). According to Woolf (2007), it might be challenging for international students to make acquaintances in a country where locals have already built-up networks and affiliations. For instance, Japanese students studying in Australia faced challenges interacting with Australians who already had obligations to their families and other activities, according to Kudo and Simkin (2003).

In conclusion, research on foreign students and their networks of friends highlights how important it is for the adjustment process for them to build friendships with people from their host country. The quantity, variety, and depth of social interactions with host nations were determined to be the most significant factors pertaining to international students' adjustment (Church, 1982). Researchers have tried to examine co-national, multinational, and host-national friendship formations among international students in general, but few systematic attempts have been made to use a phenomenological design to identify the difficulties encountered in a multicultural setting.

The Hawthorne effect is a psychological phenomenon that influences how overseas students appear and act. The 1950s saw the emergence of the Hawthorne Effect, which was based on a series of studies on factories that were first carried out in the 1920s to determine whether or not more ambient lighting increased production. Both groups' production rose above the control levels, according to the researchers. It occurred because the test subjects were aware that they were being researched, according to other experiments. Essentially, people want to look well and perform well when they are being watched. People all agree that it's normal to act differently in accordance with expectations when they are aware that they are being watched. International students will behave better when they are aware that co-nationals, other internationals, and host nationals are all observing. Both positive and negative habits will be strengthened. Knowing that they are being observed and evaluated by others will help the foreigners perform better. As a result, foreign students who missed their home influences substituted their patterns of love, care, and belonging to others for their ideas, feelings, and behaviors. They made acquaintances with host country pupils. Countertransference took place. They might work and get married in their own nation.

4.3. The Impact of Friendship Development on International Students' Lives

This is the second research question that illustrates the impact that friendship creation has on international students' lives in the Philippines' multicultural environment. There were both favorable and unfavorable effects, according to the participant data. Under each consequence, the emergent themes are examined. There were obstacles to the development of friendships as well.

Favorable effects. The international students benefited from the friendships that were formed. Having an appreciation of the host culture, enhancing enjoyment and happiness, improving lifestyle and psychological well-being, developing critical thinking, reducing homesickness, and relieving stress

were among the emerging themes demonstrating the impacts of friendship creation.

Appreciation for culture. According to the data study, international students valued the host culture's cuisine, language, manners, and values. They developed close bonds with people, found love, and were prepared to be married and work in the host nation. Johnsou said:

Yes...lifelong commitments begin with friendship. I love the Philippines. When I arrived here I was open to new friendships. For a long time, I was praying for someone and found her here... God used people like you to get me acquainted with others. I found someone already...I mean a sweetheart. (Johnsou, 32, Male, Africa Franco-phone, Graduate, Nursing, Lines73-76)

According to Sidushia, her social life was enhanced by her friendships. When she was worried, she found someone to confide in. Sidushia said:

Well, ah, friendship contributes to my social life...because I feel like...going from one place to another to eat, you can't do it alone.....dance with friends,... you get to know them....some of my friends who have worries confide in me.....when I talk to them... I put into practice what I study in psychology.... doing counseling....It builds friendships... they get help and share with others....

Ohhh. there is fun, that connectedness to other people, the talking to other people, and of course without nationals, I would miss...the chance of talking to people....I don't know but I like talking to people...I would miss happiness...with friends, you talk to and become happy otherwise it is boring. If I don't have friends, I would do sleeping.

Yes, of course, I would stay and work here. I have friends, not only from my country but also from Filipinos...and other countries...I make friends with shopkeepers and gate people.

(Laughing) Yes, I would even marry her. Yeah. The Philippines. One thing I have seen is that Filipino men work. Yes. They work. They are good at helping ladies....They are supportive of women. (Sidushia, 28, Female, Graduate, Papua New Guinea, Psychology, Lines 120-124, 129-131,134-136).

Both Johnsou and Sidushia had a favorable opinion of the host citizens. They value the language, the food, and the values. Johnsou had no trouble blending. He enjoyed the culture. He has a beloved partner. Sidushia's friendship kept her from being bored and gave her the opportunity to enjoy herself. Because of the close bonds they have already made, these foreign students would decide to get married and even work in the host nation.

A very significant aspect of mankind is friendship. Satisfying deep emotional and personal needs is valuable. According to Aristotle, a happy man will require companions. In his hierarchy of needs, Maslow (1970) placed friendship at level three, along with the desire for love and belonging. This need cuts beyond social, ethnic, religious, gender, and racial divides. Students who study abroad encounter difficulties in their lives, particularly if they fail to form deep friendships in multicultural environments.

According to Kim's cross-cultural adaptation theory (2001), friendships with citizens of the host nation were more significant and equally helpful to the adaption process. Besides, Church (1982) showed that overseas students reported feeling more satisfied, less homesick, and less alone during their



study abroad experience when they interacted with the local countrymen more. Additionally, the students had stronger communication skills, less social challenges, and were better equipped to adjust to living abroad (Ward & Kennedy, 1993b). According to Pruitt (1978), these students typically felt better about the host culture. The transition process was significantly enhanced by the presence of close ties with host nationals (Maudeni, 2001).

Enhanced lifestyle, psychological well-being, enjoyment, and happiness. In the host nation, deep friendships encouraged a healthy way of life. AnnaParia stated that she was independent in her actions. She had learned how to eat and work out. She is now emotionally secure and has a happier, more hopeful life. She could think critically. AnnaParia stated:

From the Bible study group, I have benefitted from a lot of change came.... The friends influenced how to be dependent. I learned how to study the Bible personally. They didn't push what they believed or liked; they taught me how to be independent. Not being dependent on them taught me independence. Then the benefit of my... hmm....when it comes to health....I learned how to eat, exercise....As for me, I didn't know how to eat healthily....they also helped me with emotional issues...When I came I was not like this. When I started studying the Bible it changed my life....there was more hope, more joy, and stabilized me emotionally (AnnaParia, 22, Female, France, Undergraduate, MedTech, Lines 28-35).

Because of her international friends, AnnaParia improved her food habits, exercise routine, and emotional equilibrium. Through Bible studies, she has acquired the ability to think critically.

According to research, meaningful friendships gave international students a network of support (Williams and Johnson, 2011), promoted wellbeing (Finkenauer & Righetti, 2011), served as a safeguard that promoted resilience, and had an impact on psychological well-being and adjustment (Helgeson & Lopez, 2010). Meaningful friendships shield them from engaging in illegal activity, claims (Brass, 2015).

Acquired the ability to think critically. Through Bible studies, AnnaParia honed her critical thinking abilities. She put them to use in her studies. This ability is necessary for academic work. According to AnnaParia,

If it were not for my friends who influenced me to study the Bible, I would not be like this. They taught me to think critically. The thinking process, (the analytic way), the analytic way became my way of doing things. I applied it to my academics. (AnnaParia, 22, Female, France, Undergraduate, MedTech).

According to research, overseas students' study skills allowed them to finish their studies faster and with greater completion rates (Curtin *et al.*, 2013).

Stress was reduced. For overseas students, the academic setting might lead to stressful times in their lives. VeNatu was under stress since she had no pals. VeNatu said:

They (friends) help you push on. Life without friends is hard. It makes me feel someone is going through similar challenges as me. I can relate to that. So we encourage each other. Positively, we share experiences, negatively, when we don't share experiences. (VeNatu, 22, Undergraduate, Nutrition and Dietetics, East Africa, Line 34-36)

Through her friendships, she was able to manage life. They support one another. As a student, she can handle stress. According to Williams and Johnson (2011), meaningful friendships had an impact on adjustment and psychological well-being (Helgeson & Lopez, 2010), created a support system, promoted well-being (Finkenauer & Righetti, 2011), and served as a protective mechanism that promoted resilience.

Less longing for home. International students find life difficult, particularly if they are unable to form deep friendships in multicultural environments. AnnaParia stated:

When I was new, I used to long for home and felt homesick, but now it is long gone. Now that I have been here for 2 years, I have overcome it.Before, I would talk to parents more often. But ever since I have come to appreciate the way Filipinos value their families, and I never thought it before. I felt homesick when I saw them interacting with their families. This made me recall my family. (AnnaParia, 22, Female, France, Undergraduate, MedTech, Lines 58-62)

According to literature (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007), homesickness was a challenging problem to cope with because it led to hopelessness for overseas students who lacked genuine friendships. According to Messina's (2007) research, homesick overseas students exhibited poor decision-making and study skills as well as social anxiety. In addition, some international students experienced serious physical and mental health problems because of their lack of meaningful friendships. Hope, increased self-worth, protection from criminal activity, the ability to achieve social and emotional goals for one another, and the provision of affection and companionship are all benefits of friendship (Brass, 2015).

Adverse consequences. Data indicated that while friendships have a favorable impact on international students, there are also drawbacks. These consequences included social and economic setbacks, postponed necessities, and a distaste for the host nation despite its natural beauty.

Academic requirements are delayed. The results indicated that the friendships that were formed negatively impacted certain international students. Johnsou's failure to submit the academic requirements on time had a detrimental effect. Johnsou said:

...they (friends) take your time for studies....and times you have delayed requirements....Last time, I helped them do tasks and was late to finish my requirements....we had an IC but later completed it. (Johnsou, 32, Male, Africa Franco-phone, Graduate, Nursing, Lines 149-151)

Academic failure, a postponement of graduation, or even a transfer to a different institution could result from late submission of requirements. Research revealed that while international students completed their studies more quickly and with higher completion rates Curtin *et al.* (2013), friendship problems negatively impacted their academic performance, causing them to transfer to another school, lengthen their study period, or receive lower grades.

Emotionally and socially. According to Powder, the absence of friendships has an impact on numerous facets of his life. Said Powder:

Socially, academically, and emotionally, am affected.... no one helps me out to do certain things when stranded. Group work



is better in education. (Powder, 39, Male, PhD candidate, Public Administration, UP Diliman, Lines 47-48).

In addition to using Tagalog against this international student, the host nationals decided to remain in one group. According to Dano,

Some time ago, I performed poorly because I missed a group with which to share information in a discussion. I have a problem with Philippine students....In class, when they are allowed to make discussions or assignments most of them choose to keep with fellow Pinoys. That usually excludes me and others. Usually, they are the majority and make the basis for groups. They prefer their people. Friendship is not promoted by such a move.....Not because they don't understand English, they speak English very well, because they make presentations in good English and feel offended if you tell one that he doesn't know English. (Dano, 24, Male, Graduate, Indonesia, Business, Lines 31-38)

Nyobur claimed that during a class, he was left alone. He was ignored by the host nationals, who gathered. According to Nyobur:

I don't join social events because most of the time I am indoors. I don't go for those activities outside....We have College social activities.....like acquaintance nights and team-building activities....while they are good, but still the challenge is that my fellow students from this country prefer being in their group.

Sometimes negatively.....especially in class. When the professor asks for groups, most of my local classmates choose to sit in one group....That means the discussions will be done within them alone. There is no point of interaction. I also experience moments when my classmates sit on one side of the class, leaving the rest of us to sit uncomfortably alone. They make friendships difficult. I thought we were in this country and the local people should treat us with friendship.....but it is different. Because of this limited time with them, and limited time for acquaintances, I do not learn more facts from them...I am glad my religious life is not affected. (Nyobur, 28, Male, Myanmar, Business, Lines 20-26, 28-35)

When the locals decided to speak in a dialect without considering foreigners, it had an impact on Powder, Dano, and Nyobur. They were necessary for Powder in discussion groups. Dano was absent from a group conversation. Because he might not find the talk enjoyable, Nyobur is unable to participate in social events. A sense of belonging improved the academic performance of international students and promoted cross-cultural engagement between host and international students, according to Glass and Westmont (2014). Additionally, Glass validated viewpoints that social scientists had previously investigated concerning the sense of belonging of overseas students.

Dislike the host country despite its beauty. Furaha seems to have looked at the language barrier as the greatest impediment to friendship formation. She seems to dislike everything in the face of beautiful things in this country. Furaha said:

I have not enjoyed my friendship here. One thing that is the barrier: language. They use Tagalog even in class. I keep reminding them repeatedly but in vain...I have found it hard since I arrived here. One is language, then....cultural

differences... they see things from a different point of view... then adjust to their way of life. (Furaha, 28, Nigeria, PhD candidate Molecular Science, UP Diliman, Lines 3-6).

Furaha dislikes the host country due to the language barrier. It seems like she does not see the beautiful things in the host country including native food, beaches, moderate weather conditions, and respect for the law.

Obstacles to the development of friendship. Despite the international students' reports of both good and negative effects, the data revealed obstacles to the development of friendships. Limited engagement, language hurdles, insensitivity to guests, and disparities in dietary choices are some of the obstacles.

Little interaction. The report from the data showed that international students had barriers in the formation of friendships. It was the host-nationals who created the obstacles. One of those was a lack of communication with the host countrymen. Nana said:

The neighbor in front of my door here is a Filipina...we never talk with her. She never talks to us... They always close the door....probably because she is a working mothermay be... may be....only one time she talked to me. For example for this semester, we have talked only once...I find it difficult to relate to her. (Nana, 35, Graduate, Education, China, Lines 28-31)

A key element in the development of friendships is communication. Friendship quickly fades away when there is less engagement. As communication is to friendship, oxygen is to life.

Linguistic barrier. According to Furaha, friendship obstacles had prevented her from ever enjoying her time in the country. Furaha claimed:

I have not enjoyed my friendship here. One thing is the barrier, language. They use Tagalog even in class. I keep reminding them over and over again but in vain...I have found it hard since I arrived here. (Furaha, 28, Nigeria, PhD candidate, Molecular Science, UP Diliman, Lines 3-6).

Powder also mentioned that he had encountered a similar linguistic issue with the host countrymen. Powder expressed:

I have been here for almost two years now. My experience with the Filipinos.....is that they are very work-oriented. But one thing....I don't know if they know it or not... they speak a lot of Tagalog, without recognizing the presence of other people.....

It hinders my interaction with them.....very much.... I visited one church and they welcomed me very well....they even asked me to speak..but later, in the afternoon, they used Tagalog. I wanted to learn something for myself but the use of Tagalog was a problem to me. (Powder, 39, Male, PhD candidate, Public Administration, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Lines 2-6, 8-13)

Nyobur stated that he had language difficulties. Without considering other nations, the host nationals opt to speak the local dialect, ignoring him. According to Nyobur,

They often use Tagalog for communication, and this excludes me and other friends - internationals as well. I wonder why they use Tagalog in a setup where we have international students who don't understand their language. So, I have decided not to move friends with local people. (Nyobur, 28, Male, Myanmar, Business, Lines 20-26).

A language barrier prevented Furaha, Powder, and Nyobur from



becoming friends. The local dialect, which overseas students do not learn, was the sole language available to the host nationals. Communication may be hampered by language barriers faced by both international and domestic students. It serves as a conduit for friendship: the exchange of ideas, sentiments, and perspectives. The influence of language on the development of friendships among international students is demonstrated in literature. It was challenging to make acquaintances with the host country because of the inadequate proficiency in the language (Yamazaki *et al.*, 1997).

Kudo and Simkin (2003) assert that the development of intercultural friendships is significantly impacted by spoken English proficiency. Likewise, Gudykunst *et al.* (1991) documented numerous instances when a lack of language proficiency prevented people from getting to know one another. Second, many international students reported feeling discriminated against (Leong & Ward, 2000) and/or discovering that people in the host environment had racial or ethnic biases (Kim, 1994; Rajani *et al.*, 2018; Redden, 2012). Third, it can be challenging for international students to make friends in a country where locals have already built friendship networks and affiliations (Woolf, 2007). For instance, Japanese students studying in Australia found it challenging to spend time with Australians who already had obligations to their families and other activities, according to Kudo and Simkin (2003).

In conclusion, research on foreign students and their networks of friends highlights how important it is for the adjustment process for them to build friendships with people from their host country. The quantity, variety, and depth of social interactions with host nations were determined to be the most significant factors pertaining to international students' adjustment (Church, 1982).

Inconsiderate of foreigners. In a separate development, Powder stated that he had encountered a similar mindset from the locals. Said powder:

I expect the learned friends to be considerate and sensitive to strangers who don't follow the conversations....but they seem to be uncaring...

...They use English in other places....as for UP it is a big school.....they teach English...but use also Tagalog. We back home are sensitive to strangers....we care for them...we don't speak anything outside that they don't understand. We consider it backbiting...Even here in UP, it is ... (shrugging). (Powder, 39, Male, PhD candidate, Public Administration, UP Diliman, Lines 11, 12, 16-19).

Furaha claimed that she didn't get the attention she was hoping for and was left alone. Friendship development is hampered when kids don't care about the well-being of others, they don't assist, and nobody cares. Furaha said:

If it is at home, if you have a visitor, your attention will be turned to a visitor. You would want to help, ensure he is fine; going out of his way to ensure his comfort. But not here..... Here, everyone is on his own....not minding your welfare...if you need help or not, no one bothers....during meal times, they all rush leaving the visitor to also scramble on the line. (Furaha, 28, Nigeria, PhD candidate, Molecular Science, UP Diliman, Lines 50-54).

There have been instances where host nations and even

other students failed to acknowledge the presence of foreign nationals, according to Furaha and Powder. Using the vernacular and acting carelessly over meals prevents many people from forming friendships in a mixed-national group. Numerous obstacles, such as neighborhood and school segregation, prejudice, the expectation that the minority must blend in with the majority culture, a lack of trust, and peer pressure, are known to hinder friendships across racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation boundaries (Mahzad & Moyer, 2017). What anthropologists already knew—that the 'need to belong' was a basic human motivation—was confirmed by Glass (2018). This was in line with the findings of Baumeister and Leary (1995), who stated that 'human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships' (p. 497). Cultural differences, prejudice, insufficient bonding, and bridging activities are some of the reasons why friendship may be lacking.

Variations in dietary preferences. Many international students were deprived of social activities due to the disparity in food types. As a result, they were unable to interact and form friendships with other students. According to Nana:

You know, it is hard to relate when you don't talk to people. If people don't talk to you, it is hard. I have difficulty talking to them....Every time I finish class, I just come to my room, I carry and do my assignments in the house.. here..... not with any of them. There is a problem....there is a problem....you know.... culture... The next is food...(shaking her head)...I think you know the food. I don't like Filipino food. It is very salty, or very sweet...(sugary).....Yes, sugary...I don't like sugary foods..but to them...everything is sugary.....something else....something else.....the food is very...very...with fat....(Oily)....yes...it is very oily.....But to them they like it...They eat most of the time. The stomach has not rested. They eat between meals...This is unhealthy. (Nana, 35, Graduate, Education, China, Lines 52-71). Nana's limited social engagements stem from her preference. She disliked very salty, sweet, and greasy foods that were common in social gatherings. These prevented her from interacting with others during social gatherings. Friendship cannot be built on a foundation of insufficient interactions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

First, the international students' friendship with countrymen is due to the similarities (in culture, food, and expression of feelings at home), proximity, and companionship, and had many common topics to share. Secondly, the international students' friendship with other international students is due to common religious events, collaborative activities, prizes and gifts, facial attractiveness, willingness to discuss worries and acts of kindness, and exposure were among the emerging shared themes that enriched this partnership. Thirdly, it can be concluded that the international students' friendship with host country students is typically for social engagement. Common experiences that strengthen this bond include appreciating the host culture, leading to a desire to marry and work, as well as socializing. Furthermore, foreign students who miss their home influences substitute their patterns of love, care, and belonging to others for their ideas, feelings, and behaviors. They make



acquaintances with host country students. Countertransference is common. They may work and get married to people in this host nation.

The impact of friendship development on international students' lives has both negative and positive effects. Positive effects include the appreciation of culture thereby enhancing enjoyment and happiness, improving lifestyle and psychological well-being, developing critical thinking, reducing homesickness, and relieving stress. In other words, hope, increased self-worth, protection against criminal activity, the ability to achieve social and emotional goals for one another, and the provision of affection and companionship are all benefits of friendship. The drawbacks include social and economic setbacks, postponed necessities, a distaste for the host nation despite its natural beauty, a delay in academic requirements, emotional, and social interruptions. The obstacles to the development of friendship include limited engagement, linguistic barriers, and insensitivity to foreigners, especially in dietary choices.

Friendships with their fellow citizens provide emotional and psychological support. Preferring friendships with people from the host country, these students value the culture and are open to getting married and working there. For students who favor friendships with people from different countries, cultural networking is beneficial. Furthermore, the international students form their friendships based on the Ben Franklin effect, law of attraction, matching hypothesis mere exposure, propinquity effect, reinforcement affect, repulsion and communication accommodation theory, relationship, social penetration, and social exchange. The purpose is more in instrumental facilitation of academic, and professional aspirations and life satisfaction of international students.

In agreement with psychoanalytic transference theory, the study proves that friendships can develop anywhere. People require belonging, affection, and friendships. If these basic needs are not satisfied by the immediate family because of distance or other circumstances, friendships with other people will quickly form. People have mastered the art of transferring emotions, ideas, and actions to other people. International students who yearn for the affection, care, and sense of belonging that come from home displace their thought and emotion patterns toward other people. Their friendships were with students from their own countries, other countries, or studies abroad. Both countertransference and transference took place. Despite being separated from their parents, guardians, and siblings, international students quickly make acquaintances in their new country of study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this study, institutions that boast of having international students ought to be intentional in ensuring healthy friendship formations in a multicultural environment. The orientation programs should not only deal with norms, expectations, and culture of the host country and institution, but also an intentional appreciation of each international student's culture in terms of food, dress code, general norms, and social, and spiritual life. Let the institutional leaders take time to appreciate these students more keenly than haphazard routine programs. This will reduce homesickness and complaints. As

institutions celebrate the presence of international students, let them shoulder the challenge of understanding each culture represented in their compounds. Besides, there should be a policy on multiculturalism.

The findings of this qualitative phenomenological study demonstrated the common experiences of international students in forming friendships in a multicultural environment. Further research would consider a case study to investigate how certain international students could form friendships from all the categories. The establishment of a multicultural setting that would facilitate and encourage international education initiatives would also be examined. It would also examine methods to enhance international students' social interaction skills and comfort levels. Discussion was held regarding the findings' implications.

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