

The Young Generation's College Student's Perception of and Place Attachment to Rural Areas: Case Study of Japan and China

Abstract: Rural areas are facing increasing challenges ~~such as including~~ declining populations, advanced aging, and a lack of successors. This study aimed to investigate ~~how the perceptions of rural areas among~~ Chinese and Japanese university students ~~living~~ in urban areas ~~perceive rural areas~~ and analyze the ~~factors/determinants~~ influencing their rural attachment and willingness to ~~live in rural areas~~. ~~In this study, reside there. A total of~~ 259 students (126 Japanese in Chiba, ~~and~~ 133 Chinese in Zhengzhou) were surveyed using the place attachment scale, ~~describing and asked to describe~~ their past experiences ~~in rural areas~~. Semantic analysis was ~~also used was employed~~ to ~~more deeply further~~ explore ~~problems in issues related to~~ their ~~past previous rural visit~~ experiences ~~of rural visits~~. ~~We found. The results revealed~~ that students' place of birth, visiting experience, satisfaction with rural areas, interaction with local people, and convenience of ~~arriving accessing~~ rural ~~areas~~ all influenced their attachment and willingness to move to rural areas. Chinese students ~~were more concerned about expressed greater concerns regarding~~ hygiene issues, while Japanese students were more concerned about safety. This study offers some recommendations: ~~promoting~~ educational resources in rural areas ~~should be promoted~~ and ~~addressing~~ hygiene issues, such as ~~dirty bathrooms should also be addressed~~ ~~unclean restrooms~~, in China. ~~In Japan needs to continue to promote, the focus should be on continued promotion of~~ rural tourism, ~~educate providing more education~~ on safe driving and environmental safety for university students, and ~~provide enhancing~~ more access to rural areas through student transportation discounts.

Keywords: Place attachment; Rural area; Young generation; China; Japan; Rural Experience; Rural visiting; Migration; Text-mining

1. Introduction

Rural areas ~~play a are~~ crucial ~~role in the overall well-being of society, including for~~ food production, natural resource management, and ~~the preservation and inheritance of~~ cultural heritage ~~and cultural landscapes preservation~~ [1,2]. ~~However, rural areas globally are faced with common~~ ~~They face~~ challenges, ~~such as like~~ depopulation, aging, ~~and lack of successors, as increasing numbers of young people choose to live in cities~~ [3–6]. ~~According to [7],~~ ~~populations, and successor shortages due to urbanization~~ [3–6]. ~~However, rural regions also offer opportunities for sustainable development, such as local economic growth, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. It is vital to discuss various perspectives on rural development, including critical ones, to understand global challenges and opportunities~~ [7]. Cultural differences, national policies, and regional contexts ~~impact rural development trajectories, providing insights into the diverse experiences of rural communities worldwide~~

Japan has the fastest-declining population in Asia. ~~Japan's population started to decline, which began~~ in 2010 [8] and ~~the shrinking population has since~~ become a major issue. [8,9]. Depopulation was ~~mainly an issue in primarily a concern for~~ developed countries, ~~but recently, however,~~ it has ~~also become recently emerged as~~ an issue for some developing ~~countries/nations, including~~ China, ~~which has been facing experienced~~ declining fertility rates over the past decades [9], ~~and in~~ 10]. In 2022, ~~the country's~~ ~~China's~~ total

population declined for the first time since the 1960s [10]. ~~China and Japan are experiencing these challenges due to~~ [11]. Factors such as declining fertility rates ~~and~~, increasing life expectancy, ~~as well as other factors, such as the~~ China's one-child policy ~~in China and gender inequality~~, and the high cost of raising children in Japan [11–13]. ~~A country's declining total population began with the decline of~~ contribute to the challenges faced by both countries [12–14]. Given the challenges faced by rural areas in these countries, comparing their situations is crucial for understanding the determinants influencing young people's attachment to rural areas. As both countries aim to revitalize rural regions and promote sustainable development [15,16], examining young people's attitudes can offer valuable insights for developing effective strategies to address rural depopulation and decline [17]. Moreover, rural area with similar contexts, such as South Korea and Taiwan, could also benefit from this comparison, as they face comparable challenges in their rural areas [18,19]. This analysis may contribute to the development of tailored policies and strategies to tackle the challenges faced by rural areas in these nations and beyond.

Young people's lack of attachment to rural areas may be influenced by various factors. Among these are the rural population.

~~Young people could see perceived disadvantages of~~ living in rural areas, ~~such as a disadvantage because they have fewer opportunities for~~ employment and higher education opportunities compared to ~~their peers living in urban areas~~ [14]. ~~Fewer available counterparts~~ [20], limited public services ~~also that~~ discourage young people from ~~stay-~~ing ~~residing~~ in rural areas [15]. ~~Furthermore, with~~ [21], and the ~~advancement~~ proliferation of online social media, ~~it is easier for~~ enabling young rural ~~people~~ individuals to compare their lives with urban ~~young people and feel discontent~~ peers, potentially leading to dissatisfaction with their ~~current~~ rural lives [16]. ~~These~~ [22]. While these factors ~~eventually lead to~~ are not exhaustive, they play a significant role in shaping young people's ~~lack of~~ attachment to rural areas and ~~drive them~~ their decision to move to the cities. This study focuses on university students for several reasons. First, university students are often more mobile and open to exploring new living environments than other population groups [23]. Second, attracting young and educated people to rural areas can help revitalize local economies and support sustainable development [24]. Finally, understanding the factors that influence university students' attachment to rural areas can inform the development of targeted policies and initiatives aimed at encouraging young people to visit and potentially settle in rural areas.

Place attachment refers to an emotional bond between a person and a specific place, influenced by personal experiences, memories, and cultural/social connections. This connection can impact the well-being, identity, behavior, and desire to preserve the place [17–19,25–27]. Place attachment plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' attitudes, behaviors, and well-being toward a place and can guide and encourage their visits to it [20,28]. Young people's attachment to rural areas is influenced by socioeconomic, cultural, and geographic ~~factors~~ determinants. Those who grew up in rural areas are more likely to have a strong attachment compared to those with urban and suburban backgrounds [21,22,29,30].

To assess young people's place attachment, this study used the 12-item place attachment scale [23,31]. This scale was developed by Otani and Haga based on a process of recognizing information from the environment, generating emotions, and evaluating it [24,32]. It was further refined by Hagiwara, Fujii, and Suzuki into three dimensions: preference, affection, and desire for continuity [23,31]. In these three dimensions of place attachment, "preference" refers to the degree to which a person positively evaluates an area from the perspective of personal preference. Meanwhile, "affection" refers to a person's deep attraction to the area above preference and feeling unwilling to leave. Lastly, "desire for continuity" refers not only to the cognitive and emotional engagement with the current

place, such as thoughts and feelings, but also to a desire that arises from the development of the place itself. There are differences in the development period of these three dimensions of place attachment. This is also true for the process of emotion generation from the recognition of a place [2533]. This scale has mostly been used in Japan, but this study explores its potential usage in a country other than Japan.

Research has shown a correlation between higher place attachment and increased participation in community development policies and activities [25,2633,34]. Studies on place attachment in rural areas have also found a relationship between attachment and decisions related to environmental governance and migration [27-3035-38]. Therefore, understanding young people's attitudes and attachment to rural areas is crucial to promote sustainable rural development, especially as they are viewed as the future of these areas [2430].

This research studies place attachment in young people, specifically university students. Existing studies show that university students with similar ages and education tend to be more mobile and that their perceptions of place are fluid and complex [31-3239,40]. Previous research has shown that university students have low levels of place attachment and complex, fluid perceptions of place influenced by ~~factors~~determinants such as their geographical mobility, educational background, and past experiences [33-3541-43]. These findings highlight the importance of studying university students in relation to place attachment.

Studies on young people's place attachment have mainly focused on their attachment to the rural areas where they grew up or their attachment to urban and rural areas after moving to the city [36-3844-46]. However, there are only a few studies on the attachment of young people studying in cities to rural areas and their intention to visit. Understanding the attitudes and perceptions of young city-dwellers towards rural areas is important to support and developing rural communities [39-4147-49]. Further, encouraging young urban dwellers to focus on and strengthen their attachment to rural areas is crucial for revitalizing these areas [42-45], enhancing the quality of life, economic opportunities, and environmental sustainability in these regions, in line with national policies and global sustainable development goals [50-53].

This study aims to examine the perceptions of young university students in Chiba City (Japan) and Zhengzhou City (China) toward rural areas and ~~the factors~~identify determinants affecting their attachment and willingness to live there. Chiba City and Zhengzhou City were ~~specifically~~ selected due to their status as regional economic and transportation hubs with ~~a high level of~~ urbanization, a ~~large~~ concentration of universities and research institutions, and young ~~and~~ educated populations [46,4754,55]. Both cities face common ~~challenges in~~ urban development and sustainability ~~challenges~~, such as ~~a~~ declining birthrate, ~~an aging population,~~ and ~~an~~ increasing migrant population. The study ~~focuses on~~investigates young people's attitudes towards rural areas, ~~factors~~determinants contributing to attachment, and differences based on birthplace, culture, rural experiences, and geographic background. Comparing the perceptions and attachments of young people in China and Japan can reveal similarities and differences in their rural experiences.

We address two main research objectives in this study. The first objective is to explore strategies to encourage more college students to visit rural areas and identify determinants that support this, including gender analysis and differences. The second objective is to determine how to make college students more willing to live in rural areas by identifying determinants that contribute to their attachment and willingness to settle in these regions. By addressing these two interconnected research objectives, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of university students' attitudes towards rural areas and

inform the development of targeted policies and strategies to address the challenges faced by rural communities.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 The participants

~~In~~During the period of 2021–2022, this study surveyed university students in Zhengzhou City and Chiba City ~~utilizing~~using snowball sampling, ~~in which students spread~~. Students distributed the questionnaire among their peers ~~in~~at their universities or cities. In Japan, Google Form was ~~used~~employed, while in China, a Tencent questionnaire was used. The variables in the questionnaire ~~variables~~ are discussed in Section 2.2. –

~~A~~Although online questionnaires, such as Google Form and Tencent questionnaire, may have limitations in terms of response accuracy and representativeness, their convenience and privacy assurance encourage honest feedback from participants. To ensure data reliability and validity, we employed snowball sampling and carefully designed our questionnaire to capture relevant and reliable information on students' perceptions and attachment to rural areas. Furthermore, to guarantee the accuracy of the collected data, we screened the received questionnaires and removed those with incomplete responses.

We collected a total of 259 valid questionnaires ~~were collected~~ from college students in Zhengzhou ~~city~~City (China) and Chiba City (Japan), aged 19 to 26, currently living in urban areas, and ~~have all had~~having at least one experience visiting rural areas. The questionnaire was conducted in the ~~mother~~native language of each country. ~~In the~~The Chinese sample, ~~there were comprised~~ 133 participants, ~~with~~ (63 males and 67 females, ~~and a mix of~~) from urban, suburban, and rural birthplaces. ~~In the~~The Japanese sample, ~~there were included~~ 126 participants, ~~with~~ (61 males and 65 females.). Both Chinese and Japanese ~~student have~~students had a similar distribution of birthplaces. ~~In terms of~~

Regarding the sample size, ~~our research is sufficient as we have a sample of more than 120 respondents from each country. This is in line with the findings of similar previous studies, such as those conducted by Gay and Diehl [4856], Roscoe [4957], Fraenkel & Wallen [5058], and Prita [51] which~~ 59], suggest that a sample of 30 or more respondents is sufficient. In our study, we collected data from over 120 respondents from each country, exceeding the recommended minimum. To further ensure the reliability of our findings, we conducted statistical tests to assess the reliability and validity of the collected data and the significance of the differences observed in our analysis. These tests include Cronbach's Alpha (α) analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, and factor-loading analysis (Section 2.2).

The ~~questionnaire~~ administered ~~in this study~~questionnaire included not only items from the widely-used place attachment scale ~~which widely used~~ in Japan. ~~[24,25,52,], [32,33,60]~~ but also questions designed to measure the impact of various variables on students' attachment to and willingness to move to rural areas, such as place of birth, visiting experience, satisfaction with rural areas, interaction with local people, and convenience. The selection of these variables is explained in detail in ~~section~~Section 2.2. Additionally, students were asked to provide open-ended responses regarding their interest in rural visits, past experiences in rural areas, and any related issues they encountered.

2.2 Research item

In this study, we examined the determinants of students' attachment to an area, i.e., "students' place of birth" ~~[53,54]~~61,62]. Considering the effect of multiple covariates, we

classified students' birthplaces as rural, suburban, and urban areas. Rural, suburban, and urban areas are classified by population density, land use, and proximity to each country and area has its own set of rules [5563]. Rural areas have low population density and agricultural land; suburban areas have higher population density near cities; and urban areas have high population density, mixed land use, and proximity to cities and transportation [5664].

~~In addition~~Moreover, Taniguchi notes that the "number of visits" may also be a determinant of local attachment [57-5965-67]. The more opportunities there are for contact, the greater the favorable impression of the place. Some tourism studies also note that locality attachment is determined by the number of visits to the area and the experience of visiting it. The more a person is exposed to a place, the stronger his attachment is likely to be. Therefore, using visit experience as a variable, students in this study were categorized into those who had no residential experience of day trips (attending farmhouses, one-day rural tours, etc.), those who had lodging experience (short rural trips, visiting relatives for short stays, etc.), and those who had long-term rural residential experience (regular annual family visits to the countryside, annual visits to grandparents' homes for New Year's celebrations, rural-born students, etc.).

Regarding the examination of students' attributes, we also analyze gender specificity. Males and females may have different needs and views of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the community, and therefore, their respective attachment to rural areas may differ. [6068] In addition, those with high levels of satisfaction with their visit are also likely to have high levels of attachment to the community [5967]. According to previous research, the better the relationship with rural residents in terms of contact, the stronger the attachment to the area [61,6269,70]. Attachment may increase as the relationship between young visitors and the area's residents deepens. Convenience and willingness to move are also thought to be associated with place attachment [63-6571-73]. This study examined these factors using a questionnaire designed to test the rural attachment of university students in both cities.

A five-point scale was used to measure place attachment, with 5 being "strongly agree" and 1 being "strongly disagree." In terms of scale reliability, we utilized SPSS Statistics to conduct the Cronbach's Alpha (α) analysis and found that the reliability coefficients of the questionnaires in both China and Japan were all above 0.7. In addition, the overall KMO value of the scale was greater than 0.8, and the factor-loading coefficient of each item on the corresponding factor was greater than 0.4. Thus, the scale has sufficient reliability and validity.

Furthermore, to understand the general impressions of and intention to live in rural areas among Japanese university students, the KH Coder 3 software was used for text mining, and a map of "co-occurrence" was obtained [6674]. A co-occurrence network is a network representation method of the relationship between codes with similar appearance patterns. When creating the co-occurrence network, co-occurrence relationships with a Jaccard coefficient of 0.3 or higher were employed and drawn.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the results of the descriptive analysis of the 12-item place attachment scale and five questions on resident communication, satisfaction, expenses, convenience, and willingness to move to rural areas in the future. Chinese students answered positively to the six questions on the place attachment scale, with the majority expressing a liking

for rural areas, including 89% feeling relaxed and 71% liking the atmosphere. Japanese students also expressed a liking for rural areas, with 95% indicating that rural areas are nice to walk in, and 73% liking the atmosphere. The results of the questionnaire suggest that both Chinese and Japanese college students have positive perceptions and attachment to rural areas, with potential implications for promoting sustainable and livable urban-rural environments. In addition, compared with Chinese students, 57% of Japanese students answered disagree to the question, "I think rural areas are good places to live."

Table 1. Rural attachment of students in China and Japan (percentage).

	Strongly dis- a- gree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
Chinese students (N=133)						
Place Attachment-Preference (N=133)						3.93
I think rural areas are good places to live. **	1.5	7.5	38.3	37.6	15	3.5864
There are some places which I like in rural areas..	0.8	3.8	18	55.6	21.8	3.9474
It is nice to walk in the rural area.	2.3	4.5	11.3	50.4	31.6	4.0677
I feel relaxed in the rural area.	0.8	3.8	6.8	48.1	40.6	4.2481
I like the atmosphere and ~~character~~ local characteristics of the rural area.	2.3	3.8	22.6	48.1	23.3	3.8872
I like rural areas.	1.5	6	27.1	41.4	24.1	3.8195
Place Attachment-Affection (N=133)						3.9417
I think rural areas are important.	0	1.5	10.5	42.1	45.9	4.3233
I feel attached to the rural area.	1.5	6.8	21.8	38.3	31.6	3.9323
I feel that I belong in the rural area. **	3.8	6	28.6	38.3	23.3	3.7519
I would like to live in a rural area.	2.3	9	24.1	42.1	22.6	3.7593
Place Attachment-Desire for continuity (N=133)						3.748
I do not want the rural areas to change forever. **	9	28.6	31.6	18	12.8	3.0601
I would be sad if rural areas were to disappear.	0.8	3.8	7.5	36.8	51.1	4.4359
Others (N=133)						3.56712
I have many opportunities to meet and greet people. in rural areas. **	0.8	2.3	6.8	51.9	38.3	4.2557
I have had a high level of satisfaction from rural visits. in the past.	3.8	3	27.1	43.6	22.6	3.782
I think I can live with a small amount of one-day. tourist spending in rural areas. **	0.8	3.8	10.5	54.9	30.1	4.1053
Rural areas are convenient. **	8.3	33.8	24.1	22.6	11.3	3.031
Are you highly motivated to move to a rural area in the future.	23.3	18	36.1	14.3	8.3	2.6616
Japanese students (N=126)						
Place Attachment-Preference (N=126)						3.74
I think rural areas are good places to live. **	4	53.1	31	11.9	0	2.51

There are some places which I like in rural areas.	4	15.8	21.4	36.6	22.2	3.57
It's nice to walk in the rural area.	0.8	0.8	3.2	51.6	43.6	4.37
I feel relaxed in the rural area.	0	0.8	8.8	46	44.4	4.34
I like the atmosphere and ~~character-local characteris-~~ ~~tics~~ of the rural area.	0.8	10.3	15.8	49.3	23.8	3.85
I like rural areas.	0.8	8.7	19.8	49.2	21.5	3.82
Place Attachment-Affection (N=126)						3.56
I think rural areas are important.	0	0.8	1.6	37.3	60.3	4.57
I feel attached to the rural area.	0.8	15.8	27.8	31.8	23.8	3.62
I feel that I belong in the rural area. **	6.3	39.6	22.2	21.5	10.4	2.9
I would like to live in a rural area. **	3.9	28.6	24.7	34.9	7.9	3.14
Place Attachment-Desire for continuity (N=126)						4.19
I don't want the rural areas to change forever. **	0	4.7	10.3	57.2	27.8	4.1
I would be sad if rural areas were to disappear. **	0	3.9	5.6	49.2	41.3	4.28
Others (N=126)						2.89
I have many opportunities to meet and greet people. in rural areas. **	21.4	19.8	12.7	25.4	20.7	3.04
I have had a high level of satisfaction from rural visits. in the past.	0	2.4	26.9	50.8	19.9	3.88
~~I think I can live with a small amount of one-day tour-~~ ~~ist spending~~ believe living in rural areas- <u>can result in</u> <u>reduced daily expenses.</u> **	4.7	25.4	27.8	34.9	7.2	3.14
Rural areas are convenient. **	53.2	43.6	1.6	1.6	0	1.52
Are you highly motivated to move to a rural area in. the future?	11.9	25.4	33.4	23.0	6.3	2.87

* percentage ** significate questions

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The results of the study on young university students' perception of and place attachment to rural areas in Japan and China showed that Chinese students had a more positive attitude towards living in rural areas compared to Japanese students. Eighty-eight percent of Chinese students responded positively to the four questions on the affection scale of the place attachment scale, with 98% of Japanese students responding positively to the question "I think rural areas are important." However, Japanese students had a stronger desire for rural areas to remain unchanged with 85% hoping they would not change, compared to 31% of Chinese students. These findings suggest that the attitudes towards rural areas and the desire for continuity vary between the two countries, possibly due to the difference in the development of rural planning in China.

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Overall, in the descriptive analysis of the three dimensions of place attachment (preference, affection, and desire for continuity), Regarding the three dimensions of place attachment (preference, affection, and desire for continuity), Chinese students showed the strongest affection towards rural areas, followed by preference and desire for continuity. On the other hand, Japanese students had the highest desire for continuity with a place, followed by preference and affection. Thus, we found that Chinese students have a strong

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emotional attraction (Place Attachment-Affection) to rural areas, while Japanese students have a deeper cognitive and emotional engagement and desire for the development of rural areas (Place Attachment-Desire for continuity).

Many prior studies have mentioned that preference, affection, and desire for continuity are generally affective incremental processes, and the differences between Chinese and Japanese students on the issue of continuity may also be related to the history and processes of rural planning in each country, which we discuss more in-depth using ANOVA (**analysis of variance**) in Section 3.2, and correlation analysis in Section 3.3.

This study found that Chinese university students ~~hold~~have a more favorable view ~~towards~~of living in rural areas compared to their Japanese counterparts. The differences between the two groups are evident in their desire to live in rural areas and their expectations of interacting with locals. Specifically, 88% of Chinese students consider rural areas important, and 65% express a desire to live in one in the future with 88% considering them important and 65% wishing to do so. In contrast, only 56% of Japanese students feel attached to rural areas, and onlymerely 29% desire to live in one. Furthermore, 90% of Chinese students expect many opportunities to interact with locals in rural areas with 90% expressing this, while only 46% of Japanese students feel the same. Both share this sentiment. Although both groups view their past experiences in rural areas positively, but most students they find rural areas to be inconvenient. The study delves into the inconvenience of rural areas through a in general. A detailed text analysis of the inconveniences of rural areas is provided in section 3.3.

3.2 Discrepancy analysis for place attachment by place of birth, gender, and rural visit experience

Table 2 ~~shows~~presents the results of ~~the~~a t-test analysis ~~between~~conducted on the three dimensions (preference, affect, and desire for continuity) of place attachment between Chinese and Japanese students ~~by, considering factors such as~~ gender, place of birth, and rural visit experience. Some studies ~~noted~~have indicated that females ~~tend to have~~generally exhibit a higher attachment to ~~region~~[60regions [76]. However, based on the ~~surveys obtained data collected~~ in this study, ~~there was~~no significant difference in place attachment ~~was observed~~between ~~the~~genders ~~for among~~Japanese students, ~~while. In contrast,~~ among Chinese students, males ~~had~~demonstrated significantly higher attachment than females. ThusConsequently, it appears that male college students livingresiding in urban China are more attachedpossess a stronger attachment to rural areas ~~than females compared to their female counterparts.~~

Table 2. Results of t-test for place attachment by gender (China N=133).

	N	Male Mean	SD	N	Female Mean	SD	T-Value
(Chinese students N=133)							
Place Attachment-Preference	64	3.07	0.5	69	2.91	0.55	1.82
Place Attachment-Affection	64	4.07	0.73	69	3.82	0.68	2.03 *
Place Attachment-Desire for continuity	64	3.81	0.78	69	3.6	0.69	1.66
(Japanese students N=126)							
Place Attachment-Preference	61	3.77	0.66	65	3.72	0.65	0.38
Place Attachment-Affection	61	3.59	0.73	65	3.52	0.73	0.55
Place Attachment-Desire for continuity	61	4.16	0.67	65	4.19	0.65	0.24

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Different places of birth were determinants of place attachment. The results showed that Chinese students born in rural areas had higher levels of place attachment (preference and affection) than those born in urban and suburban areas. However, suburban-born students had higher levels of place attachment (preference, affection, and desire for continuity) than urban-born students. This may be related to the distance between their region of origin and the rural area as well as their familiarity with the rural area (Table 3). Among Japanese students, those born in rural areas had higher levels of place attachment (preference, affection, and desire for continuity) than did both urban and suburban-born students. Interestingly, unlike in China, urban-born Japanese students had relatively higher levels of place attachment (preference, affection, and desire for continuity) than those born in suburban areas. We suspect that this may be due to urban-born students' curiosity about rural cultural influences, which is discussed in the text-mining analysis section in Section 3.4.

Table 3. Results of ANOVA analysis for place attachment by birthplace and rural visit experiences

	N	Place Attachment Preference	Place Attachment Affection	Place Attachment Desire for continuity
		Mean	Mean	Mean
Chinese students	133			
Place of Birth				
Urban	76	2.74	3.74	3.61
Suburban	26	3.13	4.19	3.9
Rural	31	3.49	4.22	3.77
F		35.11	7.60	1.79
P-Value		0.00 ***	0.01 **	0.17
Experience				
Day trip	31	2.84	3.9	3.87
Lodging	49	2.79	3.79	3.55
Long-term residence	53	3.26	4.11	3.74
F		14.12	2.87	1.95
P-Value		0.00 ***	0.06	0.15
Japanese students	126			
Place of Birth				
Urban	62	3.69	3.50	4.10
Suburban	37	3.60	3.35	4.03
Rural	27	4.05	3.96	4.56
F		4.24	6.32	6.28
P-Value		0.02 *	0.02 *	0.03 *
Experience				
Day trip	48	3.56	3.36	4.01
Lodging	43	3.73	3.46	3.94
Long-term residence	35	4.01	3.94	4.41
F		5.21	7, 71	3.98

P-Value 0.01 * 0.00 ** 0.02

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

In addition, the experience of visiting rural areas, day trips, lodging, and long-term residential experiences were determinants of place attachment. The results for Chinese students showed that those with long-term residential experience had relatively higher place attachment (preference, affection, and desire for continuity). Interestingly, students with lodging experience had relatively higher levels of place attachment than those with residential experience (Table 3). In the subsequent, free text description section, we found that the issue of sanitation plagued the students in their lodging experiences, and this may have influenced the attachment levels of students with lodging experience, which was lower than those without it. Regarding the Japanese students, it was found that those with long-term rural residence experience had significantly higher levels of place attachment (preference, affection, and desire for continuity). Unlike Chinese students, Japanese students who had lived in rural areas had relatively higher levels of place attachment than those who had no live-in experience (Table 3). This may also be related to their familiarity with rural areas.

3.3 Correlation Analysis

To clarify whether the five factors of "degree of communication with local residents," "spending," "convenience," "satisfaction of visiting," and "intention to live in a rural area" affect students' rural attachment, a correlation analysis was conducted, and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation analysis of place attachment

	N	Place Attachment Preference correlation	Place Attachment Affection correlation	Place Attachment Desire for continuity correlation
Chinese students	133			
Degree of communication with local residents		0.50 ***	0.50 ***	0.46 ***
Thinking of less spending		0.21 *	0.19 *	0.35 ***
Thinking of convenience		0.54 ***	0.53 ***	0.52 ***
Satisfaction of visiting		0.64 ***	0.65 ***	0.65 ***
Intention to live in a rural area		0.66 ***	0.49 ***	0.33 ***
Place Attachment-Preference			0.77 ***	0.54 ***
Place Attachment-Affection				0.57 ***
Japanese students	126			
Degree of communication with local residents		0.38 ***	0.47 ***	0.30 **
Thinking of less spending		0.06	0.09	0.16
Thinking of convenience		0.28 **	0.29 **	0.10
Satisfaction of visiting		0.55 ***	0.53 ***	0.31 ***
Intention to live in a rural area		0.59 ***	0.63 ***	0.40 ***
Place Attachment-Preference			0.80 ***	0.56 ***
Place Attachment-Affection				0.58 ***

Note. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4 shows a significant correlation between Chinese students' responses to all five questions and place attachment (preference, affection, and desire for continuity). First, the greater the interaction with residents, the closer the psychological distance to the rural

area, the deeper the awareness of the attractiveness of the area, and the greater the degree of place attachment (preference, affection, and desire for continuity). In addition, past ease of access to rural areas was positively correlated with place attachment; the easier the access, the deeper the place attachment, and the higher the satisfaction with past visits to rural areas, the higher the attachment level. The intention to move to a rural area was also significantly positively correlated with place attachment. Spending also showed significant correlation with the degree of place attachment. The lower the cost of the experience, the higher the attachment to rural areas; however, this correlation is not as significant as that of the other four factors. Therefore, spending is not as important for Chinese college students, but it should not be ignored.

The four factors of "level of interaction with residents," "ease of visiting rural areas in the past," "satisfaction with the visit," and "willingness to live in rural areas in the future" were all significantly correlated with place attachment (preference, affection, and desire for continuity) among Japanese students. As with the Chinese students, the more past interactions with rural residents, the more convenient the arrival process, and the higher the satisfaction with past visit experiences, the greater the degree of place attachment (preference, affection, and desire for continuity), and the higher the willingness to move to a rural area for Japanese students. Unlike Chinese students, cost was not significantly correlated; therefore, cost is not important for Japanese students.

According to previous descriptive statistics, Chinese and Japanese college students' intention to live in rural areas in the future is generally low, and this factor is most likely related to previous experience, living environment, etc. To understand why more deeply, the reasons will be explored through the text analysis in the next section.

3.4 Text mining analysis

This study analyzed the past rural visit experiences of all 133 Chinese students and 126 Japanese students through a co-occurrence network of frequently used words in their answers. The network, created using KH Coder 3[6674], shows the problems encountered by university students in Zhengzhou city (China) during rural visits based on their place of origin (urban, suburban, or rural). (Figure 1) The semantic analysis found that rural and suburban students were correlated, with both groups focusing on transportation, poverty, infrastructure, and convenience. Rural students had deeper experiences and concerns about practical issues, such as education and poverty, while suburban students were more concerned with environmental aspects such as development, medicine, environment, structures, and insects. Urban students focused on hygiene, communication, dialect communication, and shopping difficulties, possibly due to their distance from rural areas.

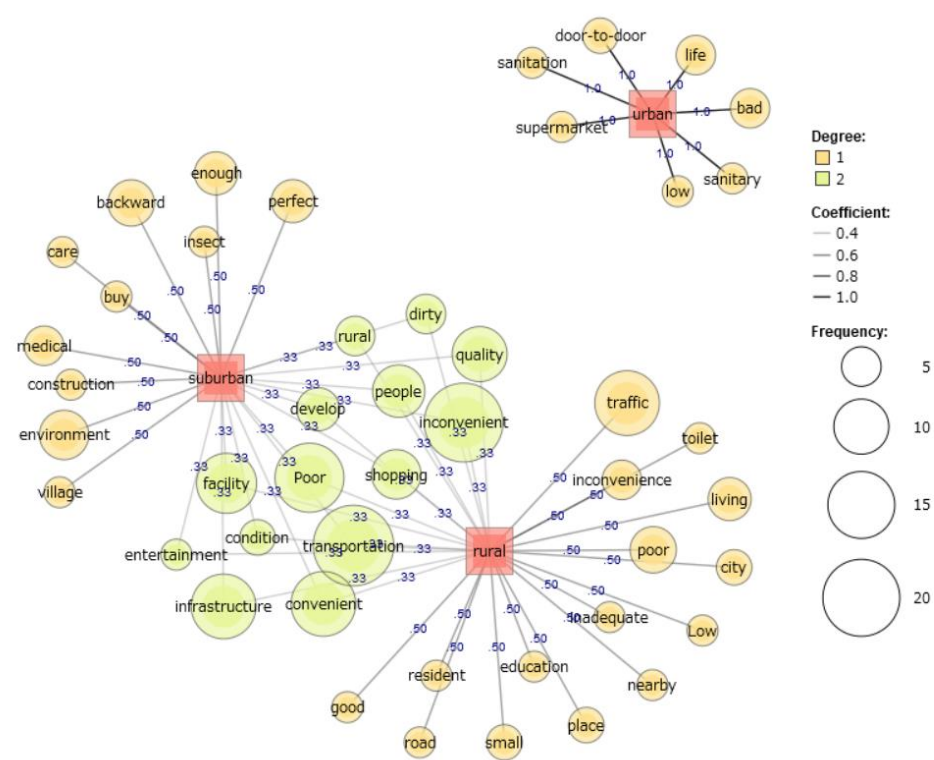


Figure 1. The central co-occurrence between problems and different places of birth (Chinese Students).

In Figure 2, the text mining results of past rural visit experiences for Chinese college students were analyzed. The results showed that students with lodging experience and long-term residence were correlated with words like supermarket shopping, medicine, unexplored, convenience, and take-out questions. Day trip students also correlated with long-term residents, including population, and structures. Day trip students focused on transportation, convenience, infrastructure, poverty, and recreation, while those with lodging experience focused on development. Long-term residents were more concerned about convenience and neighborhood issues. The ANOVA findings from Section 3.2 showed that students without lodging experience had stronger place attachments. This was also evident in the higher focus on shopping and take-out issues among students with lodging experience, indicating potential problems with food and shopping during their stay.

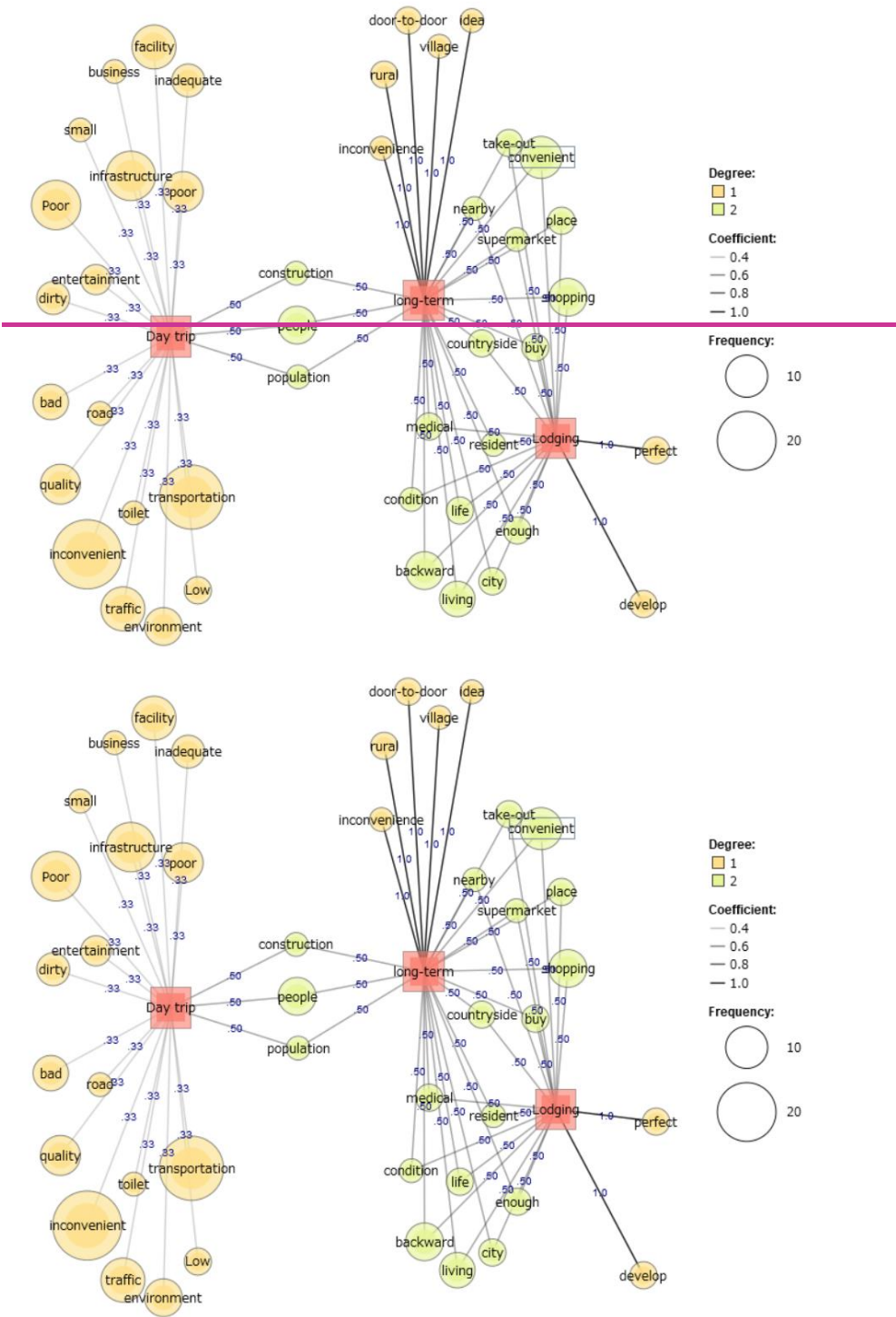


Figure 2. The central co-occurrence between different problem experiences (Chinese Students).

The results of the text mining analysis on Japanese students' rural visit experiences are shown in Figure 3. Rural and suburban students had similar concerns, focusing on old age, education, and inadequate public services. Suburban students had more concerns about hazards, technology, driver's licenses, population loss, and labor, while rural students focused on employment, supermarkets, activities, and bicycles. Urban students were more concerned with accessibility, lack of maintenance, culture, forests, and agriculture. Rural students focused on substantive issues, while suburban students were more concerned with the social status quo and population loss. Urban students were primarily

concerned with access to rural areas (the routes to rural areas appear to be more complicated).

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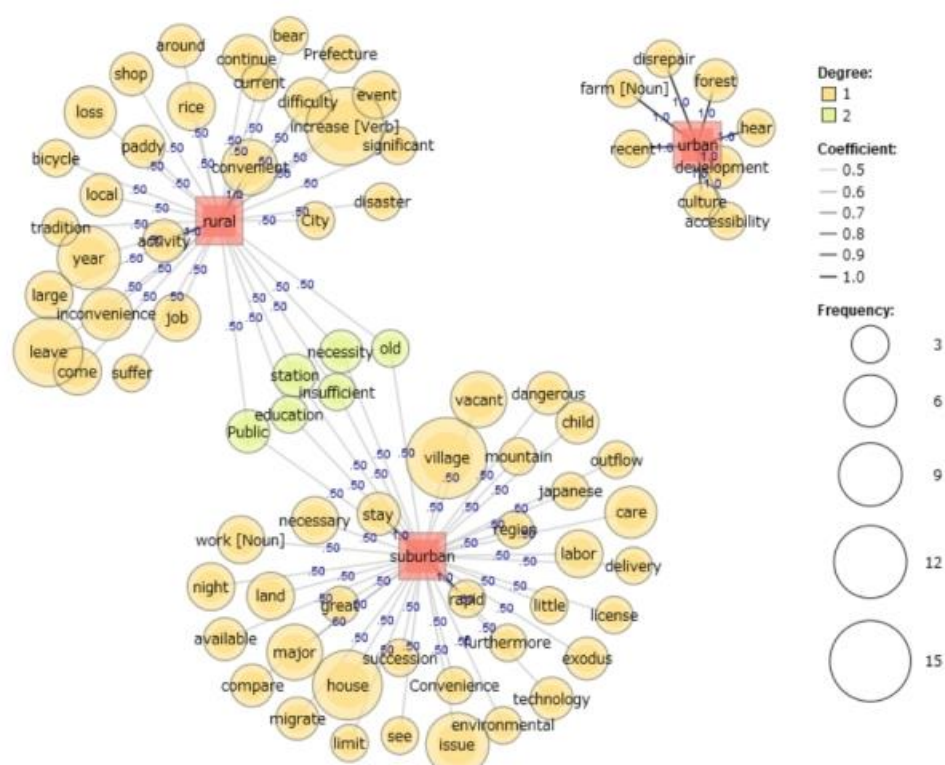


Figure 3. The central co-occurrence between problems and different places of birth (Japanese Students).

The text mining analysis results of Japanese students' experiences with different rural visit types are shown in Figure 4. Japanese students with lodging and long-term residence experience had similar concerns, such as activities, landscape, agriculture, culture, and bear infestation. Long-term residents were concerned about employment, education, old age, recreation, physical illness, and lack of children. Students with lodging experience were worried about rural management, loss of culture, successors, danger, and the need for a driver's license. Day-trip students focused on population loss, opportunity, future, and worry. All students were concerned about rural population, but those with lodging experience were more concerned about practical issues like safety and having a driver's license.

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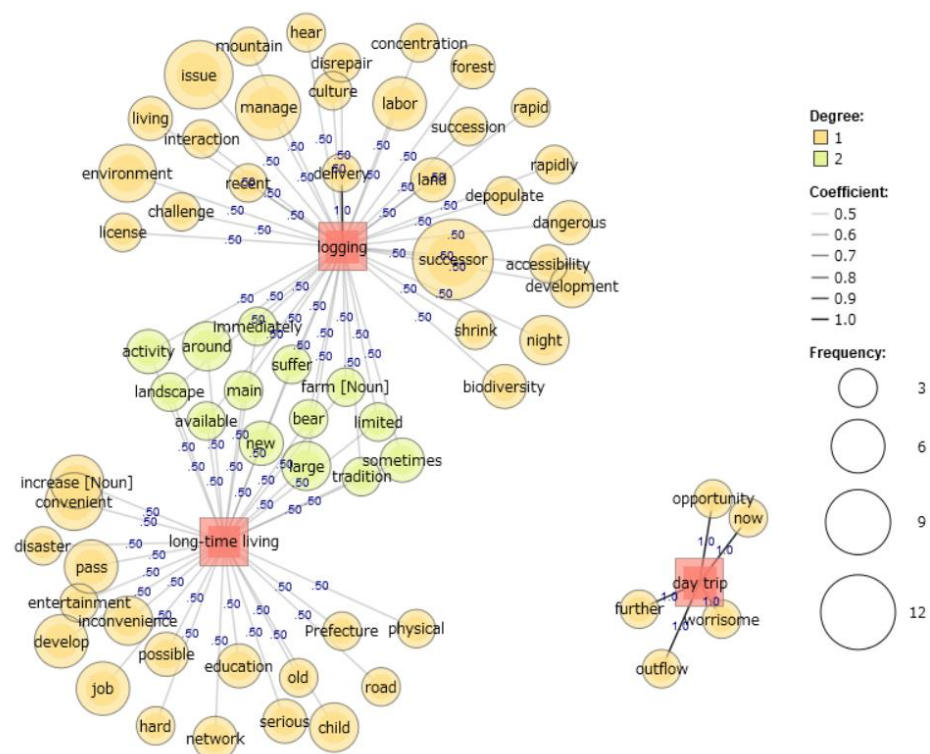


Figure 4. The central co-occurrence between different problem experiences (Japanese Students).

Chinese and Japanese students shared similar concerns about rural living, such as transportation and shopping convenience. Japanese students were more concerned with access and safety issues, such as driving ~~and~~ streetlights, and wild animals in rural areas. In contrast, Chinese students were more worried about sanitation, poverty, and education in rural areas, ~~and both~~. Both groups faced difficulties in communicating with rural neighbors due to dialect differences. 【3.1. Subsection】

4. Discussion

This study explores place attachment in rural areas, description of past experiences, and the willingness to move to rural areas among Chinese and Japanese university students living in urban areas. Unlike older adults, college students are extremely flexible in their actions, and most of them have left their hometowns where they have grown up to go to college in a new city and are in the stage of adaptation from a familiar area to a new environment. We must understand and promote to the new generation of young people to contribute to the rural economy by maintaining rural areas or visiting them in the future.

The Result found that Chinese university students were concerned about sanitation, poverty, and rural education in rural areas, while Japanese students were more concerned about access, safety, and wild animals. The concerns of Chinese students reflect the lack of basic amenities and widespread poverty in rural areas, as well as the underfunding of rural education and its impact on access to education and personal and professional growth. With schools being underfunded and lacking resources to provide quality education, ~~This this~~ can lead to a lack of access to education and limited opportunities for personal and professional growth [67–68,75,76]. Gender inequality in rural areas is also a problem. Addressing these issues is crucial for improving the quality of life for rural residents and promoting sustainable development in these areas. On the other hand, Japanese students were concerned about access issues, such as limited public transportation, and

safety issues, such as limited street lighting and wild animal presence, in rural areas. Both Chinese and Japanese students shared similar concerns about transportation and shopping convenience, and both groups experienced communication difficulties due to dialect differences in rural areas. Addressing these issues is crucial for improving the quality of life in rural areas and promoting sustainable development.

This study confirmed that the number of visits affects students' place attachment, as previously reported by Taniguchi [57–59,65–67]. However, the difference between Chinese and Japanese students was more pronounced, with Japanese students showing a stronger attachment to rural areas. This could be attributed to Japan's rural tourism policy or better construction of basic facilities. The study also found that gender plays a role in place attachment among Chinese students, with males showing stronger attachment to rural areas compared to females, which contradicts previous research [60]. ~~The text mining data shows that this could be due to females placing higher importance on sanitation and having negative past experiences in rural areas.~~ [68]. Therefore, addressing the sanitation concerns and negative past experiences of females in rural areas is important for promoting sustainable development. Furthermore, the study found that satisfaction with rural, interaction with residents, and convenience all positively impact place attachment, supporting previous research findings [59–65,67–73]. These findings offer insight into the factors affecting students' attachment to rural areas and emphasize the need to consider these factors in promoting rural development.

~~Although~~ There are several limitations to this study. First, ~~although~~ the study focuses on students with rural visitation experience, there is a lack of research on students who have not had any rural visitation experiences, which could be a potential avenue for future research. In addition, the study was limited to two representative countries in East Asia, and the findings may not be generalizable to other regions or countries and need to be explored further. ~~Furthermore, the sample size of this study, limited to the cities of Zhengzhou and Chiba, may not be large enough to comprehensively capture the full range of perceptions and experiences of young people in these countries on a national scale.~~

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides a deeper insight into the perception and attachment of young university students towards rural areas in China and Japan. The results highlight the impact of various ~~factors~~ **determinants**, such as place of birth, visiting experience, satisfaction, interaction with local people, and convenience, on students' attachment and willingness to live in rural areas. The findings of this study are valuable for rural community development, suggesting the need for educational resources, promotion of rural culture in urban education, and addressing hygiene issues in China, and promoting rural tourism, environmental safety, and access to rural areas in Japan. However, this study has limitations and further research is necessary to explore the emotional connection between young people and rural areas in more depth. Additionally, future studies could examine the perception of young people in other countries towards rural areas, contributing to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities for rural development globally.

6. Patents

Author Contributions: removed for peer review

Informed Consent Statement: removed for peer review

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

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