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Understanding Names: A Comparative Study of Vietnamese and Chinese Naming Structure

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ABSTRACT

This study examines naming practices in Vietnamese and Chinese cultures through a comparative analysis of 10,022 contemporary names (5,004 Vietnamese and 5,018 Chinese) collected from institutions and universities. By applying the mixed-methods analysis, we aim to identify the structural patterns, differences by gender, and variations by region in the naming conventions and take socio-cultural factors into account. The findings indicate significant differences in the culture's perspective of tradition and modernity between the two cultures. The Vietnamese names are more traditional in their structure as 71.7% of the names had a three-component structure, and the middle names helped in distinguishing between the genders. The Chinese names are more flexible in their structure, and there is no clear distinction in gender. Regional analysis indicated a significant north-south gradient in traditional structure adherence (North Vietnam: 78.3%, South Vietnam: 65.2%; East China: 71.5%, South China: 58.9%) and pronounced urban-rural differences in naming complexity (15.3% difference in Vietnam, 12.7% in China). The results of statistical analysis show that there is a strong association between cultural background and name structure ($\chi^2 = 876.43$, $p < 0.001$), and specifically with the gender marking patterns (Vietnamese: $\beta = 0.847$, $p < 0.001$; Chinese: $\beta = 0.124$, $p = 0.286$). The findings have implications for onomastics as they show how naming practices can be used as cultural resources to maintain and transform social identities. The findings also offer practical applications for those working in cross-cultural communication and documentation as well

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as for understanding the evolution of naming practices in response to modernization.

Keywords: Personal Names; Linguistics; Cultural Factor; Gender Factor; Social Factor; Onomastics; Sociolinguistics; Naming Structure

1. Introduction

The name is one of the primary aspects of a person's identity and communication. In Asian societies, naming customs are strategically placed in order of social order, cultural beliefs, and historical annals. A recent study has pointed out that naming practices mirror and sustain social relations, gender norms and ethno-cultural archetypes^[1, 2]. Although much research has been conducted on the naming customs of cultures, comparison studies between the various Asian naming systems and the structural and socio-cultural aspects of names in Vietnamese and Chinese cultures are still lacking.

The Vietnamese and Chinese naming systems, although have some similarities, they are different in some features. Vietnamese and Chinese name structures normally have three parts: [Family name + Middle name + Given name], but there are some differences in the structure and the way the elements are combined. The structure of Vietnamese names is rather conservative, and full middle names are always present, while the Chinese naming system has been revised dramatically since 1949^[3]. These changes are indicative of shifts in social and political realms in the Chinese context which has resulted in the streamlining of the naming system and the minimal use of middle names^[4].

There are certain gaps in the research regarding cultural and linguistic aspects of naming practices. The current research also does not include systematic comparative analyses. Most existing studies are based on qualitative analysis or use small data sets and lack quantitative evidence for naming patterns. Also, more research is needed to explore the effects of globalization and social change on traditional naming conventions and gender and structural variations.

This study fills these gaps using a comprehensive and comparative analysis of the Vietnamese and Chinese naming structures based on a large dataset of 10,022 contemporary names (5,004 Vietnamese and 5,018 Chinese) collected from official institutions and universities. The research questions to be addressed in this study include determining the structural features of contemporary names, identifying the

sociolinguistic factors that influence naming practices, determining if there are differences in naming conventions based on gender, and determining the changes in naming practices in the light of modernization.

The importance of this research is that it will offer new theoretical contributions and practical applications. From a theoretical point of view, our analysis extends onomastic theory to point out the patterns and principles of the Asian names. This study also implements a method of utilizing quantitative data in the analysis of names while at the same time looking at the names in the context of society. In a culturally and socially diverse global environment, the outcomes of this research can be useful for developing measures of cultural conservation and for enhancing communication.

The study seeks to address the following research questions: The first one is: What are the major differences in structure between the Vietnamese and Chinese naming systems? The second research question is: How do gender and social factors affect naming practices in both cultures? The third research question is: What can be seen as trends in the naming of people in the present time from the more conventional names given before? The final research question is: In what ways do naming structures reflect cultural and social values? To answer these questions, we combine structural analysis of name components, statistical analysis of naming patterns, and sociolinguistic analysis of gender.

This research extends these foundations while providing new insights through comparative analysis between Vietnamese and Chinese personal names. The purpose of this research is to examine naming practices from this perspective to add to the understanding of how personal names encompass and determine cultural character in Asian societies while also seeking theoretical and practical patterns that may be identified.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Research on Vietnamese Personal Names

Vietnamese personal names are embedded in cultural, historical, and social norms, whereby there is a balance be-

tween the old and the new. Vietnamese people have a conventional order of naming, which is given by the combination of Surname + (Middle name) + Given name; the Surname is always given priority. This structure is not only used for identification but also holds cultural and family meanings. The several subsections of the paper are arranged to provide the readers with information on the prevalence of some surnames among Vietnamese, the cultural influence of personal names, and the problems that these naming structures pose in different situations.

First, for surname prevalence and significance, as for Vietnamese surnames, the Kinh ethnic group is predominantly represented, with the *Nguyen* surname being the most popular among the population. This is due to historical factors, for instance, the *Tran* and *Trinh* dynasties, where people changed their surnames to avoid political aggression^[5]. Also, surnames are more significant than the given names in Vietnamese culture, and they indicate the family background. It is not common for a person to change his or her surname, and it is considered as giving up one's identity^[5].

Second, cultural influences on personal names carry much meaning and symbolism, which relate to religion, respect for nature, and agricultural culture. Some examples of names include those that denote natural phenomena or animals, for instance, *Mây* (cloud) or *Long* (dragon)^[5]. The naming process also shows some level of reverence to the ancestors when the names of parents or grandparents are not taken to ensure that the ancestors are not named directly.

Third, for structural and linguistic considerations, Vietnamese personal name structure is problematic when used in the international context, especially when it comes to cataloging and documentation since the names can be arranged in Vietnamese order. Furthermore, Vietnamese people use kinship terms instead of personal pronouns, which also affects the naming system. These terms reflect age and status hierarchies, which govern how people interact with each other in society^[6].

Last, from legal and onomastic perspectives, some of the legal issues that concern Vietnamese surnames include rules for changing names and preserving cultural identity. The onomastic analysis of Vietnamese names reveals the meanings and associations of these names^[7]. Nevertheless, the semantic analysis of Vietnamese names is a controversial issue since some scholars' state that the names have both

a denotative and connotative level of significance with an emphasis on cultural norms^[8].

Thus, although the Vietnamese naming conventions are very traditional, they can be slightly altered. Globalization and modernization have set in and that has made the naming system change gradually and embrace other aspects while at the same time embracing aesthetic value. This change is indicative of the vitality of the Vietnamese culture, which could embrace the old and the new at the same time.

2.2. Research on Chinese Personal Names

In China, the study of Chinese personal names is a diverse and dynamic research field. With the rapid development of science and technology in China, many researchers and scholars have conducted studies on Chinese names across various areas. Chinese naming structures encompass personal names, organizational names, and even brand names, each with its own set of rules and influences. The naming conventions in China are not only a means of identification but also carry significant cultural and symbolic meanings. The various aspects of Chinese naming structures are explored, highlighting their unique characteristics and underlying principles.

Firstly, for personal naming conventions, Chinese personal names often incorporate elements from the Chinese Zodiac and the Five Elements theory. The Eight Characters, which include the year, month, day, and hour of birth, are used to determine a favorable name that aligns with the individual's horoscope and destiny^[9]. Furthermore, names are chosen for their meanings, often reflecting desirable traits such as strength, wisdom, or patriotism. For instance, male names may include characters symbolizing strength or historical significance, such as 龙 (dragon) or 虎 (tiger)^[10].

Secondly, for linguistic and pragmatic aspects, in Chinese syntax, the naming sharing structure is a topic-comment framework where a naming (topic) is followed by multiple tellings (comments). This structure is distinct from the verb-centered syntax of Indo-European languages and reflects the cognitive and pragmatic aspects of Chinese language use^[11].

Moreover, the semantic relations in noun compounds have an influence on Chinese naming. Chinese noun compounds often involve complex semantic relations with implicit predicates that require interpretation. These compounds can represent various syntactic constructions, such

as modifier-head or appositional structures^[12].

Finally, for regional and hierarchical variations, the distribution of surnames across Chinese provinces reveals a hierarchical structure influenced by historical migration patterns and geographical features. This distribution reflects regional identities and cultural heritage^[13].

While Chinese naming structures are rich in cultural and semantic depth, they also face challenges in modern contexts, such as globalization and technological advancements. The need for adaptation of names in international settings highlights the dynamic nature of these naming conventions. Nonetheless, the core principles rooted in tradition and cultural significance continue to play a vital role in shaping Chinese identity and communication.

2.3. Research on Comparing People's Names

The study of personal names includes various areas, such as cross-cultural name comparisons, and the sociocultural features of names. This research has an important role in data integration, information retrieval, and intercultural communication. The complexity of name matching arises from variations in spelling, phonetics, and cultural differences, necessitating sophisticated algorithms and methodologies. This research explores key aspects, highlighting the challenges and methodologies involved in comparing people's names.

Firstly, for name matching algorithms, algorithms are commonly used to handle name variations caused by spelling and phonetic differences. These algorithms enhance data accuracy in applications like information retrieval and data mining^[14]. This research has shown that phonological comparisons can effectively match names across languages. A monolingual approach, focusing on phonological representations, achieved a high accuracy of over 97% in matching English and Chinese names^[15]. Different techniques perform variably across datasets, necessitating careful selection based on specific data characteristics^[16].

Secondly, for cross-cultural name comparisons, names carry cultural messages, reflecting language, history, and social values. The differences in naming conventions between cultures, such as Chinese and English, can impact intercultural communication and necessitate a deeper understanding to avoid misunderstandings^[17]. Research in diverse communities, such as Scotland, highlights how social and linguistic factors influence naming practices. These stud-

ies provide insights into the broader societal implications of naming conventions^[18].

Thirdly, for name disambiguation and ethnicity classification, addressing name ambiguities in search engines is a significant challenge. Approaches incorporating biographical information and comprehensive texts have shown promise in improving disambiguation accuracy^[19]. Moreover, names can be used to classify ethnic groups, offering an alternative to self-identification. However, these methodologies face limitations due to restricted name datasets and partial coverage of reference populations^[20].

While the research on comparing people's names is extensive, it is important to consider the limitations and challenges inherent in these studies. The effectiveness of name-matching algorithms can vary significantly depending on the dataset and context, and cultural differences in naming conventions can complicate cross-cultural communication. Additionally, the use of names for ethnicity classification must be approached with caution due to potential biases and incomplete data coverage. These considerations highlight the need for ongoing research and refinement of methodologies in this field.

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative analysis of naming patterns with qualitative interpretation of socio-cultural factors. The research design systematically compares Vietnamese and Chinese naming structures while considering their cultural and linguistic contexts.

3.1. Data Collection

The study analyzed 10,022 contemporary names from Vietnam and China, with data collected between 2022–2023. The Vietnamese dataset ($n = 5,004$) comprised 2,404 female and 2,600 male names, while the Chinese dataset ($n = 5,018$) included 2,452 female and 2,566 male names. All names belonged to individuals born after 1975 to ensure contemporary relevance. The year 1975 was chosen because it marks significant societal turning points in both Vietnam and China. In Vietnam, 1975 signifies the reunification of the country, ushering in a new era of social and cultural transformation. In China, this period precedes the Economic Reforms of 1978

and follows the Cultural Revolution, reflecting an important transition in cultural and social values, including naming practices. Selecting this timeframe enables the study to capture the evolving naming convention patterns influenced by these historical contexts.

The Vietnamese names were collected from:

- Vietnam Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs database;
- Hanoi Open University student records;
- VNU University of Languages and International Studies registration data;
- Ho Chi Minh City Open University enrollment records.

The Chinese names were sourced from:

- Suzhou University student registration database;
- Zhejiang University enrollment records.

To ensure representativeness, we employed stratified random sampling based on:

- Gender distribution (Male, Female);
- Geographic regions (North, Central, South for Vietnam; Eastern, Southern, Central for China).

3.2. Analytical Framework

3.2.1. Structural Analysis

Names were analyzed according to three primary components:

1. **Family Name (họ/姓)**
 - Simple: Single morpheme
 - Complex: Multiple morphemes
 2. **Middle Name (tên đệm/中间名)**
 - Simple: Single morpheme
 - Simple: Single morpheme
 - Complex: Multiple morphemes
 3. **Middle Name (tên đệm/中间名)**
 - Zero: Absent
 - Simple: Single morpheme
 - Complex: Multiple morphemes
- Given Name (tên riêng/名字)**
- Simple: Single morpheme
 - Complex: Multiple morphemes

3.2.2. Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis employed *R* version 4.2.1 to examine naming patterns across multiple dimensions. Our anal-

ysis began with descriptive statistics, calculating frequency distributions for name components, and conducting cross-tabulations to examine relationships between naming patterns and demographic variables. We employed chi-square tests of independence ($\alpha = 0.05$) to examine relationships between naming components and cultural or gender factors. Logistic regression analysis investigated gender influences on naming patterns while controlling variables such as time and geographic location. Time series analysis from 1975 to the present revealed trends in naming practices and identified potential influences of social and cultural changes in both societies.

3.3. Research Procedures

The research process spanned 20 months, organized into four phases. The initial three-month preparation phase established theoretical foundations through a literature review and developed data collection tools. The six-month data collection phase involved accessing institutional databases and implementing systematic data extraction procedures with regular validation checks. The eight-month analysis phase comprised detailed statistical analyses and pattern recognition studies, with regular expert consultations in Vietnamese and Chinese linguistics. The final three-month validation phase focused on verifying results and refining comparative analyses to ensure the reliability and validity of conclusions.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

The ethical framework prioritized data protection while maintaining research integrity. All personal identifiers except names were removed, and data storage followed institutional security protocols. The analysis focused on aggregate patterns rather than individual cases, and we obtained explicit permissions from all participating institutions. The research adhered to both international research standards and local regulations regarding personal data use in academic research.

4. Results

4.1. Overall Structural Patterns

Analysis of the 10,022 names revealed fundamental differences in naming structure preferences between Viet-

name and Chinese cultures. Vietnamese names demonstrated a strong adherence to three-component structures, accounting for 71.7% of the sample, with a particularly high representation among male names (47.18%) compared to female names (24.52%) (Figure 1). This gender disparity, as further illustrated in Table 1, suggests a more conservative approach to male naming conventions in Vietnamese culture. In contrast, Chinese names showed greater structural flexibility, significantly representing two-component (32.72%) and three-component (66.42%) patterns. The chi-square test of independence ($\chi^2 = 876.43, p < 0.001$) confirmed that these structural differences are statistically significant, indicating distinct cultural preferences in name formation.

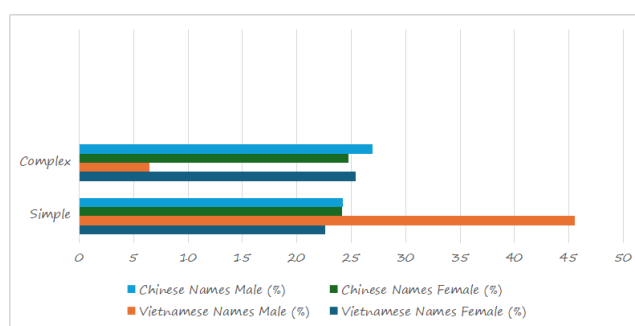


Figure 1. Distribution of name components by culture and gender.

Figure 1 demonstrates the distribution of name components by culture and gender, highlighting the higher prevalence of complex structures in Vietnamese names. Notably, Vietnamese names showed greater complexity in their overall structure, with some names containing up to five components (0.14% of female names), while Chinese names rarely exceeded four components.

Table 1. Distribution of name components by culture and gender.

Structure Type	Vietnamese Names (%)		Chinese Names (%)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Two components	0.04	0.66	16.52	16.20
Three components	24.52	47.18	31.98	34.44
Four components	23.30	4.16	0.36	0.50
Five components	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.00

This structural variation reflects bigger cultural differences in how personal identity is expressed through naming conventions, with Vietnamese culture favoring more elaborate structures that often incorporate generational and gender markers.

The chi-square test of independence showed a significant relationship between cultural background and name

structure ($\chi^2 = 876.43, p < 0.001, df = 3$).

4.2. Family Name Characteristics

The analysis of family names revealed striking contrasts between Vietnamese and Chinese naming traditions. Vietnamese family names showed greater structural diversity, with 93.35% simple and 6.65% complex structures, compared to Chinese family names which were overwhelmingly simple (98.86%) as detailed in Table 2. In the Vietnamese sample, the dominance of certain family names was evident, with *Nguyễn* accounting for 31.08% of all names, followed by *Trần* (11.32%) and *Lê* (8.75%). This concentration reflects historical patterns of family name adoption and social mobility in Vietnamese society, as shown in Table 2 under the “Most frequent” categories. Chinese family names, while also showing some concentration among common surnames like *Wang* (7.25%) and *Li* (7.19%), demonstrated a more even distribution. Complex family names in Vietnamese culture often resulted from historical processes such as clan differentiation or noble lineage marking (e.g., *Nguyễn Phúc*), while Chinese complex family names typically emerged from geographical or historical circumstances. Statistical analysis revealed significant differences in family name distribution patterns between the two cultures ($\chi^2 = 234.56, p < 0.001$), suggesting distinct historical and social processes in family name evolution. Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of these contrasts, including the breakdown of simple and complex family names across both cultures.

4.3. Middle Name Patterns

Middle name usage emerged as one of the most distinctive features differentiating Vietnamese and Chinese naming practices. Vietnamese names strongly preferred middle name inclusion (92.59%), with clear gender-specific patterns. Female names frequently incorporated the middle name *Thị* (44.60%), while male names often used *Văn* (47.98%), as detailed in Table 3 under the “Gender-specific” middle name category. This gender marking through middle names represents a crucial aspect of Vietnamese naming culture. In stark contrast, Chinese names typically omitted middle names (84.7%), reflecting a modern trend toward simpler name structures, as shown in Table 3 under the “Zero” category.

Table 2. Detailed distribution of family name types across cultures.

Family Name Characteristics	Vietnamese Names (n = 5,004)		Chinese Names (n = 5,018)	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Simple Family Names				
Single morpheme	4,671	93.35	4,961	98.86
- Most frequent	Nguyễn (31.08%)		王/Wang (7.25%)	
- Second most frequent	Trần (11.32%)		李/Li (7.19%)	
- Third most frequent	Lê (8.75%)		张/Zhang (6.83%)	
Complex Family Names				
Two morphemes	312	6.23	52	1.04
- Traditional compound	198	3.96	38	0.76
- Modern compound	114	2.27	14	0.28
Three or more morphemes	21	0.42	5	0.10
Total	5,004	100.00	5,018	

In Chinese names, middle names showed minimal gender differentiation, suggesting a different approach to gender marking in naming practices. Logistic regression analysis confirmed that gender significantly predicted middle name choice in Vietnamese names ($\beta = 0.734, p < 0.001$) but not

in Chinese names ($\beta = 0.089, p = 0.456$). These findings, supported by the detailed distribution in **Table 3**, highlight fundamental differences in how the two cultures use name components to convey gender identity and family relationships.

Table 3. Middle name distribution by gender and culture.

Middle Name Type	Vietnamese Names				Chinese Names			
	Female (n = 2,404)		Male (n = 2,600)		Female (n = 2,452)		Male (n = 2,566)	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Zero	125	5.21	235	9.05	2,057	83.89	2,194	85.51
Simple								
Gender-specific	1,573	65.43	1,892	72.77	289	11.79	298	11.61
Neutral	699	29.09	465	17.89	106	4.32	74	2.88
Complex								
Two morphemes	7	0.27	8	0.29	0	0.00	0	0.00
Total	2,404	100.00	2,600	100.00	2,452	100.00	2,566	100.00

4.4. Given Name Characteristics

The analysis of given names revealed distinct patterns in complexity and gender association between the two cultures. There was a clear gender-based differentiation in Vietnamese names, with female names showing a higher tendency toward complexity (25.42% complex) compared to male names (6.43% complex). This distinction is illustrated in **Figure 2**, which highlights the higher prevalence of complex given names among Vietnamese females. Simple given names dominated male Vietnamese naming patterns (45.52%), suggesting a cultural preference for straightforward, strong-sounding male names. Chinese given names,

however, demonstrated more balanced complexity patterns between genders, with female names showing 24.75% complexity and male names 26.94%. As shown in **Figure 2**, this near-equal distribution suggests a different approach to gender expression in Chinese naming culture. Logistic regression analysis confirmed these patterns, showing significant gender effects in Vietnamese naming ($\beta = 0.847, p < 0.001$) but not in Chinese naming ($\beta = 0.124, p = 0.286$). The semantic analysis of given names also revealed interesting patterns: Vietnamese complex names often combined nature-related terms with virtuous qualities, while Chinese complex names frequently paired characters representing both cultural values and aspirations, regardless of gender.

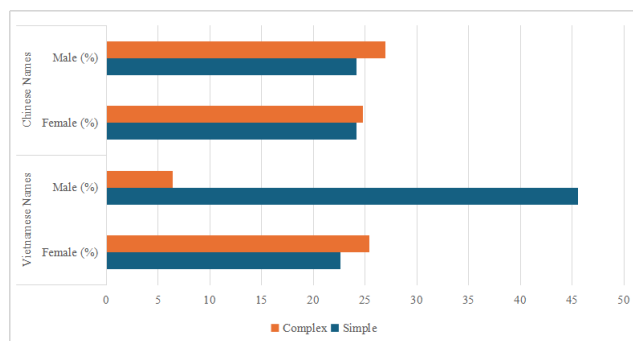


Figure 2. Given name complexity by culture and gender.

4.5. Regional Variations

Regional analysis reveals distinct geographical patterns in naming practices across Vietnam and China, with significant variations in both traditional structure adherence and naming complexity. The analysis is based on comparable sample sizes across regions, with approximately one-third of the total sample represented in each region (Vietnam: n = 5,004; China: n = 5,018). Table 4 provides a detailed breakdown of these regional naming patterns.

In Vietnam, a clear north-to-south gradient emerges in the adherence to traditional naming structures, as shown in Table 4. The Northern region exhibits the strongest preservation of traditional patterns, with 78.3% (1,317 out of 1,682 names) following traditional structures. This traditional adherence gradually decreases through the Central region (74.7%, 1,238 out of 1,658 names) to the Southern region, where only 65.2% (1,085 out of 1,664 names) maintain traditional structures. The modern naming format shows a

contrasting trend, increasing from 21.7% (365 names) in the North to 34.8% (579 names) in the South. The variation along with each region ($\chi^2 = 145.23, p < 0.001$) shows the reason why the differences are not due to chance.

The differences in naming structures also exhibit the regional variation in Vietnam, with the highest rate in the Northern region (34.7%, 584 names) then the Central region (32.9%, 546 names), and the lowest in the Southern region (30.9%, 514 names). Overall, 32.8% (1,644) of Vietnamese names exhibit complex structures, suggesting a substantial presence of multi-component naming patterns across all regions (Table 4).

In China, the regional distribution presents a different pattern. Naming structure in the Central region (Sichuan, Liaoning, Shaanxi) shows the highest rank for traditional structures at 75.6% (1,261 out of 1,668 names), and then the Eastern region (Beijing, Shanghai) at 71.5% (1,195 out of 1,672 names). The Southern region (Guangdong, Fujian) shows the lowest rank for traditional structures at 58.9% (988 out of 1,678 names) but the highest adoption of modern structures at 41.1% (690 names). These regional differences are also statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 167.89, p < 0.001$).

Complex name structures in China show less regional variation than in Vietnam, ranging from 33.5% (560 names) in the Eastern region to 29.1% (488 names) in the Southern region, as detailed in Table 4. The overall proportion of complex structures (31.2%, 1,563 names) is slightly lower than in Vietnam (32.8%, 1,644 names), suggesting similar levels of naming complexity between the two countries despite different regional patterns.

Table 4. Regional distribution of naming patterns.

Region	Sample Size (n)	Traditional Structure	Modern Structure	Complex Name Structures
<i>Vietnam (n = 5,004)</i>				
Northern	1,682 (33.6%)	78.3% (1,317)	21.7% (365)	34.7% (584)
Central	1,658 (33.1%)	74.7% (1,238)	25.3% (420)	32.9% (546)
Southern	1,664 (33.3%)	65.2% (1,085)	34.8% (579)	30.9% (514)
Total	5,004 (100%)	72.7% (3,640)	27.3% (1,364)	32.8% (1,644)
Regional Variation		$\chi^2 = 145.23, p < 0.001$		
<i>China (n = 5,018)</i>				
Eastern (Beijing, Shanghai)	1,672 (33.3%)	71.5% (1,195)	28.5% (477)	33.5% (560)
Southern (Guangdong, Fujian)	1,678 (33.4%)	58.9% (988)	41.1% (690)	29.1% (488)
Central (Sichuan, Liaoning, Shaanxi)	1,668 (33.3%)	75.6% (1,261)	24.4% (407)	30.9% (515)
Total	5,018 (100%)	68.6% (3,444)	31.4% (1,574)	31.2% (1,563)
Regional Variation		$\chi^2 = 167.89, p < 0.001$		

Comparing the two countries, both show significant regional variations in naming practices but with distinct patterns. Vietnam exhibits a more linear north-south gradient in traditional structure adherence (ranging from 78.3% to 65.2%), as shown in **Table 4**, China shows a more complex regional distribution, with the central region maintaining the strongest traditional patterns (75.6%). Both countries demonstrate higher rates of modern naming patterns in their southern regions (Vietnam: 34.8%; China: 41.1%), suggesting similar geographical influences on naming innovation.

These regional variations, supported by the detailed data in **Table 4**, reflect the complex interplay of historical, cultural, and social factors in shaping naming practices. The maintenance of traditional structures in Vietnam's North and China's Central regions likely reflects their historical roles as cultural centers. In contrast, the higher rates of modern naming patterns in the southern areas of both countries may be attributed to their historical exposure to international influences through maritime trade and cultural exchange.

5. Discussion

Our comparative analysis of Vietnamese and Chinese naming practices reveals several significant patterns that reflect broader social changes and gender dynamics in both societies. The findings contribute to understanding how naming conventions evolve while maintaining cultural distinctiveness in an increasingly globalized world.

5.1. Gender Dynamics in Naming Practices

Based on the results, it can be noted that there are differences and similarities in the way the two cultures approach gender marking in the naming practices. Middle name is used to identify gender in Vietnamese names (female: 44.60% *Văn*) using while *Thị*, given male: name 47.98% complexity using shows gender difference (female: 25.42% complex, male 6.43% complex). This pattern aligns with Khang's findings on the role of names in maintaining social values and gender norms in Vietnamese culture.

On the other hand, the Chinese naming practices seem to be gender neutral as both the female and male given names are equally complex, with rates of 24.75% and 26.94%, respectively. This result is in accordance with Yu's study on the transformation of Chinese naming culture, which reveals

the changing perceptions of gender in contemporary China.

The discrepancy in the influence of gender on naming conventions between Vietnam and China may partly be attributed to Vietnam's historically more pronounced preference for male offspring than China. This preference has been reflected in naming practices that explicitly distinguish between male and female names, often emphasizing traditional roles associated with each gender. For example, the common use of *Văn* for male names in Vietnam underscores qualities traditionally associated with masculinity, such as intellect and leadership. In contrast, *Thị* in female names denotes femininity and familial lineage.

In contrast, China's policies and societal transformations, such as the one-child policy (1980–2015) and post-Cultural Revolution reforms, have contributed to a cultural shift away from traditional gender distinctions in names. The one-child policy may have encouraged a more balanced treatment of gender, as families focused on raising a single child regardless of gender. This, coupled with broader movements toward gender equality, has made Chinese naming practices less reliant on explicit gender markers.

5.2. Regional and Urban-Rural Divisions

In China, the regional differences in naming practices are more pronounced along the East-South axis than the North-South axis. This divergence can be attributed to the country's geographical, economic, and historical dynamics. With its historical significance as a political and cultural center (e.g., Beijing and Shanghai), the eastern region strongly adheres to traditional naming conventions. Influenced by its role as a hub for trade and international exchange (e.g., Guangdong and Fujian), the Southern region has embraced more modern naming practices.

This difference in regional naming patterns between Vietnam and China underscores the two countries' distinct historical and cultural contexts. While Vietnam's North-South division mirrors its historical political and cultural dichotomy, China's East-South differentiation reflects its economic and trade-oriented regional identities.

The differences in the naming patterns are evident in showing how various factors such as historical, economic and social have affected it. The traditional structure adherence gradient by region (North Vietnam: 78.3%, South Vietnam: 65.2%, East China: 71.5%, South China: 58.9%) reveals that

the geographical location of a region concerning historical political powers affects the level of innovation in naming. This pattern is consistent with Ge & Song's conclusion that regional identity influences naming practices in China.

The urban-rural divide in naming complexity (15.3% difference in Vietnam, and 12.7% in China) indicates that urbanization significantly influences naming conventions. This finding extends previous research by demonstrating how modernization affects naming practices differently in urban and rural contexts across both cultures.

5.3. Family Name Evolution and Social Identity

The patterns of change in family names show the different historical processes in the development of surnames of the two cultures. The occurrence of some Vietnamese last names, especially *Nguyễn* (31.08%), is quite noticeable, while the occurrence of Chinese last names, particularly *Wang* (7.25%), is quite balanced, indicating different historical processes in the adoption of family names and social mobility. This finding is in line with Them's^[21] study on the history of Vietnamese family names but with a comparison to Chinese practices.

The disparity in surname concentration and evolution reflects the contrasting historical and societal contexts of Vietnam and China. In Vietnam, the dominance of certain surnames, such as *Nguyễn*, *Trần*, and *Lê*, can be traced to feudal systems and historical events. For instance, during certain dynasties, individuals and clans were compelled to change their surnames to avoid persecution or align with ruling powers. This centralization of surnames became deeply embedded in Vietnamese social identity, symbolizing familial and societal ties.

In contrast, China's relatively even distribution of surnames reflects a different historical trajectory. The influence of centralized imperial governance and a broader geographical spread contributed to the diversification of family names. Additionally, the Cultural Revolution and subsequent modernization reforms simplified naming conventions, focusing less on lineage and more on individuality and practicality. These reforms diluted the association of surnames with specific social hierarchies or familial prestige, leading to the more balanced distribution observed today.

The differences in surname evolution also underscore divergent approaches to social identity. In Vietnam, surnames

remain a vital marker of family heritage and collective identity, often tied to preserving cultural traditions and values. Meanwhile, the emphasis has shifted in China toward a more inclusive and flexible interpretation of identity, reflecting the country's historical commitment to egalitarian ideals and modernization.

6. Conclusions

This exhaustive analysis of Vietnamese and Chinese naming customs therefore offers a unique understanding of how naming conventions are shaped and reshaped by cultural, social, and even moderating influences in Asian societies. In this study, we analyzed 10,022 contemporary names using mixed-methods analysis. We found that there are both general trends and specific characteristics of naming structures that are characteristic of certain cultures and can change as naming practices change. The findings indicate that, although the Vietnamese and Chinese naming systems have different cultural implications, they reflect different trends of development regarding modernization. The study also identified several important trends in analyzing contemporary Asian naming practices. Vietnamese names are more likely to maintain the three-component structure (71.7%) and distinguish gender from middle names, which proves the significance of cultural norms in Vietnam. On the other hand, Chinese names are more versatile and gender-neutral, which may imply that Chinese people are trying to find a new way of balancing the traditional and the contemporary. The study also found that there are noticeable differences when it comes to the regions, specifically between the urban and rural settings in both countries. This urban-rural gap (15.3% in Vietnam, 12.7% in China) proves that naming conventions are greatly affected by urbanization and modernization, but the cultural influences are still preserved. This research makes several contributions to onomastic theory and sociolinguistics. This research also helps to contribute to the knowledge of how naming conventions are both tools of tradition and tools of change in societies. The results align with Aksholakova, who postulated that names are social identifiers. This study also shows how these identifiers change with shifts in society. Our analysis offers new perspectives on the connection between the structural and semantic components of naming in different cultures based on Thang's

work on Vietnamese naming patterns and Wei & Yuan's study of Chinese naming trends. The method used in this study allows the authors to see how these two cultures are different. At the same time, they show how to react to the same pressures of modernization. The findings have important applications in cross-cultural communication and documentation procedures. It underlines the fact that there is a need to have adaptable systems in place to allow for this in the international setting, underlines the importance of understanding culturally specific gender markers in names when communicating across cultures, and shows that there is a need to take into consideration the differences in regional naming practices for documentation. These findings are especially relevant in today's interconnected world where encounters between cultures are increasing and are becoming more complicated. Several areas remain untouched by this study and thus deserve further exploration. Future research can also be useful for analyzing changes in naming patterns over time, studying the naming practices of ethnic minorities in both countries, analyzing the effects of international migration on naming practices, and investigating the effects of social media on contemporary naming trends. Research based on other cultures from the Asian region would also help in giving a better understanding of the naming culture in the area. Thus, this analysis of the status of Asian naming practices shows that, despite the influence of modernity, the intermingling of the traditional and the innovative is still very much prevalent in naming culture. Not only does this research enhance the theoretical knowledge of naming practices in an Asian context, but it also offers useful information for cross-cultural communication and documentation. As globalization impacts culture more and more, understanding these patterns becomes crucial for the preservation of culture and the promotion of exchange on an international level. According to the findings of this research, it can be stated that naming practices are still used as significant symbols of cultural identity, which, however, transform to meet the needs and values of the modern world, which testifies to the durability and adaptability of the cultural traditions in the conditions of modernization.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, H.Q.N.; methodology, T.T.M.L.; data collection, H.Q.N.; data analysis, T.T.M.L.; comparative

cultural analysis, T.T.M.L.; manuscript writing, T.T.M.L.; review and editing, H.Q.N. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement

The dataset analyzed in this study was obtained from institutional records in Vietnam and China. Access to this data is subject to the privacy policies of the respective institutions. Detailed information about the data can be provided upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this study.

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