“My Neighbor, My Friend”: The Relevance of Support, Closeness, and History of Relations in Neighborhood Friendship

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Received: 15 November 2021 / Revised: 10 February 2022 / Accepted: 11 March 2022 © The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2022

Abstract

Friendship is a common and essential social relationship in daily life. Various works of literature have described friendship including how it is experienced in various contexts, yet limited studies have focused on the neighborhood context. This study aimed to investigate the relevance of neighborhood friendship and the characteristics of friendship that make it still relevant, especially in Indonesia. This study was conducted in two phases: 1) an online survey with an open-ended questionnaire and 2) in-depth interviews. A total of 222 participants completed the questionnaire and among those, 15 participants were interviewed to further understand the relevance of neighborhood friendship based on the emerging themes from the open-ended responses. This study found that neighborhood friendship is still relevant despite physical distance. Those relevancies are perceived in the three main characteristics of friendship: support, closeness, and history of relations. This study also found that the essence of friendship is not only discussed in a romantic view which highlights intimacy and closeness, but also in an instrumental view. However, support as an instrumental process may indicate the expressions of closeness, especially in close friendships. Furthermore, this study also suggests that although proximity characterized by physical interaction is crucial in the formation and maintenance of neighborhood friendship, physical distance and social mobility did not dissolve the relationship, due to the history of relations. In the neighborhood context, the history of relations bond people to a certain place and the social relationship formed in that particular place, stimulating certain feelings of belonging which encourage the maintenance of neighborhood friendship.

Keywords  Friendship · Neighborhood · Support · Closeness · History of Relations

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Introduction

Friendship is the most common type of social relationship, in which almost everyone has a friend (Blieszner & Adams, 1992). Friendships are described as distinct from the usual, everyday relationships of people (Brissett & Oldenburg, 1982) and different from other forms of interpersonal and family relations. Nevertheless, questions remain on how friendship differs from other forms of relationships. The return to questions about friendship during the COVID-19 pandemic is essential, even though this study does not specifically focus on the pandemic as a context to understand friendship. During the pandemic, the way friendship is formed, maintained, and viewed, may have changed with social distancing measures in place. In the neighborhood context, social distancing measures have strained face-to-face interactions which is the most common interaction found in neighborhood settings. We will return to a discussion on neighborhood friendship, but first, we would like to provide an overview of the literature on friendship in general.

Several elements of friendship are posed to further understand the characteristics of friendship. Previous literature suggests that friendship is a relationship that involves voluntary or unconstrained interaction in which someone responds to another in a personalistic way (Lea, 1989). The relation of friendship is also symmetric (Leibowitz, 2018) and could be understood as reciprocal and egalitarian relationships in which both partners acknowledge the relationship and treat each other as equals (Rubin & Bowker, 2018). Besides, individuals typically choose those who are similar to themselves in such characteristics as gender, age, and behavioral styles to make friends (Rubin & Bowker, 2018). Similarly, Fischer’s cross-sectional study (1982) of 1050 adults living in northern California revealed that the research participants defined “friend” as everyone to whom no specific title was available, oriented to people of the same age, and directed to sociability, to everyone whom people meet, hang out together, discuss and share memories of the past, and join an organization together. Friendship is often characterized by shared activities, communication, affection, trust, responsibility, mutual commitment, and support (Argyle & Furnham, 1983; Hays, 1984; van Duijn et al., 2003). Communication often refers to self-disclosure and discussion, support that involves showing concern and providing assistance (Argyle & Furnham, 1983) and affection that includes expressing sentiment and emotional bonds (Hays, 1984). Additionally, Annis (1987) suggests the central elements of friendship which include: mutual liking, shared experiences, care and sympathy, and trust, which can increase welfare.

Friendship is generally viewed in a positive light and literature has mostly shown the positive outcome of friendship. Friendships may provide experiences that facilitate interconnectedness and actions that can lead to caring for self and others (Cleary et al., 2018). Friendship is a relationship that can fulfill important personal needs such as inclusion, affection (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and identity affirmation (Wright, 1984). Friendship also provides a consistent emotional bond and sense of belonging which creates a sense of meaningfulness in a relationship (Bauminger et al., 2008). It is a medium for positive support and self-validation which then helps a person fulfill various socioemotional needs and goals (Demir et al., 2007) and is consistently correlated with happiness (Demir et al., 2013). Thus, friendships have a vital role in supporting mental health and well-being.

The impact of friendships on mental wellbeing may also head in a more negative direction. Blieszner and Adams (1998) formulated four ways in which friendships can be problematic. First, friendship may lead to differences in perception of each other’s
characteristics, such as a person being ‘annoying’. It may also stem from internal structure features of the relationship; a friendship maybe ‘too close’ or ‘too distant’, there might be certain unbalanced power dynamics within the friendship that could prove detrimental to the relationship. External factors may come into play, as friendships may have to be forcibly terminated or less maintained due to physical separation or differences in life patterns. Conflict may arise in daily life, caused by or causing feelings of hurt, betrayal, and disappointment, yielding anger, distress, or even merely indifference.

Literature on friendship also discusses the phases of friendship development, suggested by Blieszner and Adams (1992) beginning with formation, which marks the shift from strangers to acquaintances. This phase is characterized by efforts to identify potential friends and to build a foundation of the friendship through initial interactions and disclosure. Following the establishment of friendship is the maintenance phase, concerning the different ways friendships are sustained, and individuals continue to be involved with one another according to different expectations and values that are put on the friendship. Evaluations of friendship happen in this phase (e.g., whether a person would like to retain the friendship, to be more involved, or to terminate it) leading to the final, optional phase; dissolution. While some friendships are assumed or maintained for an indefinite period of time, some others dissolve due to involuntary causes, such as death or forced separation, or voluntary causes like mutual disagreement. Causes can come from external forces, such as physical relocation of individuals, or internal forces, such as lack of sufficient emotional closeness. Dissolution may be a direct request to end the friendship, or a less explicit method such as letting the friendship drift away (Amati et al., 2018; Blieszner & Adams, 1992). Based on the stages of formation, friendship can take the form of close friendship and casual friendship (Bryant & Marmo, 2009). Close friendships are associated with high levels of interaction, self-disclosure, intimacy, involvement, and interdependence (Kelley et al., 1983; Sillars & Scott, 1983) along with the requirement of positive mutual perceptions (Sherman et al., 2000). In contrast, casual friendships usually exist in the early stages of relationship development and have not yet reached the intimacy, closeness, and communal bonds as presented in close friendships. In casual friendships, a friend engages in shared activities and experiences low to moderate levels of closeness, yet typically avoids revealing extremely intimate information (Berger & Roloff, 1982).

**Gender and Age in Friendship**

Previous studies also suggest that age and gender can be contributing factors in the variation of friendship characteristics. Men emphasize the importance of friendship and affiliation more than women (Smollar & Youniss, 1985) as men’s friendships are more often characterized by how they relate to others and share activities with friends (Bell, 1981). However, women perceive friendship development more rapidly than men and focus more on intimacy and interpersonal support at an earlier age than men (Berndt, 1981; Bigelow & LaGaipa, 1980). Both genders consider intimacy as important (Bukowski & Kramer, 1986), but women’s friendships tend to be more personal and emotionally based than that of men.

In terms of gender and age, Matthews (1983), and Roberto and Kimboko (1989) reported that there are no differences in orientations toward friendship between older men and women. According to Adams et al. (2000), men increased their use of affection or appreciation, whereas women decreased theirs with age. The opposite pattern emerged for loyalty or commitment. Moreover, women mentioned self-disclosure more frequently,
whereas men mentioned trust more often. Identification of assistance or support dimension decreased with age for men, but not for women who reported that the compatibility and shared activities increased with age. In sum, previous studies do not show consistency about the differences between women and men in friendship meaning and orientation.

While most literature on friendship tends to discuss same-sex friendships, women and men also form friendships, generally known as cross-sex friendships. Cross-sex friendship places more emphasis on cost–benefit, such as meeting material needs, cognitive needs (e.g., experience or knowledge), and socio-emotional needs (e.g., by providing love and self-esteem; Lenton & Webber, 2006). In cross-sex friendships, women reported receiving protection from their opposite-sex friends more often than men did, and they perceived the protection as highly beneficial (Bleske & Buss, 2000). Cross-sex friendships seem to be relevant across cultures (Demir et al., 2012), but cultural norms are also influential in providing a guide on how men and women should interact with each other (Felmlee et al., 2012).

Generation and age provide an important context in how friendship is viewed. For instance, Indonesians in their middle to late adulthood highlighted the importance of instrumental and reciprocal friendships in their neighborhood network. Looser and more instrumental friendship types play a central role in the everyday life of this older generation in Indonesia. The term “friend” (teman) is referred to by the older generation as the most common type of friendship, incorporating far acquaintances, casual friends, and intimate friends (close friends or teman dekat). In contrast, friendship for the younger Indonesian generation, especially those in their late adolescence, functions to fulfill personal needs such as the need for emotional belonging (Brandt & Heuser, 2011). This study shows the possibility of a shift from a collectivistic orientation to an individualistic orientation among Indonesia’s younger generation. Otherwise, it may also indicate a more universal shift related to generational characteristics across the lifespan. This means that as a person grows older, instrumental friendship which emphasizes the need for support also increases (McDougall & Hymel, 2007).

In conclusion, friendship is considerably difficult to define with an all-encompassing definition (Adams et al., 2000). Friendships tend to be holistic and subjective than elementaristic and objective (Brissett & Oldenburg, 1982). As such, friendship is viewed differently according to varying characteristics such as age and gender. The way friendship is viewed may also change across the life course. However, the essence of the relationship lies in the dynamics and intimate self-disclosure or primary selves (Walker & Wright, 1976).

**Friendship in Context**

Despite the central elements of friendship that seem universally accepted as the general characteristics of friendship, friendship varies in terms of meaning according to circumstance or settings. Literature on friendship has described how friendship is experienced in various settings, from wide cultural contexts to schools or colleges, workplaces, and organizations. For example, Verkuyten (1996) stated that participants from collectivist cultures have greater sensitivity to friends, having fewer friends but seeing their relationship more closely, and feeling less intimacy with those who are not close friends. On the contrary, Adams and Plaut (2003) also claimed that friendships in collectivistic societies are characterized by putting less emphasis on self-disclosure and highlighting instrumental assistance as an important element of friendship (González et al., 2004; Tietjen, 1989).
The instrumental characteristic of friendship among adolescents in Indonesia was also mentioned by French et al. (2006). It is likely that the prior studies refer to forms of close friendship, emphasizing closeness and intimacy, while the latter studies point to more casual forms of relationships which encompass a wide range of friends and thus are more instrumental.

In workplace friendships (Choi & Ko, 2020), workers have informal and personal relationships to deal with isolation in the workplace. Friendship networks are based on intimacy, trust, and social liking rather than a specific task and have non-performance benefits, such as work commitments. Similarly, students at university also form friendships as important relationships to fulfill the need for emotional support in a stressful academic life. Friendship on campus tends to exist in a small group (cliques) influenced by gender, social class, age, and ethnicity (Read et al., 2020). In community organizations, friendship tends to be homogeneous in organizational goals. They also foster solidarity, regardless of members’ social characteristics (Adams & Ueno, 2008).

As previously mentioned, the neighborhood is an important context to further understand friendship. Only a limited set of studies have focused on the neighborhood context. Literature on neighborhood and friendship reveals that in general, neighborhood social relations take the form of acquaintance relations (e.g. Kusenbach, 2006; Morgan, 2009). Yet, in many cases, friendships grow as a result of proximity, often referred to as ‘local friendship’. Proximity, such as in neighborhood contexts, provides a feeling of security due to close presence and involvement in activities such as visiting homes, sharing food, or exchanging local news which tends to be instrumental in nature. The neighborhood context also involves binding norms, such as friendliness, helpfulness, respect, and involvement in local social activities. These norms provide opportunities to interact more often and adapt to the social environment through friendships (Wenger, 1990).

A neighborhood is a place that allows opportunities to form friendships based on components of proximity and reciprocity. Historically, a neighborhood appears wherever human beings live together, live near one another (Kallus & Law-Yone, 2000). Mumford (1954) suggests that neighborhoods are composed of people who enter, either by birth or chosen, a common residence life. Therefore, the neighborhood is a place defined by the identity of the people inhabiting it which originated from the strength of human bonds in the context of their living environment (Kallus & Law-Yone, 2000). Ruonavaara (2021) summarized the literature on neighborhoods and defined them in three main ideas. Neighborhoods are formed by individuals living together in the same residential area, they are physically so close to each other, and thus, their lives are influenced by each other. Not only staying physically close, being neighbors also requires recognition of each other, especially from the member/insider’s perspectives. Therefore, the potential for neighbors to shift from being acquaintances to becoming friends is quite high, especially when intimacy is present in the relationship (Keller, 1968; Rosenblum, 2018).

In urban contexts, neighborhood friendship is valuable in providing a sense of communal identity that crosses group boundaries (DuBois & Hirsch, 1990), a buffer for loneliness in situations of immobility (Gan & Best, 2021), and a medium to foster social trust that can support the subjective well-being of occupants (Fahmi et al., 2019). Additionally, compared to other social identities, neighborhood identity is also considered to have a higher level of permeability (Ossenkop et al., 2015; Thai et al., 2014). This is possible because the neighborhood group is considered to have a relatively moderate cohesiveness which allows members to create more flexible and open relationships (Hewstone et al., 2014), including a more permeable friendship. All of the above factors are crucial for inclusiveness and integration at the community level.
However, neighborhood relations also come with high levels of diversity in identity, values, and behavior, which may lead to conflict between neighbors (Gans, 1961). Moreover, individuals have the tendency to choose friends on the basis of similarity in backgrounds, such as age, socioeconomic background, values, and interests. Differing educational levels and length of stay in a certain neighborhood, for example, negatively impact the perception of intimacy between neighbors. Neighbors with a higher educational level are predicted to be less likely to be approached by their neighbors (Alami et al., 2012). This suggests that neighborhood friendships may have more opportunities to blossom in a homogenous neighborhood (Blieszner & Adams, 1998; Gans, 1961).

**Neighborhoods in Indonesia**

Indonesian society is often assumed to value the ideals of collectivism (Hofstede, 2011), promoting togetherness, mutual assistance and respect, and harmony as a group. In the context of neighborhoods, the values of collectivism are also associated with how neighborhoods work. Neighborhoods in Indonesia are commonly referred to by the term “kampung”. Kampung can be located both in rural and urban areas (Guinness, 2009). As a so-called collectivistic society, relationships in neighborhoods include sharing stories or discussions as a group. Discussions cover a wide range of topics, from matters of actual issues in Indonesia to programs regarding the environment, social, and humanitarian action (Fryling & Hayes, 2019). These gatherings also involve affective expressions and solving problems as a group, for instance through communal gatherings. These gatherings are often the core of neighborhood activities. Each region in Indonesia has its own term in referring to this kind of socialization, such as "srawung" in Java (Geertz, 1960; Magnis-Suseno, 1997), "mapalus" in Minahasa (Nelwan et al., 2018), and “marsialapari” in Mandailing (Sibarani, 2018). Social punishment, such as inattentiveness from other community members, is executed for those who do not participate in those gatherings.

Rural neighborhoods usually maintain certain practices to serve the interest of the community. One example of a long-held tradition in rural neighborhoods is carrying out the community neighborhood watch systems (siskamling). Men in the neighborhood take turns making rounds throughout the neighborhood to secure the environment. A small security post is commonly used as a place for these men to gather during this shift. In urban areas, a kampung refers to a neighborhood inhabited by people from lower-middle classes. This is supported by the development of social housing projects with an affordable price and sufficient infrastructure facilities for low-income people (Yuliastuti et al., 2015). However, urban neighborhoods nowadays are more heterogeneous, characterized by a tight-knit community, unaffected, and not differentiated by types of housing, economic ability, and cultural backgrounds. Urban neighborhoods often no longer maintain long-held traditions such as those in rural neighborhoods. Yet, urban neighborhoods still claim common interests and construct community symbols (Guinness, 2009). Thus, urban and rural neighborhoods nowadays continue communal activities, but also modify them. For instance, the community neighborhood watch systems are sometimes replaced with other shared social activities, such as sports, community services, and cultural-related activities with the more flexible arrangements (Fahmi et al., 2019).

In conclusion of the overall literature review, we find that the aforementioned studies have shown that friendship is most likely viewed in a positive light, and thus, still highly relevant. Negative outcomes of friendship are discussed, but to a lesser extent. We suggest two main characteristics of friendship from the literature that makes friendship still
relevant: affective and instrumental characteristics. Affective characteristics of friendship which include affection such as closeness, intimacy through acts of self-disclosure, and trust are often cited in the literature on friendship. The second characteristic of friendship is rather instrumental, consisting of mutuality (e.g., support, commitment, communication, voluntary acts), symmetric and reciprocal relations, and shared activities. However, which characteristic dominates friendship depends on several factors such as the depth of the friendship (e.g., close friendship or casual friendship), the demographic characteristics of those involved in the friendship (e.g., age or generation, gender), and the context or situation in which the friendship is formed and maintained (e.g., neighborhood or workplace). Friendship also changes, and possibly evolves throughout the life course. Instrumental forms of friendship seem to be more apparent in older ages. Moreover, some studies also suggest the instrumental nature of friendship among adolescents.

As one of the contexts in which friendship develops, neighborhoods not only facilitate and support the formation of friendship through the proximity of living arrangements, but also the maintenance of it. Neighborhoods in Indonesia still encourage collective ideals through communal gatherings, which further provides opportunities for the formation of friendship. However, there are still contradictory findings on how Indonesian society, as a so-called collectivistic society, views and practices friendship. Some studies tend to conclude that as a collectivistic society, Indonesian friendship is based on instrumental characteristics, while others view affective characteristics as more dominant. We suggest that as a setting that emphasizes communal interests and goals, neighborhood friendship in Indonesia tends to be more instrumental rather than affective, regardless of gender or age. However, affective characteristics of friendship may dominate—depending on the depth of the relationship. In this study, we question “to what extent is neighborhood friendship relevant and which characteristics of neighborhood friendship make it still relevant?”.

Study Objectives

Mobility, global connectedness, and the growth of online friendships, especially among young people, presumably reduce the significance of physical proximity that neighborhood contexts provide as a requirement for the formation and maintenance of friendship. The existing literature has provided insights into (neighborhood) friendship, yet to what extent neighborhood friendship is still relevant and the characteristics of friendship that make it relevant remains unclear. Thus, this study intends to investigate the relevance of neighborhood friendship and the characteristics of friendship that make it still relevant, especially in Indonesia.

Methods

Participants

The study was conducted in two phases: 1) an online survey with an open-ended questionnaire and 2) in-depth interviews. Participants in this study have identified themselves as having friendly relationships with their neighbors. The open-ended questionnaire was distributed online during April to May 2021 via various social media platforms, such as WhatsApp groups, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to reach as many potential and willing participants as possible. A total of 222 participants (166 women & 56 men;
Mean age = 25.29 years old) from various ethnicities in Indonesia (44.59% were Javanese) completed the online survey. Table 1 describes the online survey participant demographics. In the second phase of the study (Table 2), in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 participants (7 women & 8 men; Mean age = 24.7 years old) selected from the online survey participant list, based on several criteria explained in the procedure section. The interviews were carried out from June to August 2021.

Procedures

As aforementioned, data in this study were collected in two phases: open-ended questions through online survey and in-depth interviews. The open-ended questions were distributed to obtain a general map of how neighbor friendship is perceived (i.e., how relevant it is for the participants and why). Then, we carried out an interview with 15 participants to explore the responses from the open-ended questionnaires in more depth. Interviews helped to elaborate the participants’ perspectives and experiences of friendship. We will explain each procedure in further detail below.

### Table 1 Participant Demographics (Online Survey)

| Demographic Variables | Total (n = 222) |
|-----------------------|----------------|
|                       | n   | f (%) |
| **Gender**            |     |       |
| Male                  | 56  | 25.23 |
| Female                | 166 | 74.77 |
| **Age Category**      |     |       |
| 19—20 years old       | 40  | 18.02 |
| 21—25 years old       | 91  | 40.99 |
| 26—30 years old       | 63  | 28.38 |
| 31—35 years old       | 19  | 8.56  |
| 36—40 years old       | 6   | 2.70  |
| > 40 years old        | 3   | 1.35  |
| **Ethnicity**         |     |       |
| Javanese              | 99  | 44.59 |
| Buginese              | 46  | 20.72 |
| Makassar              | 16  | 7.21  |
| Mixed Ethnicity       | 15  | 6.76  |
| Sumatera              | 3   | 1.35  |
| Sundanese             | 6   | 2.70  |
| Malay                 | 5   | 2.25  |
| Balinese              | 3   | 1.35  |
| Others                | 26  | 13.00 |
| **Estimated Monthly Expenditure** | | |
| Below 1 million       | 62  | 27.93 |
| 1—3 million           | 106 | 47.75 |
| 3—5 million           | 19  | 8.56  |
| Above 5 million       | 18  | 8.11  |
| Refuse to answer      | 17  | 7.66  |
An open-ended questionnaire was utilized in this study, which enabled researchers to obtain more diverse and factual data (Carmichael, 2017). Participants first responded to questions of whether they had someone they considered close friends from their childhood neighborhood. Only participants who reported having such friends were directed to answer the next questions in the survey. Those who moved on to the next question were then requested to name their neighborhood friends in order to prime participants about these particular friends. Afterward, participants answered two questions aimed to probe the meaning of friendship between neighbors, such as “What is a friend? Do you have close neighborhood friends? How important are the close friends you mentioned earlier?” and “Tell us briefly about your friendship with the previously mentioned friends”. At the end of the survey, participants also responded to a set of questions related to their demographic information which included: sex, age, education, estimated family expenditure, and the type of current living area. All participants of the online survey received a small monetary reward (10,000 IDR or US$ 0.70).

After the themes from the open-ended questionnaires were identified, we decided to focus on participants who mentioned “history of relations” as a defining characteristic of their neighborhood friendship to be interviewed. Out of 44 participants who provided this answer, 24 participants stated in the questionnaire that they agreed to be contacted further by the researchers. However, out of those 24 participants, only 15 people actually agreed to participate in the interview sessions. Fifteen separated semi-structured interviews were then conducted to explore the participants’ views of the neighborhood friendship, as well as the quality, strength, and diversity of their friendships with their neighbors. The interviews were conducted in both Bahasa Indonesia and the local language alternately to create a more convenient atmosphere for the participants during the interview processes and to reduce semantic barriers in conveying the meaning of information.

| Pseudonym | Gender | Age | Ethnicity | Estimated Monthly Income |
|-----------|--------|-----|-----------|--------------------------|
| Edo       | Male   | 29  | Javanese  | Above 5 million          |
| Ihsan     | Male   | 23  | Javanese  | 1 – 3 million            |
| Dito      | Male   | 21  | Javanese  | Below 1 million          |
| Ardi      | Male   | 31  | Javanese  | 3 – 4 million            |
| Hiza      | Male   | 21  | Javanese  | Below 1 million          |
| Riza      | Male   | 23  | Javanese  | 1 – 3 million            |
| Tio       | Male   | 25  | Javanese  | Above 5 million          |
| Adi       | Male   | 23  | Javanese  | Below 1 million          |
| Silvia    | Female | 27  | Javanese  | 1 – 3 million            |
| Isna      | Female | 22  | Tolaki    | Below 1 million          |
| Arfi      | Female | 24  | Sundanese | 1 – 3 million            |
| Nita      | Female | 26  | Javanese  | 3 – 4 million            |
| Lili      | Female | 25  | Banjarese | 3 – 4 million            |
| Ima       | Female | 25  | Javanese  | 1 – 3 million            |
| Amira     | Female | 25  | Javanese  | Refuse to answer         |
Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was conducted to identify the essence of qualitative themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2018), both in the online survey data and in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis was used as it allowed researchers to identify patterns within and across data sets and is suitable for exploring friendship experiences and perspectives.

First, we analyzed and coded themes from the open-ended questions. The initial codes were established by second and third authors and trained assistants. The first and fourth authors subsequently reviewed the codes. The codes and themes were then refined to ensure the credibility of the coding process. All authors regularly discussed potential themes and improved codes to clarify the building framework. Then, we decided which themes needed to be further explored. The data from the interviews were used to further explain the themes we identified from the open-ended questions. Data familiarization was achieved by repeatedly reading the data from the open-ended questions and interview transcripts. Next, we developed thematic maps and constructed conceptual meanings and definitions. We use pseudonyms to refer to the participants’ identities.

Ethical Statement

This study emphasized the principles of anonymity and volunteerism in each participant’s involvement. All participants have obtained information about the purpose of the study, what participants would do, and the opportunity for withdrawal from participation in the study prior to the data collection process. All participants, both in the online survey and in-depth interview phases, have provided their consent to participate in the study. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Gadjah Mada (approval date: 22 April 2021, number: 2626/UN1/FPSi.1.3/SD/PT.01.04/2021).

Findings

Why is Neighborhood Friendship Relevant?

We have explained previously that the first step in our analysis was constructing a thematic analysis of participant responses to our online survey. In our questionnaire, we asked participants to mention their neighborhood friends that they feel close to. Then, we asked two questions: “how important are the close (neighborhood) friend(s) you mentioned earlier? Please explain your answer; and “Briefly describe your friendship(s) with the previously mentioned friend(s)?””. In this questionnaire, a close friend may also refer to a neighborhood friend a person feels closest to, not necessarily having the same meaning as a close friend in a theoretical sense. The reason we chose the term close friend here, is because we wanted participants to be able to elaborate in detail about their friendships with their neighborhood friends. Using the term “friend” only could be perceived in a variety of ways, as the term “friend” in Indonesia can also refer to acquaintances, as we will discuss later in this paper.

Table 3 shows the themes extracted from online survey data along with the descriptive data of each theme. From this analysis, we found that neighborhood friendship remains
relevant for our participants for reasons most friendships are. Out of 222 participants, 80.63% reported that relational qualities, mainly support, as the most relevant reason as to why neighborhood friendships are formed and maintained. This is quite in contrast to the answers that refer to the a) personal qualities of friendship (10%), such as kindness and trustworthiness, and to b) the spatial dimension of friendship (4.5%). Thus, we will focus on elaborating the top three sub-themes that emerged under the larger theme of relational qualities, considered relevant in the formation of neighborhood friendship.

The first subtheme is ‘support’, which refers to the availability and mutual support of the neighborhood friend. Availability is the presence of a friend, both physically and psychologically, in providing support. For example, participants responded to the open-ended questions with the following statements: “They are always there every time I need them, even though we are sometimes far away and busy with our education or work …” or “They are both there for me during my ups and downs and they are also good listeners.”

Similarly, mutual support here can be described as a reciprocal relationship concerning the provision of mutual help and support for one another in the form of social, psychological, and instrumental support. An example of a response in the open-ended question that we categorized as mutual support is “We share everything, we help each other if one of us is facing difficulty or need help, we also share our stories.” The difference between mutual support and availability is that mutual support mainly involves mutuality or reciprocal relationship, whereas availability refers to the expectation that the friend will be available. In other words, availability refers to a one-way mode of relationship rather than a mutual one. However, we suggest that the two aspects indicate some forms of support in friendship.

The second most relevant characteristic of neighborhood friendship is ‘closeness’. Closeness refers to the degree of intimacy between friends and is often indicated by how much disclosure is practiced among the parties involved in the friendship. Some of the answers that we categorized as closeness include “We are very close, we are by each other’s side if there are any problems. I am closer to my (neighborhood) friend than I am with my own sibling” and “I consider my friend as my sibling or as part of my family.”

Table 3 Reasons for Perceiving Neighborhood Friendship as Relevant

| The Relevance of Neighborhood Friendship | Total |
|-----------------------------------------|-------|
| n (%)                                   |       |
| Personal Qualities                      |       |
| Independency                            | 22    | 9.91 |
| Kindness                                | 12    | 5.41 |
| Trustworthy                             | 4     | 1.8  |
| Relational Qualities                    | 190   | 80.6 |
| Support (availability and mutual support)| 101   | 45.5 |
| Closeness                               | 39    | 17.6 |
| Moral compass                           | 6     | 2.7  |
| History of relation                     | 44    | 14.9 |
| Spatial Dimension                       | 10    | 4.5  |
| Distance                                | 4     | 1.8  |
| Proximity                               | 6     | 2.7  |
| Total                                   | 222   | 100  |
because my friend knows how I feel, what my mood is, etc.” Several of the participant’s answers that indicated closeness with their neighborhood friend are often parallel with a relationship with kin, especially that of (nuclear) family and siblings. Other answers equate closeness with disclosure. Disclosure can either refer to the effects of the disclosure such as mutual understanding (“My friend also knows my strength and my weakness”), or the feeling of comfort to disclose oneself (“We are that close. I feel comfortable confiding in my friend if something happens to me”). The closeness which implies emotional disclosure and intimacy is also experienced not only by women but also by men, for example, “We are already like family. When I come to his house, I can stay and mess up his house, share my stories and support each other.”

The third most relevant characteristic of neighborhood friendship is the ‘history of relations’ which refers to the history of friendship that is considered important in continuing a friendship. A friend is an old friend whom a participant has known since childhood. For example, “He was my friend when I was in elementary school and until now, we still see each other when I go back home in the village”. Sometimes, there was a family tie between the friends (extended family), for instance, “There is an extended family relation that brings us closer.” These survey responses also reflect that history of relation may prompt the closeness among friends and sustain the friendship. This theme of the history of relations is further found as the foundation of neighborhood friendship.

**History of Relations as Foundation of Neighborhood Friendship**

We have shown previously that neighborhood friendships remain relevant due to reasons most friendships are, which in this case, highlights the importance of relational qualities of support, closeness, and history of relations. While support and closeness as aspects of friendship are often mentioned in literature on friendship, literature on the importance of the history of relations are less so (Poulin & Chan, 2010; Sherman et al., 2000; Steinhoff & Keller, 2020). Thus, we were intrigued to examine this feature in further detail, as it remained rather unclear. We sensed that this answer carries more value than the numbers shown in the table. We wanted to know more of what that actually meant and traced back some of the participants who mentioned this aspect as being the most relevant element for their friendship. From the in-depth interview with some participants, we found that in most cases, they referred to the history of relations as the foundation of neighborhood friendship based on a long history of the relationship, mostly tracing it back to their childhood and extending well into their adult life (Fig. 1).

Arfi, a 24 years-old young woman, thinks of her neighborhood friend, Naura, as a childhood friend. Arfi and Naura have been friends since they were toddlers as their families have been living in the same neighborhood until now. “We have been friends since childhood, we played together. We are still friends today, even though we are busy with our own work. She is my neighbor and my friend.” Arfi has migrated since she started higher education in another city, around 400 km from her hometown. This distance makes it more difficult to interact directly with Naura. Arfi is busy with her work as a midwife and a project-based research assistant, while Naura is currently working as a highly mobile local model in her hometown. However, Arfi and Naura continue to communicate and often meet up when they can. Arfi and Naura used to keep in touch through WhatsApp when they needed friends or someone to talk to. Even though meeting each other is not as easy as before, they put effort into meeting each other, at least around once a month. When they meet, they usually reminisce about their childhood experiences (their hobby taking pictures together,
making parody videos, and dancing in various village events). Apart from reminiscing about the past, they also make videos together as a way to maintain their chemistry as friends ("untuk lucu-lucuan"/literally to have a laugh). They dream of having a YouTube channel someday. Arfi and Naura remain close, and Naura is currently Arfi’s only neighborhood friend. Arfi and Naura’s friendship shows that neighborhood friendship does not only refer to friends who live close to each other in the present moment. It also shows that neighborhood friendship is rooted in a history of relationships attached to a certain place in the past.

A crucial aspect to understanding neighborhood friendship is how neighborhood friendship is sustained despite physical separation. From Arfi and Naura’s neighborhood friendship, we suggest that the maintenance of neighborhood friendship is dependent on aspects that are generally seen as crucial in maintaining friendship such as shared activities, frequent communication, interaction, and proximity (e.g. Annis, 1987; Mrkva & Van Boven, 2020; van Duijn et al., 2003). However, history and sentiment, especially on aspects of shared childhood memories in their neighborhood, seem to be the foundation that maintains their friendship.

If childhood memories and place are so important in neighborhood friendship, there is still a question as to how neighborhood friendship differs from other childhood friendships formed in other contexts, such as schools. We cannot deny that places such as schools provide a strong context for the formation and maintenance of friendship. However, we argue that school is for the most part, not home. The discourse of making school a home where teachers play the role of parents is an idealization rather than reality (Chan et al., 2013; Crozier, 1999; Epstein, 1985; Murray, 2009). On the other hand, a house and a neighborhood where the house is located are often equated with home (kampung; Brown et al.,

![Fig. 1 Arfi and Naura: Neighborhood friends since childhood](image-url)
The place we regard as home is a significant source of emotional attachment, much more than any other place and often referred to as place attachment (Bhuyan et al., 2020). Second, school friendships do not necessarily involve friendship between families. In our study, we found that it is common for families to form three-generational friendships (Nielsen, 2016), meaning that friendships are formed between grandparents, parents, and children of neighboring families. Here, we see the neighborhood as a place where emotional sentiment develops and contributes to the maintenance of friendship across generations. The bond between two families often strengthens the ties between the two individuals involved in the friendship and becomes a buffer in situations of conflict involving parents or their children.

Referring to Arfi and Naura again, Arfi mentions that she and Naura used to live close by in their neighborhood. She describes that both of their families have been close since her grandparents lived there. Yet, she remembers that her friendship with Naura is not without disagreements and conflict. She remembers that in her childhood, they did not talk to each other because of jealousy over a toy, for example. They also felt jealous when one of them played with other friends, and they were not invited.

During times when conflict arose, both families intervened to ensure that they became friends again. Arfi’s mother used to give advice so that they could get back together and not break their sisterhood. Arfi’s mother also talked to Naura’s aunt and grandmother. After that, it was usually Naura who started approaching Arfi to play together again. Arfi explains, “Once we had a disagreement, we didn’t talk to each other. For a whole day, we did not play together, we did not ask about each other, we just stopped talking. Both parents wondered why we stopped playing with each other. Finally, my parents told me to shake hands and apologize to my friend. We made up, and after that, there was less friction” (Arfi, 24, Midwife).

Another example of how the friendship between families in the neighborhood helps maintain a friendship is Nita’s story. Nita, 26, is a young woman who works as a civil servant. Her friendship remains with her neighborhood friend, Dira. Both Nita and Dira’s families have been friends through three generations, dating back to the friendship that was formed between their grandparents. Nita also states that she became close to Dira through her parents. Dira remembers a time when the relationship between her mother and Dira’s mother became tense. At that time, Nita’s parents visited a sick neighbor prior to visiting Dira’s parents who were also unwell. Dira’s parents felt that Nita’s parents prioritized the other neighbor. Nita explained that there were no direct verbal exchanges between the parents that signaled the tension, but her mother noticed Dira’s parents becoming distant and less talkative. After a while, Nita’s mother asked her to bring some fruits to Dira’s mother as a symbol of apology. Dira received the fruits, without Nita having to express a verbal apology to Dira’s mother. After the incident, the relationship between the families (also between Nita and Dira) became closer. “Our house is close by, and our families have been close since our grandparents’ time. What brings us close together is our family. Once, my mother and Dira’s mother had a misunderstanding, and I was asked by my mother to send fruits to Dira’s mother so that the conflict does not become worse.”

Third, a friendship formed across generations between families in neighborhood contexts also involves intergenerational trust. Trust that develops in friendship does not only involve the two parties who are in the friendship, but also their parents. Ihsan’s story will be used to describe this point. Ihsan, 23 years old, is from a respectable family in his neighborhood, his family status deriving from a high level of education and economic standpoint. Ihsan stated that perhaps due to his family’s status in the village, some parents, friends, and neighbors, feel secure when their children hang out with Ihsan. “Since I was a
little boy until now, Rangga’s mom feels safe if Rangga hangs out with me. Rangga’s Mom will not worry that he would do something wrong. Rangga will be fine.” Ihsan is aware that in his neighborhood, he is known as a “good boy”, meaning that he is often seen as religious, educated, and clean (no involvement with drugs), which is often associated with his family’s reputable status in the neighborhood. Rangga and Ihsan have been friends since childhood until now and they also live close to each other in their village.

**Neighborhood Friends and Change in Friendship**

We have described above the position of history, relations, and place in the formation and maintenance of neighborhood friendship. Here, we will show that not all neighborhood friendships are close friendships. This means that even though the history of relations attached to a neighborhood provides a foundation for friendship, not all friendships based on the same history possess the same quality. Before explaining why this is so, we would like to offer a general definition of neighborhood friendship as expressed by the participants of our interviews.

According to one of the participants, Hiza, a 21 years-old male university student, the variation in the quality of friendship is determined by the degree of closeness with the friend. She stated, “the quality of (neighborhood) friendship depends on how close we are (with our neighborhood friend)”. Hiza’s construction of closeness as a marker of friendship quality is also reflected in the statements of other participants, forming three categories of friends based on closeness of the relationship. Friends range from acquaintances (kenalan) to casual friends (teman biasa) to close friends (sahabat). The lowest level of friendship quality is “acquaintance”, where recognition is a key feature of the relationship. This means that a person only knows their friend’s name, and occasionally greets each other when they meet. Edo, a 28-year-old male entrepreneur expressed, “I have many friends, some I met in forums, and (like neighborhood friendship), friendship starts when we become acquainted with each other (kenal), sometimes we say hi to each other. Not all (neighborhood) friends are close.”.

The second level of friendship is casual friendships, highlighting instrumentality or how the friend facilitates personal goals. Ria, a 22 years-old female student, for instance, stated that “(my friends in the neighborhood) who are casual friends (teman biasa) only meet when they need something”. The highest quality of friendship is close friendship, where mutual disclosure is the main foundation of the relationship. For some people such as Edo, it is the process of mutual disclosure that forms closeness. As mentioned previously, the closeness resulting from the friendship is often referred to as similar to a kinship-like relationship (“like our own blood”). Edo further explains that “Close (neighborhood) friends are those that we trust to keep our secrets, and with close friends self-disclosure is mutual, they are like our own blood.”. Apart from the disclosure of secrets, disclosure of the self is also significant in defining close friendship. According to Hiza, “Disclosure (defines close friendship), because (in close friendships) a person can express ‘this is who I am’ (one’s true self).”. Self-disclosure is related to one’s integrity (honesty), and the presence of integrity further supports the formation of trust and closeness (e.g., Alarcon et al., 2016; Faturochman et al., 2020; Jarvenpaa et al., 1997). The same pattern of friendship quality is found in neighborhood friendship. Despite having a long history of relations, some neighborhood friends remain acquaintances, while others become close friends. In most instances, the participants referred to neighborhood friends as causal friends.
While closeness is regarded as the key to close friendship in general, the type of friendship a person is involved in may change over time. Other relationships often take priority over friendships such as family or romantic relationships, and increased mobility may also bring friendship apart. Aside from that, not all friendships have the same significance. As explained above, the relevance of neighborhood friendship seems to be relatively low at an interpersonal level and may change over the course of one’s life. The same dynamics of change in friendship also applies to neighborhood friendship. Neighborhood friendship may be important during childhood but as a person grows older, various relationships develop outside the neighborhood arena and neighborhood friendship may become less significant.

We refer back to Arfi, the 24 years-old young woman who is close friends with her neighbor, Naura. She states that apart from Naura, she used to have other close neighborhood friends as she was growing up in her neighborhood. However, over time, her friendship with her other friends changed due to what she calls “natural selection in friendship”, resulting in tenuous relationships with other friends in the neighborhood. “Apart from Naura, I also had other close (neighborhood) friends whom I am no longer close to. I even forgot some of their names, we are no longer close as we were when we were a child. I am no longer close to them because of ‘natural selection’”. The natural selection in friendship that Arfi states refers mainly to mobility of her friends: some of them have moved, gone to a different school, or migrated to the other region. Arfi feels distant from her other friends. They just said ‘hello’ and no deeper conversation follows. They no longer share activities together like she and Naura. She describes other neighborhood friends other than Naura as merely acquaintances.

Friendship can also become less close because of a change in social and economic status of one of the individuals involved in the friendship. This situation is experienced by Ali, a 23-year-old student from the countryside. Ali explained that when he was a child, he had close friends from wealthy families. Coming from a simple family, the difference in social-economic status did not matter that much during his childhood. But as they grew up, his neighborhood friend began to participate in an upper-class lifestyle, such as hanging out in expensive cafes or restaurants. This was deemed incompatible with Ali’s lifestyle, so he decided to withdraw from his friend and chose to develop close friendships with people whom he thought were in accordance with his values and lifestyles. “I once had a close (neighborhood) friend and we used to play together, even though his socioeconomic status level was above mine. When we grew up, we had a different way of spending our leisure time and hanging out. He liked to go to elite cafes or fancy places that cost a lot of money, so I didn’t want to follow. As I grew up, my friendship circle changed”.

In this section, we have shown why neighborhood friendships are still relevant, especially because of the relational qualities of the friendship. Those relational qualities include support, closeness, and history of relations. History of relations is often regarded as the foundation of neighborhood friendship, both in terms of its formation and maintenance. Families and generational friendships often characterize neighborhood friendships, which allows the longevity of the relationship. Neighborhood friendships vary in quality from acquaintances to close friendship, and the type of friendship a person has with his/her neighborhood friends is subject to change over time.

**Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the relevance of neighborhood friendship and the characteristics of friendship that make neighborhood friendship relevant. We provide an overall discussion of our findings before returning to a more detailed nuance of our
findings. First, our findings from the open-ended questionnaire’s thematic analysis suggest three main sub themes as to why neighborhood friendship is still relevant, which include: support, closeness, and history of relations. Support in neighborhood friendship consists of availability and mutual support; while closeness consists of disclosure, intimacy, and meaningful relationships. Findings from the open-ended responses suggest that support, as the instrumental element of friendship, seems to be considered as more dominant than closeness, the affective element of friendship. Although the relevance of neighborhood friendship depends on both support and closeness, our in-depth interview results suggest that closeness is more prioritized than support. We argue that the slight difference shows that the affective element tends to be undermined when participants were asked to describe their friendship experiences in brief. When provided the opportunity to discuss their experiences in more detail through in-depth interviews, participants were able to elaborate the affective relevance of friendship, such as telling their secrets to their friends and expressing intimacy toward each other. Here, closeness determines what type of friendship a person has with their neighborhood friend (whether formal or close friend). Closeness and involvement often change the friendship, some due to distance and some to social mobility, as we will explain further. Support, on the other hand, offers a rather instrumental element of friendship in which closeness (affection) is expressed. To what extent the friendship is relevant may vary, not only across different neighborhood friends but also across time with particular friends.

Now we return to the history of relations, the third reason determining the relevance of neighborhood friendship. We suggest that the history of relations is the foundation of neighborhood friendship. The history of relations is often referred to as the main reason why friendship in neighborhood contexts was formed, and the main factor in supporting the maintenance of neighborhood friendship. Regardless of how much (or lack of) support and/or closeness is available, often the history of relations is the main reason to justify that neighborhood friendship is relevant. As previously explained, proximity is significant in defining neighborhood friendship. Even though long-distance neighborhood friendships continue and are maintained, the level of involvement often fluctuates or changes. Most often the involvement changes from close friend to casual friend. Some remain close friends despite the distance.

**Support and Closeness as Instrumental and Affective Elements of Neighborhood Friendship**

We will now discuss the above findings in more depth by linking them to broader discussions of friendship. Many studies in Indonesia reflect similar findings to our study, on the importance of the instrumental element in friendship. For example, French et al. (2006) have shown that instrumental aid, which we refer to as support, appears more often in the friendship of young people in Indonesia than in the United States. Instrumental forms of friendship are also found among the older generation of Indonesians (Brandt & Heuser, 2011), and are considered an important aspect of interpersonal relationships and group cohesiveness in Indonesia (Sullivan, 1994). In a recent study on friendship in Java, Indonesia, Heuser (2020) also concluded that friendship is often utilized as a tool to gain access to resources and economic exchange, through the practices of helping (tolong-menolong) and a continuous exchange of favors and mutuality (rukun).
Similar to our findings on the relevance of closeness in neighborhood friendship, closeness in friendship among young Indonesians mainly aims to fulfill personal needs such as the need for emotional belonging (Brandt & Heuser, 2011). Closeness involves both intimacy and disclosure. However, in more casual forms of friendships, previous studies have consistently shown that friendships in Indonesia involve relatively low levels of intimacy (French et al., 2006). French et al’s (2006) findings suggest that while closeness is important in friendships in Indonesia, it is less so in comparison to support. They also argued that Indonesians are also more likely to focus on integration into family groups, peer networks, and the large community (such as neighborhoods) compared to US students. This may help explain why neighborhood friendships are less close at an interpersonal level for many Indonesians, as neighborhoods are generally seen as communal. Thus, this study goes beyond the romantic view of friendship, often highlighting affective elements of friendship such as closeness and intimacy. It shows that in neighborhood contexts, the instrumental aspect of friendship is quite significant. However, in close friendships, support may also indicate expressions of closeness rather than being purely instrumental per se.

**History of Relations: Childhood Memory, Three-generational Friendship and Intergenerational Trust**

Apart from support and closeness, we found that the history of relations is the main characteristic of neighborhood friendship that makes the friendship relevant. Several concepts related to the history of relations emerging from this study include childhood friend (Kitts & Leal, 2021), childhood memory, three-generational friendship, and intergenerational trust. We view these concepts as linked to the concept of history of friendship, where past memories of relationships result in particular associations and affection with a certain place. Friendship might be interpreted as a form of the complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas and feelings, related to the history of relation in neighborhood friendship, including meaningful symbols as part of that history. Meaningful symbols include friendship or childhood friends. People often have a strong emotional relationship with the place that is meaningful and significant to people. When positive meanings are associated with friends, it also fosters positive meaning to the neighborhood. Childhood memories, nostalgia, games, and social gatherings can bring past sentiments when hearing about neighborhood friends (Davies et al., 2021).

In our study, we have also noticed the role of the three-generational neighboring families living close to each other as an important factor in the formation and maintenance of neighborhood friendships (O’Dare et al., 2021). We believe this is associated with proximity, even though in our study the percentage of answers relating the relevance of neighborhood friendship with proximity was relatively low in the open-ended questionnaires. We suggest that friendships during childhood are linked to the proximity of houses in which the participants live (or used to live in). For instance, it was obvious that participants in our interviews tend to choose friends who live in close proximity to their house. Thus, in addition to the role of generational friendships, proximity is also relevant in relation to the choice of person in which the friendship is formed (Backstrom et al., 2010).

This study also underlines the existence of intergenerational trust as a part of the historical dimension in which the relationship is based upon. By intergenerational trust, we refer to trust formed between different generations within the neighboring families. We have given an example of parents who develop trust towards their child’s friends, which
also influences the neighborhood friendship their child is involved in. In intergenerational trust, trust is not only built based on the personal qualities of the child’s friend, but also the family social status of the child’s friend. Older generations view the younger generation as untrustworthy (Tomo et al., 2020), and parents must fall back on other resources to build their trust. The social status of families is often assumed to reflect the history of the child’s family (i.e., whether they come from good families), what values are instilled, and to what extent those values are implemented in the friendship. In other words, assumptions about social and cultural reproduction are indicated by a family’s social status (Schut, 2020).

**Closeness and Change in Neighborhood Friendships**

In line with the types of friendship in general, neighborhood friends also take the form of acquaintances, casual friends (“teman” or “teman biasa”), and close friends (“teman dekat”), which is possible to change over the time of the relationship. Acquaintances are often not included as friends (Baym et al., 2007; Kitts & Leal, 2021), because acquaintances are relationships characterized by rare interaction, no or low levels of intimacy and relational quality, and limited social support exchange (Bryant & Marmo, 2009). Acquaintances often know each other from casual social encounters, yet lack a sense of personal connection and shared relational history (Jehn & Shah, 1997). Membership to a kampung provides a basis in which ingroup members are referred to as friends (Bhuyan et al., 2020; Chatterjee, 2005).

Similar to social relations in general, neighborhood friendship is dynamic. Changes can occur in the quality of friendship. We refer to a change in positive direction of friendship quality when neighbors who were initially acquaintances change to casual friends or even to close friends. Meanwhile, a change to a negative direction of the friendship quality happens when neighbors who used to be close friends become casual friends or even just acquaintances. Our results have shown a change in both directions even though French et al. (2006) showed the tendency that friendships in Indonesian tend to move in the negative direction.

Several factors may affect the changes and longevity of friendships in neighborhood context (Cook et al., 2002; Crosnoe, 2000), but we have found that closeness is especially important in determining the dynamics of neighborhood friendship. Intimacy and disclosure, the two important components constructing closeness, have the potential to lead the friendship to a positive direction. According to several participants’ statements, disclosure is also about to what extent they can tell secrets. This means personal qualities such as trustworthiness and integrity are essential in maintaining friendship longevity. We argue that keeping secrets, which is repeatedly stated by the participants of our survey, runs parallel to the culture of shame in Indonesia, which emphasizes the fear of being shamed in front of others (Geertz, 1961). In this current study, the change of closeness is associated with geographical mobility, such as, change in domicile, and social mobility which refers to the change in social or economic class.

As previously mentioned about social mobility, our findings also show that social status has significant implications for the direction of friendship across time. While during childhood social status seems to be absent in determining friendship, it becomes significant in later years (Wrzus et al., 2017). It can be related to the changes in closeness in friendships. Social status is characterized by the attributes that a person shows in certain situations (Leary et al., 2014), often visible to others (Akdemir, 2018). These attributes include places where people spend their leisure time. The gap in social status results in a complex
process of social comparison, causing feelings of shame and inferiority in individuals with lower social status (Lundberg, 2008). The feeling of inferiority may be expressed through withdrawal of the affected party from the relationship, which in turn, also reduces closeness and the quality of friendship.

Methodologically, this research complements previous studies on friendship, which primarily relied on quantitative methods focusing on explanatory models. By applying a qualitative method emphasizing explorations and more in-depth data from interviews, this study aimed to connect to a broader discussion on the importance of context in friendships. The context here does not only refer to the neighborhood as a physical setting (place), but also regarding a neighborhood as grounded within the cultural and social location in which it is lived in. It is the combination of the physical, cultural, and social that weaves into the psychological features of a friendship.

We would also like to acknowledge some limitations of the study. First, we collected data through online channels, resulting in a varied demographic of respondents, where women and those in early adulthood were the dominant samples in our study. Thus, results may differ if our sample were predominantly male or if our study included older participants. For instance, closeness may not be the main determinant of change in friendships as intimacy is often related to interpersonal friendships among women. Our study also mainly focused on the perception of friendship from our participants’ viewpoint and did not include the views of the participants’ friends.

Further research on neighborhood friendship needs to involve a more balanced gender of participants or specific types of friendship, such as same-sex friendships, with various methods, such as case study and ethnography. Asymmetrical forms of friendship also need to be considered, especially in societies with hierarchical and patrilinear patterns of relations. Further research can also apply different methods to see how the relevance of friendship identified in this current study can affect neighborhood friendship, both quality, and longevity.

**Conclusion**

This study hopes to contribute to a discussion on friendship and the significance of context, especially the neighborhood context, in that experience of friendship. In our study, we find that neighborhood friendships are still relevant despite physical distance. The relevance of neighborhood friendship lies in friendships that are characterized by support, closeness, and history of relations. While most studies on friendship offer a romantic view of friendship, emphasizing closeness and intimacy, this study found that neighborhood friendship is rather instrumental in the form of support. However, support may also indicate expressions of closeness, especially in close friendships.

Second, literature on neighborhood friendship tends to highlight the significance of neighborhoods as a physical setting where proximity encourages the formation and maintenance of friendship. Physical distance, and to a lesser extent, social mobility, may change involvement and closeness in neighborhood friendship. However, the maintenance of neighborhood friendships goes beyond physical interactions and instead is rooted in the history of relationships. While all relationships are somehow rooted in one’s history of relations, the importance of history of relations in the neighborhood context is tied to
a certain place and the social relationships formed in that particular place. The remembrance and imagination of that place, especially related to families and childhood friends, stimulate certain feelings of belonging that encourage the maintenance of neighborhood friendships.

**Supplementary Information** The online version contains supplementary material available at https://doi.org/10.1007/s42087-022-00283-w.

**Acknowledgements** The authors are grateful to all those research assistants who engaged in this study: Ika Hana Pertiwi, Fadhil Maliky Islah, Muhammad Arif Saefudin, & Beatrice Demeria Aritonang. This research was supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Republic Indonesia.

**Declarations**

**Competing Interest** This research was supported by a grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Republic of Indonesia. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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