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Country Difference in Preschooler's Social Skills between Indonesia and Japan

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Abstract

The comparative analysis of children's social skills between Indonesia and other countries remains limited due to the scarcity of standardized tools in different countries. This study evaluates the association of cross-country differences, age, and gender with children's social skills in Indonesian and Japanese by using the exact measurement: Social Skill Scale-24, which consists of 3 sub-scales (assertion, self-control, cooperation) and 24 items. The data was collected in Indonesia from nine kindergartens in B City, West Java. The Japanese data was obtained from the Child Cohort Study (CCC), collected in 2022. Finally, there were 1436 participants, with 1157 participants from Japan and 279 from Indonesia. Our findings indicate that country difference is significantly associated with children's social skills ($p<0.05$). Indonesian children demonstrated stronger cooperation skills, whereas Japanese children excelled in assertion, self-control, and the overall SSS score. In addition, children's age and gender were significantly associated with preschoolers' social skills in both samples. Furthermore, all items in SSS-24 achieved satisfactory CFA scores (>0.5), and the omega coefficients for the total scores above 0.9 in Indonesia and Japan imply this questionnaire is valid and reliable. These findings suggest that best practices from each country can be adapted to local cultural contexts to improve children's social skills.

Keywords: *Indonesian Children, Japanese Children, Preschoolers, Social Skills*

INTRODUCTION

The preschool stage is widely recognized as critical period in early childhood development, profoundly impacting their social maturation. Insufficient focus on this crucial stage of life may heighten the vulnerability of a child's growth and development to significant damage (Maleki, Mardani, Chehrzad, Dianatinasab, et al., 2019).

In psychology, the term "Golden Age" refers to the early years of life. During this time period, children are developing their physical, cognitive, linguistic, religious, and moral ideals, as well as their self-concept, discipline, independence, artistic, and social-emotional abilities (Monepa, 2019).

As mentioned above, the early childhood development is crucial and demands greater attention. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Education, child development includes several key aspects: (1) Religious and Moral Values, (2) Physical-Motoric, (3) Cognitive, (4) Language, (5) Social-Emotional, and (6) Art (Orpinas, 2010). One of the important aspects is social skill development. Social skill competence defines an individual's ability to function well in relation to other people, particularly with regard to getting along with others and creating intimate relationships. Takahashi et al., (2015) emphasized that for preschoolers, social skills are learned behaviors based on social rules and enable children to interact appropriately with others in society (ie, say greetings, wait for their own return, etc).

Nowadays, there are several social skills problems among children in Indonesia: some children prefer to be alone/shy, have difficulty to control emotions and actions, don't want to share, and can't cooperate with others (Puspita Ria, 2019). The previous study also found several concerning phenomenon among children such as lack of discipline, lack of empathy for social problems, lack of effective communication, forms of violent behavior, imposition of will and conflict between groups (Handayani et al., 2021).

Japanese education emphasizes social skills development since in very early stage. Children are required to be prompt and dependable, consistently fulfill commitments, and coexist harmoniously with peers; they must also possess the ability to engage with others, initiate and sustain social relationships, and approach daily life with energy and empathy (Le Donne & Ulferts, 2023). It can be seen through the programs they have like greet the teachers every morning in front of the school, bow to the older, share the responsibility to clean up the classrooms, and many other. This is due to Japan's collectivist culture, which prioritizes the demands of the group over those of the individual. Consequently, the capacity of Japanese preschoolers to comprehend emotions is seen crucial for effective social interaction during free-play scenarios (Levantini & Shimizu, 2023). Eventhough educators and parents face challenges, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Restricting children's direct engagement with other people, particularly their peers, results in a lack of stimulation in terms of socializing, which is especially problematic in locations with a high population density (Tomikawa et al., 2021).

Lack of social skills can lead to potential problems. Research found that children who experience emotional and behavioral issues at a young age frequently lack the necessary social skills, resulting in difficult behaviors within educational environments (Dong et al., 2023). It is also important to note that a deficiency in social skills can lead to adverse outcomes in the future, including dropping out of school, limited ability to solve problems, unsatisfying social interactions, and requiring aid from the government (Dong et al., 2023; Lent et al., 2016; Salavera & Usán, 2021). On the contrary by having good social skills children can achieve success in school and society, also more likely to attain higher education and well-paying jobs in the future (Asyari & Astuti, 2022).

Social skills development of children is influenced by various factors, they are demographic factors, family environment, intimate between parents and children,

parenting style and parents' mental health (Ip et al., 2018; Palmer et al., 2018). Nevertheless, limited study discussed about how country and cultural differences influence the children's social skills. While previous study suggested the acquisition of social skills of a child can be influenced by the cultural environment in which they are raised. A country's culture establishes specific "guidelines" for raising children and, crucially, for the organization of their education. During this educational process, children are instructed on the appropriate social norms and behaviors (Jay, 2010).

Prior studies have compared children's social skills across cultures (e.g., China-Japan, Pakistan-Sweden, but none have directly examined Indonesia-Japan differences using the same measurement tool. The SSS-24 as a tool used in the current study has been utilized to compare Chinese and Japanese preschoolers' social skills (Z. Zhu et al., 2023). This was the primary study to evaluate the measurement invariance of SSS-24 in Asian countries. The study resulted in high omega coefficients for all three subdomains—assertion, self-control, and cooperation—and the total score. Moreover, the study also succeeded in establishing the validity, reliability, and scalar measurement invariance for the first-order factor structure of the SSS-24 across the Chinese and Japanese samples.

A separate research project was carried out to compare the social skills of preschool children in Pakistan and Sweden. The study utilized the Social Competence Teacher edition (SCS-T), a questionnaire to test children's social abilities. This instrument bears resemblance to the SSS-24 since teachers complete it and comprises 25 items specifically crafted to assess prosocial-communication skills, emotional self-regulation, and academic skills (Thomas et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the SSS-24 contains a more extensive range of measurements specifically designed for assessing children's social abilities, excluding any assessment of academic skills. Additionally, this measurement has been utilized in earlier research conducted in Indonesia (Agil et al., 2023).

The distinctions across countries, such as cultural values, practices, and laws, are part of the outermost layer of the ecological system known as the macrosystem (Berk, 2000). According to this idea, changes in setting between countries illustrate distinct social expectations and result the development of children's social skills.

Japan and Indonesia share a strong economic and cultural connection that dates back to 1942 (Hinta et al., 2020). Their interaction has resulted in the process of acculturation and enculturation inside the nation. Acculturation refers to the act of adapting cultural features and social patterns, while enculturation is the process by which individuals learn the culture of their community (Berry, 1999). Japanese are commonly perceived as well-mannered due to their cultural emphasis on respect, discipline, and communal harmony (Hinta et al., 2020). As mentioned above it's the results from Japan's collectivist culture, which emphasizes the needs of other people over those of one's own (Levantini & Shimizu, 2023). In line with that, Indonesia is a community characterized by robust member interaction and a commitment to the value of *Gotong Royong* (Cooperation) (Agil et al., 2023). It may be inferred that these two nations share several analogous societal characteristics.

Nevertheless, no prior research has been conducted to compare the relationships between cross-country differences and children's social abilities in Japanese and Indonesian children. One significant challenge in comparative studies is that children's social skills cannot be compared between nations without first ensuring that the measurement is consistent across all countries (Z. Zhu et al., 2023), known as

measurement invariance. Oppong et al., (2023) also added that invariance study applies to various research areas, including clinical, cognitive, social, experimental, cross-cultural, and developmental psychology.

The availability of social skill scale in Indonesia for preschoolers through the observation are still limited. Previous study developed the social skill scale to evaluate children's social ability during the pandemic COVID-19 (Huliana, 2022). The results are quite good but very limited for non-pandemic situations. The other study also developed social skill scale however the Cronbach alpha obtained was very low, only 0.241 (Handayani et al., 2021).

The current study examined social skill by utilizing the same 24 items-social skill scale (SSS-24) developed to measure preschoolers' social competence and evaluate children's social competence in a short period of time during daily situations (Anme et al., 2013). The SSS-24 was designed as a screening instrument for school professionals or teachers to assess children's social skills development. It is an is likely to accurately reflect children's social competency, since the teacher has been consistently observing them in the classroom setting. SSS-24 has been translated into Indonesian and back-translated into English by the experts. Besides, this scales also has implemented in Indonesian children and produce reliable results (Agil et al., 2023).

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between cross-country differences and preschoolers' social skills and to assess the measurement invariance of the SSS-24 among samples from Indonesia and Japan.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in two different nations using the same instrument. The instrument consisted of demographic data of the children and social skills, which were evaluated using the Social Skill Scale (SSS)-24 questions. This study employed a cross-sectional comparative observational design to evaluate social skills difference among preschool children in Indonesia and Japan. Previous studies have clarified the Cronbach alpha for the Japanese and Indonesian SSS-24 versions: 0.91 to 0.93 for Japanese (Anme et al., 2013) and 0.907 for Indonesian (Agil et al., 2023).

Over the course from July to August 2023, data collection in Indonesia was carried out by employing a total sampling strategy in the SJ sub-district, which is located inside the urban area of B city. There was a total of nine participating kindergartens, all of which were privately owned. In the meantime, the data from Japan used in the current study was secondary data part of the Child Cohort Study (CCC). The CCC Study, initiated in 1998, aimed to examine the factors linked to child development and quality of life. The survey included all child-day-care and child-night-care establishments in Japan that have been authorized by the government (Anme, n.d.). The data that served as the basis for this study was collected in 2021 and available in 2022, since it was the latest data and closest to Indonesian data timing collection.

Preschool children in the SJ ward between the ages of four and six years old, a caregiver who consented to participate in the study, and a teacher who was ready to evaluate the children's social abilities were the criteria for inclusion for the Indonesian samples. Regarding the Japanese samples, all secondary data were included under the same criteria as Indonesian samples, they were children ages four and six years old, and the teachers evaluated children's social abilities data. Each and every participant

who lacked data in the demographic and social skills categories was excluded from the study.

Before the data collection, researchers explained the procedures to the caregivers before they consented. After fulfilling all the procedures, participants gave their written consent and filled out the demographic questionnaires, while the teachers evaluated all children's social skills. In order to get reliable data, researchers held advance training for the teachers about using SSS-24. Trainers are researchers who have previously joined several occasions to utilize SSS-24. Finally, the current study included a total of 1436 participants, with 1157 participants from Japan and 279 participants from Indonesia.

The SSS has 24 items categorized into three subdomains: assertion, self-control, and cooperation. The assertion subdomain comprises eight elements, including: 1) Makes eye contact when speaks to him/her; 2) Displays strong reactions when he/she is spoken to; 3) Evidences happiness when someone does something for him/her; 4) Shows his/her feelings through facial expressions; 5) Expresses appropriate greeting to others; 6) Initiates talk with another person; 7) Makes eye contact when speaking with others; 8) Participates in a play group (company) when asked. The self-control subdomain consists of eight items, including 1) Does not throw temper tantrums in public; 2) Waits patiently after asking for something; 3) Share toys or food with others; 4) Does not interrupt another's speech; 5) Wait for his/her turn; 6) Borrows toys from others; 7) Behaves well as required by the situation; 8) Postpones gratification when requested. The collaboration subdomain consists of eight elements, including 1) Helps friends when friends get hurt; 2) Bring cheer to friends who look lonely; 3) Cheers up and comforts those who fail; 4) Happy when friends succeed; 5) Praises friend's success; 6) Applauds friend who has done something well; 7) Helps friends when asked; 8) Helps friends without having to be asked. Each item is evaluated on a scale, with a score of 0 indicating never, 1 indicating occasional occurrence (sometimes), and 2 indicating regular occurrence (always). The final score was determined by adding up the values of all items within each subdomain and the overall scale. A greater score signifies an elevated level of social skills.

This study investigated the association of country difference, children's age and sex with children's social skills by using SSS-24. Parents reported data of the age and sex. As for the coding, researcher used gender (boy = 1, girl = 2), country (Japan = 1, Indonesia=2). In order to assuring the good measurement, researcher had done the measurement invariances of SSS-24 and the differences in the development of social skills in Indonesian and Japanese children. Prima Health College Ethical Committee has approved this study with No. 243/EC/KEPK/STIKES-PI/III/2023, and also from University of Tsukuba ethical committee No. 1657-1.

On the basis of the requirements, a number of different statistical software programs were utilized in order to answer the aim. The IBM SPSS 27 software was utilized for both descriptive statistics and bivariate analysis. extra statistical software, specifically IBM SPSS AMOS 26 Graphics, was utilized by the researchers in order to do extra analysis in order to acquire Omega coefficients and confirmatory factor analysis SSS-24 numbers. Finally, in order to achieve the results of the measurement invariance analysis, the researchers also utilized the M plus version 8.10 research software.

The first-order and second-order factors for SSS were examined in accordance with the four phases that were defined by Vandenberg and Lance (2000). This was

done in order to determine its measurement invariance. The initial step in determining whether or not configuration invariance exists was to establish factor loadings, intercepts of variables, and residual variances as free parameters.

The second thing that we did was investigate the metric invariance, which is a term that describes the limitations of similar factor loadings as well as the release of intercepts and subsequent variances. In the third step of the process, we ensured that the factor loadings and intercepts were consistent across all of the groups in order to evaluate scalar invariance.

Finally, the strict or residual invariance was examined by constraining factor loadings, intercepts of variables, and residual variances, all of which were set to be equal across groups. This was done in order to evaluate the invariance of the residuals. As for the model comparison, changes in RMSEA (ΔRMSEA), CFI (ΔCFI), TLI (ΔTLI), and χ^2 ($\Delta\chi^2$) are commonly used to compare the nested models, and they would be acceptable if $\Delta RMSEA \leq |0.015|$, $\Delta CFI \leq |0.01|$, $\Delta TLI \leq |0.01|$ and $\Delta\chi 2 / \Delta df < |5$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the descriptive characteristics of the participants in the current study between Indonesia and Japan. When it came to Japanese respondents, the participants in this study were virtually evenly divided throughout all age groups and gender categories. On the other hand, as far as Indonesian respondents are concerned, the age group of four years old is lower than the age groups of five and six years old (11.1%, 39.4%, and 49.5% each, respectively). This might be caused by the minimum age of children entering preschool education in Indonesia is 4 years old (Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2021), and during COVID-19 pandemic since the parents were concerned about the risk involved, many parents put off sending their kids to kindergarten (Sandro, 2020).

According to the findings of the bivariate study, the differences between countries are associated with all sub-scales and the total score of social skills. Based on the data presented in Table 2, Japanese samples exhibit higher levels of self-control, assertiveness, and the overall score for social skills. On the other hand, Indonesian samples exhibit a higher level of collaboration skills than Japanese samples.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Categories	Total (N=1436)		Japan (N=1157)		Indonesia (N=279)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Age	4 yo	458	31.9	427	36.9	31	11.1
	5 yo	515	35.9	405	35.0	110	39.4
	6 yo	463	32.2	325	28.1	138	49.5
Sex	Boy	731	50.9	597	51.6	134	48.0
	Girl	705	49.1	560	48.4	145	52.0

Table 2. Bivariate Correlation Results

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Age	1						
2 Sex	0.036	1					
3 Country	0.233**	0.028	1				
4 Assertion	0.247**	0.113**	-0.129*	1			
5 Self-control	0.239**	0.217**	-0.044*	0.508**	1		
6 Cooperation	0.343**	0.146**	0.074**	0.572**	0.551**	1	
7 Total SSS	0.342**	0.187**	-0.015*	0.729**	0.796**	0.914**	1

Age was found positively correlate with the development of all aspects of social skills (Ip et al, 2018). This finding in line with the previous study that age is related to the child social skills developmental trajectory (Ip et al., 2018; Takahashi et al., 2015; C. Zhu, 2021; Z. Zhu et al., 2023). As children mature, they develop an innate capacity to discern the boundaries of acceptable behavior while engaging with others. This is also connected to children's developmental milestones in the pre-school age group, which will progressively increase as they grow older.

The present study also emphasized the gender of the children determines their social skills. As many previous studies found that girls developed their social skills faster and more adapted to social behaviors, while boys' modeling of behaviors is more active and aggressive (Maleki, Mardani, Chehrzad, & Dianatinasab, 2019). Additional study also demonstrated that teachers consistently evaluated girls' social skills higher on the observation checklist, which aligns with the findings of this study (Hajovsky et al., 2022; C. Zhu, 2021).

As for the country comparisons, the study found children in Indonesia tend to have lower assertion, self-control, and the total score of SSS compared to Japanese children. It might be influenced by cultural values and curriculum that implemented in both countries. The macrosystem, the outermost layer of the ecological system, includes cultural values, behaviors, and laws that vary by country (Berk, 2000). This theory holds that country settings shape children's social skills by demonstrating different social norms.

In a recent study, it was addressed how the Japanese educational system places a strong emphasis on the development of moral character (Hinta et al., 2020). Beginning at a very young age, it was of utmost significance for the Japanese to make use of it in social and family contexts, as well as in formal settings such as kindergarten. Children do not need to be concerned with remembering facts or doing mathematical operations during this early level. They are instructed to look out for one another and to assist one another in times of need. Because of this, students in primary school are instructed to learn how to get along with others, comprehend the emotions of other people, maintain control of their egos, and be responsible and cooperative within the classroom (Hinta et al., 2020; Takahashi et al., 2015).

Japanese children are commonly seen as well-mannered because of the cultural focus on respect, discipline, and communal peace. Japanese society prioritizes social cohesion and the preservation of harmony within the community (Hinta et al., 2020). Additionally, the influence of traditional values, such as filial piety and collective responsibility, plays a significant role in the shaping children's behavior (Hinta et al., 2020; Li et al., 2022; Takahashi et al., 2015).

Conversely, Indonesian samples showed greater score for cooperation skill compared to Japanese samples. It could be influenced by the majority of participants age in Indonesian samples were 6 years old (49.5%) who have developed a better cooperation skill. As mentioned before, each age has their own milestones. At the ages of 3 and 4 years, children start to differentiate between their imagination and what is actually real. Additionally, they start to acquire the capacity to engage in social interactions. As the child matures, they develop the ability to comprehend and carry out simple directives by age five or six. They also learn the social skills of praise and apologies. They prefer interacting and socializing with their classmates, engaging in collaborative activities (Malik & Marwaha, 2022).

The present findings are in direct opposition to the findings of prior SSS-24 study that conducted a comparative analysis between China and Japan. Prior studies indicated that Japan exhibited superior cooperation abilities compared to China. One factor that impacts this is the age limit for admission into childcare facilities. In Japan, children below the age of 3 have access to daycare facilities, which allows them to enhance their social interactions with others from a young age (Cerdan et al., 2020) According to data from China, a mere 4% of children under the age of 3 have enrolled in childcare centers (Jay, 2010). The variations in the ages at which individuals enter educational institutions in Japan and China may explain the fluctuations observed in the trajectory of cooperative skills, as suggested by (Zhu et al, 2023).

As for the cooperation aspect also might be related to post-COVID-19 data collection. The prohibition of social interactions may diminish their opportunities for collaboration with others. Yet, notwithstanding the pandemic in Indonesia, children were able to attend school and engage with their peers while adhering to health protocol (Ikatan Dokter Anak Indonesia, 2020). While in Japan, the caregiver stated their children decreased the opportunities to play outdoors and spend time with friends (Li et al., 2022; Tomikawa et al., 2021). Moreover, the data collecting was done earlier in Japan, which might differ the results due to the social restrictions started in the 2020.

Nevertheless, the Indonesian children had higher cooperative skills, which might also be impacted by the Indonesian school system, which requires children to complete the tasks collaboratively in group settings, such as puzzle games or Lego construction (Faridah et al., 2024). Besides, the data was collected in 2023, which is more than a year after the start of limited schooling in mid-2021 (Kemdikbud, 2021), which allowed students to continue to develop interactions and collaborate with other students.

The current study also found all sub-scales of SSS-24 are related to each other which supported by previous study (Z. Zhu et al., 2023). Its assuring that SSS-24 would provide reliable results to evaluate children's social skills in several countries or globally. According to the omega coefficients presented in table 3, all of the sub-scales and total score of the SSS-24 are greater than 0.7 for the sub-scale, and greater than 0.9 for the overall score. This demonstrates that the measuring instrument in question is very reliable when used to samples from Japan and Indonesia.

Table 3. Standardized Factor Loadings for the SSS-24 in CFA Models

Item	Factor loading	
	Japan	Indonesia
Subdomain 1: Assertion		
1. Initiates eye contact	0.765	0.534
2. Shows strong reactions	0.759	0.526
3. Shows happiness	0.783	0.496
4. Shows feelings through facial expressions	0.634	0.506
5. Expresses appropriate greetings to others	0.568	0.561
6. Initiates talk with another person	0.723	0.619
7. Makes eye contact when speaking with others	0.752	0.521
8. Participates in companies when asked	0.632	0.604
Subdomain 2: Self-Control		
9. Does not throw tantrums in public	0.549	0.658
10. Waits patiently	0.826	0.546
11. Shares toys or food with others	0.803	0.594
12. Does not interrupt another's speech	0.726	0.649
13. Waits for the turn	0.658	0.546
14. Borrows toys from others	0.786	0.566
15. Behaves well as required by the situation	0.701	0.550
16. Postpones gratification when requested	0.798	0.570
Subdomain 3: Cooperation		
17. Helps friends when friends get hurt	0.782	0.629
18. Brings cheer to friends who look lonely	0.843	0.661
19. Cheers up and comforts a person who fails	0.877	0.632
20. Happy when friends succeed	0.831	0.580
21. Praises friend's success	0.865	0.628
22. Congratulates a friend who has done well	0.826	0.614
23. Helps friends when asked	0.752	0.517
24. Helps friends without having to be asked	0.729	0.603

Table 4. Omega Coefficients Showing Composite Reliability of the SSS-24

Country	Assertion score	Self-control score	Cooperation score	Total score
Japan	0.878	0.901	0.941	0.981
Indonesia	0.827	0.760	0.889	0.975

Table 5. Fit Parameters for SSS-24 of the Two Samples

Variable	X^2	df	X^2/df	RMSeA	CFI	TLI	SRMR
Threshold			<5	<0.08	>0.8	>0.8	<0.08
Results	2394.7	582	4.11	0.058	0.872	0.857	0.025

As for the measurement invariance analysis, results of the CFA scores for all items in the current study were greater than 0.5 (see table 3). There are many studies reported that factor loadings should be greater than 0.5 for better results (Majeed et al., 2021). In top of that, (Truong & McColl, 2011) were also considered 0.5 as a cut-off for acceptable loadings. Additionally, while exploring the behavior, Ertz et al., (2016) have considered the factor loadings of 0.4 and above for the CFA score.

The present findings indicate that the CFI provides sufficient evidence to support the factor structure in all of the models tested in both populations. It is accepted model has a good fit since CFI ≥ 0.8 and RMSEA < 0.08 (Garson, 2006). The Japanese and Indonesian versions of the SSS-24 demonstrated equivalence across all three sub-scales and exhibited a strong model-fit, indicating that the groups have a common factor structure (Oppong et al., 2023). These results demonstrate that Japanese and Indonesian participants in this study share a similar viewpoint on the items assessed in the SSS-24. However, due to difference numbers of samples between the two countries and time difference of data collecting, the slight insufficient result was found. Yet, does not affect the quality of the SSS-24 itself.

Based on our current understanding, this work represents the first attempt to investigate the measurement invariance of a social skill evaluation between Indonesia and Japan. This indicates that the strength of the correlations between items and the underlying components, as well as the thresholds of the items, are the same in both Indonesia and Japan. The current analysis could not provide evidence for the stringent invariance of the SSS-24, implying that the error variance could not be assumed equal across the two national samples. The error variance can be defined as the variability in the reliabilities of items across different groups. Nevertheless, the SSS-24 exhibited satisfactory composite reliability in the present investigation, with omega coefficients exceeding 0.950 for the overall score.

As for the originalities, this is the first study to compare the social skills of Indonesian and Japanese children using same scale: SSS – 24 items with high validity and reliability of an instrument. It empowers good practices to be adopted in other countries adjusted to the local culture and optimizing the children's development. Yet, this study has limitation to clarify more factors which consider associated with

children's development social skills like home-rearing environment, economical status due to different tools were used in each study.

In addition, one disadvantage of the study is that the sample size, particularly among Indonesian participants, was considered small. Additionally, there were missing data for certain questions, which had an impact on the results. The results cannot be generalized to all regions of both countries. Furthermore, the current study involves a limited number of demographic characteristics. Further research should collect more demographic information and more areas should be included to ensure the representativeness of samples. Continuously, due to the impact of COVID-19, the investigations in both nations were not carried out concurrently, which may have resulted in some unmanageable influence on the outcomes. In order to validate our findings, it is imperative that additional surveys be carried out simultaneously in both nations in the future. Furthermore, it is worth noting that despite the training received by the teachers who assessed the social skills of children in this study, it is possible that Japanese and Indonesian teachers may perceive observed behaviors differently due to cultural disparities.

Furthermore, a significant disparity exists in the quality of kindergartens in Indonesia, which might result in varying programs aimed at fostering the development of children's social skills development. Childcare quality in kindergartens significantly determines preschoolers' social skills development (Baker et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2018; Z. Zhu et al., 2023). However, the researcher has been managing to choose the kindergartens samples from one area to minimizing the bias. In addition, incorporating information on kindergarten quality in the future would allow for the use of multilevel structural equation models with hierarchical approaches to identify country variations in child social skills development, not only at the individual level but also at the level of childcare centers or kindergartens. Ultimately, the present investigation was structured as a cross-sectional study, preventing confirmation of a causative association. Future research necessitates the implementation of longitudinal investigations.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes the cross-country difference between Indonesia and Japan associated with the children's social skills. In both countries, age and sex were significantly associated with children's social skills. As for the subscales, they empower good practices to be adopted in other countries and adjusted to the local culture. In addition, this study also found that the SSS-24 questionnaire is a valid and reliable measurement for Indonesian and Japanese samples. Measuring the invariance also demonstrated an overall acceptable result.

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