Influence of Japanese Anime on the Social Behaviour of University Students in Nanjing

---- Taking Cosplay Culture as an Example

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Abstract: In Nanjing, the popularity of Japanese animation is relatively high, which has a significant impact on university students' daily life and hobbies. In order to study the impact of Japanese anime on Chinese college students better, this study takes the perspective of Cosplay in Nanjing to explore and discuss its impact on college students' social life. The study found that Cosplay made them more willing to initiate conversations, making them more willing to initiate conversations and enhance their social confidence. Cosplay culture has also developed among university students in Nanjing. Cosplay activities not only help college students broaden their social circle and enhance their social skills, but also promote cultural exchanges, and enrich the form of social interaction. At the same time, Japanese anime and cosplay cultures have also influenced the values and behaviours of university students, making them more open and tolerant, focusing on personality display and teamwork. In the future, with the development of Japanese anime and cosplay culture, the social ways of Nanjing university students may become more diversified and internationalised. It promotes communication and interaction between people from different regions and cultural backgrounds. By participating in cosplay activities, college students can be exposed to more cultural elements and concepts, and enhance their understanding of and respect for different cultures. This is of positive significance to their personal growth and the formation of their worldview.

Keywords: socialisation, cosplay culture, social circle, college student socialisation

1.   Introduction

The research background of Japanese cosplay culture is profound and diverse. It originated in Japan in the 1970s and gradually emerged with the rapid development of the anime and gaming industries. This cultural phenomenon has had a significant impact not only within Japan but also has garnered widespread attention globally. Firstly, the rise of Japan's anime and gaming industries has provided

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fertile ground for the growth of cosplay culture. As a leading nation in the anime and gaming sectors, Japan's rich and diverse works offer endless creative inspiration for cosplay enthusiasts. From classic anime characters to the latest game personas, all have become popular subjects for cosplay enthusiasts. The popularity and acceptance of cosplay culture within Japanese society are remarkably high. In Japan, cosplay has become a popular cultural phenomenon, frequently appearing at events like anime conventions and gaming expos, and gradually permeating everyday life. People use cosplay to express their love for anime, games, and other works, while also taking the opportunity to showcase their individuality and creativity. With the development of the internet, cosplay culture has rapidly spread and diffused. The rise of social media platforms has provided cosplay enthusiasts with a venue to display their creations, allowing more people to encounter and understand this cultural phenomenon. At the same time, cultural exchanges on a global scale have further promoted the popularity and development of cosplay culture. The research background of Japanese cosplay culture is rich and diverse. Its rise and development are closely linked to the prosperity of Japan's anime and gaming industries, the widespread acceptance in social culture, and the advancement of the internet. In recent years, the influence of Japanese anime has gradually expanded through cultural exchanges, particularly among the younger generation in China, where its popularity is evident. Nanjing, a city with a rich history, has also been swept up in this anime craze. Among them, cosplay culture, as an important component of anime culture, has found a place in the social interactions of university students in Nanjing. From the perspective of the Nanjing cosplay costume market alone, the market size has continued to grow over the past few years, with a compound annual growth rate exceeding 10%. It is expected to maintain a favorable growth trend in the coming years. This growth trend is primarily fueled by the widespread popularity of cosplay culture. With the emergence of otaku culture, including anime, games, and related elements, cosplay has gained increasing favor among young people, becoming a means for them to engage in entertainment and social activities. Additionally, cosplay is not just about wearing costumes; it is also a form of performance and a reflection of identity. This unique consumer experience attracts more and more people to join the cosplay community, further driving the development of cosplay in China.

Cosplay culture typically involves elements such as role-playing, teamwork, and community interaction, all of which can potentially impact the social behaviors of university students. This study can explore the specific manifestations of these impacts, such as whether cosplay increases social opportunities for students or enhances their social skills. Additionally, by researching the influence of cosplay culture on university students' social behaviors, we can provide insights for higher education. For instance, educational institution can design more activities that leverage cosplay culture to improve students' social abilities and confidence, thereby promoting their social development. With the rise and development of cosplay culture, certain issues and challenges have gradually emerged, such as excessive commercialization and cultural identity crises. This study can provide guidance and recommendations for the healthy development of cosplay culture in response to these problems.

2. Literature Review

Cosplay culture, as a significant component of anime culture, originated in Japan but has long since crossed national borders to become a global fashion trend among young people. In Zhou Yun's research, it is mentioned: "Cosplay is not just a role-playing game based on interests and hobbies; it is also a way to make friends with similar interests, enhance interactive experiences, and gain social joy [1]." This indicates that previous studies have already recognized cosplay as a new avenue for socialization among teenagers. According to the iResearch report "2021 China ACG Industry Research Report," the overall market size in 2020 could reach 100 billion yuan, with an annual growth rate of 32.7% [2]. The number of general ACG (Anime, Comic, and Games) users reached 420 million

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in 2020 and is expected to exceed 500 million by 2023 [2]. During the user expansion period accompanying industry development, the issues arising from the clash between ACG subculture and mainstream culture cannot be ignored. Xue Zhou's case study "Social Work Intervention to Resolve Conflicts Between Youth Subculture Groups and Their Families—Taking Jilin City Cosplay Enthusiasts as an Example" delves into the issues of online ideological and political education for "post-95" college students in the new media era [2]. Using Nanjing Agricultural University as an example, it reveals through empirical methods the behavioral characteristics and attitudes of these students on social media. The study finds that "post-95" college students are highly dependent on social media, with WeChat and QQ Space being the main platforms for information sharing. They generally trust social media, believing it strengthens social connections, offers interesting content, and provides credible information, although their awareness of privacy and security needs improvement [3]. This means that with the rapid development of cosplay in China, more and more young people are being introduced to this new culture. By playing their favorite characters, college students can better express themselves and showcase their individuality. This role-playing process helps them clarify their interests and values. The study "New Offline Marketing Pathways for Cosplay Costumes in China" summarizes the development patterns of cosplay in China and the concepts and connotations of offline marketing for cosplay. It proposes new offline marketing paths specific to China to diversify the marketing methods for cosplay costumes, promoting the development of cosplay costume culture in a positive direction.

Since its introduction to China, cosplay culture has developed systematically [4]. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Nanjing, where activities such as cosplay competitions, collaborations with anime-related industries, and cosplay experience events are common. College students carefully select characters, create costumes, and apply makeup to vividly present their favorite anime characters. This is not only a tribute to the original works but also a journey of the soul and a fusion with the characters. In the process of cosplay, they experience different roles and lives, feel various emotions and experiences, enriching their inner world and deepening emotional connections with each other.

From Xue Zhou's case study "Social Work Intervention to Resolve Conflicts Between Youth Subculture Groups and Their Families—Taking Jilin City Cosplay Enthusiasts as an Example," it is evident that the cosplay subculture, based on ACG (Anime, Comic, and Game) culture and catalyzed by the ACGN (Anime, Comic, Game, and Novel) industry, emerged in China in the 1990s and has since grown into a significant community [2]. These cosplay enthusiasts strengthen their connections through the internet and construct subcultural identities based on cultural recognition, accumulating their subcultural capital. Due to the younger age of community members and lower social recognition, cosplay enthusiasts often encounter issues in social interactions, with conflicts with their families being the most typical problem [5].

College students, as the main followers of cosplay, seek out like-minded individuals both on social media and in real life. They use the ACG culture displayed in cosplay activities to escape the troubles of real life. As a part of ACG culture, cosplay satisfies their preferences for the ACG world.

Sun Weihua and Liu Yanan provide a fresh definition of cosplay in their work "Ritual Performance and Symbolic Resistance: The Ritual Practice and Threshold Space of Cosplay": "Cosplay is a role-playing game for contemporary youth to escape from daily life [6]." In the study "Research on Communication of Secondary Dimensional Virtual Community—Taking the Bilibili Cosplay Community as an Example," secondary dimensional culture is defined as follows: "A non-mainstream cultural phenomenon characterized by entertainment, consumerism, and post-modernism, primarily conveyed through animation, comics, and electronic games, with the purpose of opposing mainstream culture of the third dimension (the real world) [7]." Cosplay, through its intuitive and vivid performance forms, vividly showcases anime culture, bringing more surprises and emotional

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resonance to the public. This relationship is fully reflected among college students in Nanjing. By watching and discussing anime works, they gain a deep understanding of the stories and emotions behind the characters, enabling them to accurately grasp the characteristics and temperament of the characters in cosplay, presenting a more perfect performance. This form of social interaction, mediated by anime and manifested through cosplay, is gradually becoming a new way of socializing for Nanjing university students. In the process of imitating beloved characters, writing text continuations, and presenting performances, college students also engage in a process of mirroring and interpreting between fans and "idol characters," creatively fulfilling their own psychological needs. Cosplay clubs, conventions, competitions, and celebrities are all integral components of the cosplay culture. For instance, the 99 Degrees Anime Club, established in 2000 and affiliated with Zhejiang Sci-Tech University in Hangzhou, is one of the university's five-star clubs. The club boasts 99 members with a high level of specialization, including departments such as Publicity, Original Creation, and Cosplay. The composition of club members is diverse, and as the club expands, individuals with similar skills are placed in corresponding departments. Each department is led by a director, with typical management hierarchies consisting of a president, several vice presidents, and several department heads. A club with a well-known cosplayer as its president will find it easier to attract opportunities for modern commerce and business activities [8]. This model provides more social opportunities and platforms for individuals who enjoy cosplay. Further exploring the relationship between Japanese anime and cosplay culture, we find an inseparable connection between the two. Japanese anime, with its rich storylines, vivid characters, and unique art styles, provides endless inspiration and source material for cosplay. Nowadays, youth subculture and mainstream culture have formed a "resistant" relationship, characterized by a "stylized ritual resistance [9]."

The cosplay subculture, as a form of youth cultural expression, has gradually grown and expanded with the advent of the internet society. Media technology has become a vital platform for subcultural groups to gather and communicate, allowing them to construct their self-identity and group identity through specific media usage patterns. However, challenges arise for the cosplay subculture due to the influence of commercial forces and ideological assimilation. While subcultural groups actively resist, they also demonstrate a unique spirit of resistance. Cosplay is not merely imitation; it is also a process of artistic creation. College students typically possess higher cultural literacy and innovative abilities, enabling them to showcase their creativity and talent through cosplay works. From designing costumes and crafting props to makeup and styling, each step requires careful planning and execution, enhancing their hands-on and aesthetic capabilities.

Cosplay events often attract people from various fields and backgrounds, providing college students with a platform to expand their social circles and meet like-minded friends. They can share their works and experiences with others through participating in exhibitions, performances, and online social media, thereby deepening mutual understanding and friendships. Therefore, Japanese anime offers new avenues for college students' social interactions, with cosplay culture being a significant manifestation of this influence. Through in-depth research, we can better understand the social needs and behavioral patterns of the younger generation, thus providing valuable insights for promoting cultural exchange and understanding.

3.   Research Methodology

During the data collection phase, the authors employed a combined online and offline approach, conducting comprehensive questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire covered various aspects such as college students' anime viewing habits, level of involvement in cosplay, and changes in social activities, aiming to gain a comprehensive understanding of the specific impact of anime and cosplay on social interactions among Nanjing university students. Additionally, the authors conducted in-depth interviews with some active members of the cosplay community among college

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students, listening to their firsthand experiences and feelings, thereby obtaining more authentic and vivid primary data.

3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed by the authors, and the questions included were as in Table 1.

Table 1: Survey Questionnaire on the Social Impact of Cosplay

Number	Questions
1	What is your current grade?
2	How do you think Cosplay activities affect your social skills?
3	Are you willing to try to participate in the Cosplay activities in the future
4	Do you know about and have participated in Cosplay activities?
5	Who do you mainly communicate with during the Cosplay activities?
6	What is the main reason why you are not involved in the Cosplay activity?
7	How do you think the school should support or promote the Cosplay activities?

The questionnaire was distributed online via the Questionnaire Star mini-program, with a distribution period of one week.

3.2. Interview

Qualitatively, the authors invited 15 college students engaged in cosplay and conducted in-depth interviews to investigate the impact of cosplay activities on them. The interview questionnaire is as in Table 2.

Table 2: Survey Questionnaire on the Social Impact of Cosplay

Number	Questions
1	Have you made new friends because of watching Japanese anime?
2	Do you follow any derivatives of Japanese anime, such as cosplay, figures, fan works, or anime conventions?
3	Have you ever attended anime conventions or participated in cosplay?
4	How do you think Japanese anime and cosplay culture influence your social interactions?
5	What impact does cosplay events have on your social circle? How do you make new friends through them?
6	What role do you think cosplay events play in university social interactions?
7	How do you think cosplay culture contributes to the dissemination of Japanese anime culture?
8	Why do you enjoy attending anime conventions or participating in cosplay?
9	(If not) Do you know anyone around you who enjoys attending anime conventions or cosplaying?
10	Do you feel that your life has been influenced by Japanese anime culture and cosplay culture? In what ways?
11	What do you think are the pros and cons of socializing through Japanese anime culture or cosplay?

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For the data collected from questionnaire surveys and interviews, the authors utilized statistical software to conduct descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and other methods to reveal the relationships and degrees of influence among variables. As for the content of in-depth interviews, we summarized and organized it, extracting key information and viewpoints. This comprehensive analytical approach enabled the authors to interpret the data from multiple perspectives and levels, leading to more comprehensive and accurate conclusions.

4. Result

4.1. Questionnaire Overview

In this survey, a total of 97 college students participated, with 25.77% being male and 74.23% female. Participants came from various academic years, with a higher proportion of freshmen and seniors. Regarding academic disciplines, the arts category had the highest proportion, followed by natural sciences and engineering technology, with other academic disciplines also represented to some extent.

4.2. Main Findings

Table 3: The proportion of social influence of cosplay on respondents to different degrees

Option	Data results
Expanded my social circle	35.29%
Made it easier for me to find like-minded friends	70.59%
Unrelated to my real-life social circle	17.65%
Narrowed my social circle	0%
Greatly enriched my social interactions	11.76%
To some extent expanded my social circle	76.57%
Had no significant impact and even reduced other social activities	5.88%
Had a negative impact on my social circle	5.88%

Table 4: The favorable influence of the investigators on the cosplay and the degree of recognition

Cosplay Favorable effects on social interaction	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Japanese anime and cosplay culture have made me more open-minded and inclusive.	34.62%	26.92%	38.46%
Through participating in cosplay activities, I pay more attention to my self-expression and showcasing my personality.	34.62%	34.62%	30.76%
The values in Japanese anime have influenced me to some extent.	38.47%	34.62%	26.91%
Cosplay culture has made me more focused on teamwork and collective honor.	42.31%	42.31%	15.38%
Japanese anime has made me more willing to actively communicate with others.	30.77%	46.15%	23.08%
Cosplay activities have given me more opportunities to meet like-minded friends.	30.77%	30.77%	38.46%
Japanese anime and cosplay culture have made me more confident in social situations.	38.46%	30.77%	30.77%

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Table 4: (continued)

Through Japanese anime and cosplay culture, my social interactions have increased.	38.47%	30.77%	30.76%
Japanese anime and cosplay culture have influenced my existing social circle.	38.46%	34.62%	26.92%

Through the questionnaire survey and interview on cosplay in Table 1 and Table 2, it can be concluded that as shown in Table 3, authors can understand the proportion of Nanjing college students on the positive effect of cosplay on social interaction, as well as the favorable influence of cosplay culture on individuals. In Table 4, it can also be clearly seen that many college students recognize the positive influence of cosplay and themselves. In general, cosplay is beneficial to college students. In Table 5, in the next cosplay activity in Nanjing line, authors can clearly understand the degree of college students' love for cos roles and their preference for role types.

Table 5: Survey on the types and number of Japanese animation characters in the Nanjing Water Tour City cos

Character Name	From which anime	Number of cosplayers
Son Goku	Dragon Ball	25
Sasuke Uchiha	Naruto	18
Edogawa Konan	Detective Conan	12
Sakuragi Hanamichi	Slam Dunk	10
Inuyasha	Inuyasha	8
Monkey D.Luffy	One Piece	7
Naruto Uzumaki	Naruto	5

5. Discussion

The influence of Japanese anime on social interactions among Nanjing university students has been profound, with cosplay culture holding a particularly significant position as a unique form of expression. This impact is not singular but operates across multiple dimensions, collectively shaping the social lives of college students.

Firstly, the widespread popularity of Japanese anime has provided Nanjing university students with a common language in social discussions. Characters, plots, and worldviews from anime have become integral parts of their conversations. This shared interest not only brings them closer together but also provides them with more social opportunities. Our research findings revealed data in the process of investigation as follows: this common interest not only brings them closer but also provides them with more social opportunities. We observed in Tang Shaozhe's research on social media that social media has become a new pathway or medium for college students to overcome social anxiety [3]. For example, by participating in anime clubs, attending anime exhibitions, and other activities, college students can meet more like-minded friends.

Moreover, Japanese anime culture has a broad influence globally, with its unique art style, profound emotional expression, and diverse storylines attracting numerous fans. College students, as young and creative individuals, are more easily drawn to this innovative and imaginative culture. Additionally, Japanese anime and cosplay culture also impact the social psychology of Nanjing university students. The varied character images in anime, some brave, some gentle, some humorous, provide college students with different behavioral patterns and values to reference. By imitating and

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learning from these characters, they become more confident and outgoing in social interactions, and better able to navigate interpersonal relationships. At the same time, cosplay culture encourages college students to bravely express themselves, pursue their dreams, and this positive attitude has a beneficial influence on their social lives. Compared to existing research, this paper delves deeper into the specific impact of Japanese anime and cosplay culture on the social behaviors of Nanjing university students. Cosplay activities provide college students with a broader social platform. In the past, college students' social activities may have been mainly confined to campus clubs, classes, or dormitories. However, with the popularity of Japanese anime culture and the rise of cosplay activities, more and more college students are starting to meet new friends and expand their social circles through participating in cosplay activities. These activities not only attract students from different majors and backgrounds but also promote inter-school exchanges and cooperation. Secondly, cosplay activities make college students' social behaviors more diverse and interactive. Additionally, cosplay activities provide college students with a stage to showcase themselves and pursue their dreams. By portraying anime characters, college students can unleash their imagination and fulfill their artistic pursuits. Just as fans pursue their favorite celebrities, fan communities establish circles, engage in derivative works, and interactively consume, not only establishing close connections with idols but also profoundly changing the production and consumption patterns of media cultural products. This interaction and participation enable fans to not only enjoy cultural products but also actively participate in the creation and dissemination of culture [10]. At the same time, they can also showcase their talents and abilities, gain recognition and appreciation from others by participating in various competitions and performances. This sense of achievement and confidence boost further promotes social interaction among college students in cosplay activities.

There are various reasons why college students enjoy cosplaying Japanese anime characters, involving multiple aspects such as culture, emotion, expression, and social interaction. Because college students are at a crucial stage of personality formation and self-identity, they aspire to express their preferences, pursuits, and dreams through cosplay, fulfilling their desire for self-presentation. By cosplaying Japanese anime characters, they can gain deeper understanding and experience of this culture, finding resonance and joy within it. Cosplay allows college students to showcase their personality and interests in a unique way. They can choose to cosplay their favorite anime characters, game characters, or historical figures, using costumes, makeup, props, and other means to recreate the characters' images. This process itself is a form of self-expression, as college students can integrate their preferences, emotions, and pursuits into the characters, expressing themselves through the characters' appearance and language. This mode of expression not only fosters a sense of identity and belonging but also provides a sense of fulfillment in self-realization. Furthermore, cosplay provides a platform for college students to showcase their personality and creativity. During cosplay, they can create unique character images based on their preferences and imagination, showcasing the characters' traits and charms through details such as costumes, makeup, and props. This personalized mode of expression not only allows college students to demonstrate their talent and creativity but also provides a sense of achievement and satisfaction in the cosplay process. Through field surveys and interviews, we found that this influence extends beyond social topics and social behaviors, delving into social psychology and social values. This provides a more comprehensive perspective for understanding the social lives of contemporary college students.

6. Conclusion

Through in-depth research and analysis, the authors found that Japanese anime has significantly influenced the social behavior of college students in Nanjing, with cosplay culture serving as a prominent example reflecting the depth and breadth of this influence. In summarizing the author's study, it becomes evident that college students in Nanjing, through their participation in cosplay

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activities, not only express their love for Japanese anime but also establish new social circles and develop unique social behaviors in the process. They gather together based on common interests and hobbies, engaging in character portrayal and creation, thereby deepening their friendships and understanding of each other. During the preparation for cosplay, college students need to cooperate and help each other, collaboratively completing the production of costumes, props, and organizing performances. This exchange and cooperation not only enable them to better understand each other but also cultivate their teamwork and cooperative consciousness. Such teamwork and cooperative consciousness not only help them collaborate better with others in their academics and future careers but also make them more confident and composed in facing challenges and opportunities. Cosplay activities provide college students with a platform to showcase their talents and abilities. In the preparation process, they need to create costumes, props, and even write scripts and organize performances themselves. These activities not only hone their hands-on skills, creativity, and organizational abilities but also help them discover their potential and strengths in practice. When they successfully portray characters in activities and receive recognition and appreciation from the audience, their confidence is greatly boosted. This confidence not only enables them to face future challenges and opportunities with more confidence but also emboldens them to pursue their dreams and goals more courageously.

However, the research also has some limitations.

Firstly, the study mainly focuses on college students in the Nanjing area, which may limit the generalizability of the findings in terms of geography and culture. Secondly, while the authors analyze the impact of cosplay culture on social behavior, other potential effects in areas such as psychology and economics are overlooked. Despite these limitations, the study still provides valuable insights into understanding the influence of Japanese anime on the social behavior of college students in Nanjing.

For future research, the authors suggest exploring the influence of cosplay culture from broader geographical and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, in-depth research and analysis can be conducted on the impact of cosplay culture in other areas such as psychology and economics. Overall, Japanese anime has positively influenced the social behavior of college students in Nanjing, with cosplay culture playing a significant role. In response to this phenomenon, society should adopt an open and inclusive attitude while also guiding college students to have a rational perspective on Japanese anime and cosplay culture, avoiding excessive immersion that may affect their normal studies and lives.

Authors Contribution

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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