

IMPLEMENTING THE CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING (CTL) METHOD TO ENHANCE ENGLISH PROFICIENCY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD: A STUDY IN INDONESIAN AND MALAYSIAN KINDERGARTENS

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Abstract: This study explores the application of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method in teaching English to children aged 5–7 years in kindergartens across Indonesia and Malaysia. A qualitative approach was adopted, incorporating observation, interviews, and document analysis to investigate how the CTL method enhances children's English language proficiency. Teachers implemented hands-on activities, including conversations, daily instructions, and engaging tasks such as singing, shared reading, and project-based activities. The approach involved providing children with English storybooks and videos, delivering materials engagingly and enjoyably, and emphasizing a student-centered learning environment. Key strategies employed by teachers included establishing interconnected meanings, promoting conceptual understanding through real-life relevance, fostering group collaboration, and facilitating knowledge transfer to new contexts. Results revealed that 50 children were proficient in English speaking before using the CTL method, while 75 exhibited limited proficiency. After implementing the CTL method, the number of proficient children increased to 95, while those with limited proficiency decreased to 30. These findings highlight the effectiveness of the CTL method in improving children's English-speaking skills. The study concludes that employing the CTL method through a qualitative approach significantly enhances early

childhood English proficiency by incorporating contextual, enjoyable, and relevant learning experiences aligned with young learners' daily lives.

Keywords: *Children's English Proficiency, Contextual Learning, Early Childhood*

A. Introduction

Investing in early childhood education is essential to help every child thrive during their formative years. Education is a fundamental process that enables students' holistic growth, including their potential, self-concept, qualities, and academic grades. One aspect of children's self-perception and nature (Yulianti et al., 2023).

The progress of a country is greatly influenced by the English language skills of its people. English is an international language that is widely used in everyday communication. For Indonesian citizens to compete with foreign citizens in the current era of globalization, the country must prepare the nation's next generation to be able to speak and write English well. Children should be taught to use English before they are twelve years old. The best time for children to learn English is between the ages of two and seven. Early age is the right time to learn English so children can speak fluently. Children absorb language faster than native speakers. (Hasanah & Ulya, 2020).

The rapid development of communication and technology marks the contemporary era of globalization. However, another challenge is the abundance of knowledge, techniques, and ideas available to parents regarding the growth and development of their children. Character education is becoming increasingly crucial in facing globalization as a means to produce quality human beings. In line with that, Presidential Instruction No.1 of 2010-Priority Two states that improving the curriculum and active, creative, and innovative learning techniques based on national cultural values is a top priority in the field of education to shape the nation's competitiveness and character (Yulianti et al., 2019).

Children's language development must be taught regularly and using the proper method. Language development includes speech, writing, reading, and listening. (Dhieni, 2007).

Applying the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method is relevant in Indonesia and Malaysia because both countries' cultural contexts and educational policies support this approach. Culturally, Indonesian and Malaysian society have collectivist values emphasizing cooperation, social relationships, and community-based learning. CTL, which prioritizes learning through group collaboration, social interaction, and sharing experiences, is in line with these local cultural traditions (Trianto, 2011). In addition, the cultures of both countries also prioritize the integration of real-life values, such as responsibility and respect for others, which are the core of the contextual approach to learning. (Basree, 2009).

The application of CTL in early childhood language learning is also supported by the theory of multiple intelligences developed by Howard Gardner. According to Gardner, every child has a unique intelligence, such as linguistic, kinesthetic, musical, or interpersonal intelligence. Through CTL, English learning can be designed to accommodate various learning styles of children, for example, through physical activity (kinesthetic), listening to music (musical), or working in groups. In this way, children learn the language passively and actively engage, which accelerates the learning process and increases their motivation. (Gardner, 1999).

CTL also follows the principles of early childhood development, which emphasize play-based learning. Activities such as role-playing, educational games, and group projects provide opportunities for children to learn English in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. (Lukman, 2024) Using this approach, children improve their English skills and develop social skills, creativity, and self-confidence.

In previous studies, CTL effectively improves early childhood English skills, especially speaking and listening. The emphasis on real-life relevance makes it easier for children to understand and use English in everyday contexts. (Johnson; E. B, 2022). Therefore, this approach is suitable for application in early childhood education environments, where learning must be relevant, fun, and centered on children's needs and experiences.

Regarding education policy, the national curriculum in Indonesia and Malaysia provides ample room for the implementation of CTL. In Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum delivers a more flexible and student-based approach, emphasizing

project-based learning and fun activities. This approach aligns with the principles of CTL, which emphasize contextual and participatory learning involving direct experience. (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020) . In Malaysia, the National Preschool Education Curriculum (KSPK) adopts a holistic approach that encourages experiential learning and real-life relevance, which aligns with the CTL method. (Indonesia, 2022) In addition, Malaysia's bilingual policy prioritizes mastery of Malay and English, creating a need for effective learning methods, such as CTL, to facilitate early English learning.

Both countries face challenges and opportunities related to globalization that make English language proficiency a primary need. CTL enables practical, relevant, and contextual English learning, preparing children to participate in the global economy without neglecting local cultural values. (Lim et al., 2019) . This method also supports inclusive education, which is essential in countries with high cultural and linguistic diversity, such as Indonesia and Malaysia. In this case, CTL allows teachers to use locally relevant materials to bridge English learning, making it more accessible to students with diverse cultural backgrounds. (KARENINA, 2023) .

CTL fits the characteristics of early childhood learning in both countries. Children aged 5-7 learn most effectively through fun and meaningful activities like songs, stories, group projects, and games. CTL provides relevant and engaging learning experiences, encouraging students' active involvement in learning (Herdiyanti & Suparno, 2023) . With an inclusive and contextual approach, CTL improves children's English skills and builds a strong foundation for future learning. (Lukman, 2024) .

CTL is also rooted in the theory of situational learning popularized by Lave and Wenger, which suggests that the most effective learning occurs in contexts where the knowledge will be applied. In early childhood language learning, this approach is applied through daily activities such as conversations with teachers, singing, reading story books, and group games, where children can use English in natural and meaningful situations. (Ghonivita et al., 2021) . For example, when children are invited to sing simple songs in English, they learn new vocabulary and practice pronunciation and intonation through fun and interactive activities.

CTL is one of the language learning models. Through the active involvement of children in relationships with teachers, peers, and family contexts, CTL emphasizes situational learning through children's dynamic experiences. This can develop the speaking skills of kindergarten children when carrying out learning activities at school because this learning strategy does not place children as learning objects whose duties are to listen, take notes, and memorize only. (Sunarsih, 2020) .

This CTL learning model can actively involve students in discovering their knowledge through direct experience with group learning and collaborating to exchange knowledge. (Satriani et al., 2012).

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language, while in Malaysia, it is the second language that children learn after they learn their mother tongue. The mother tongue is the first language spoken and understood by someone when they first get to know the language and learn to speak from birth through interaction with other members of society. While in Indonesia, English is a foreign language. A foreign language is a language that is not used in a person's homeland/country of origin. The child is considered to have skills in two mother tongues, which are not foreign to him, although one of the languages he uses may be a foreign language to most other people living in the child's homeland. (SHELEMO, 2023).

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B. Method

This study uses a qualitative research design that utilizes evaluation studies (Lexy J. Moleong, 2014). Evaluation studies are designed to determine the conclusions of a policy program, significantly to determine the final results of the program, and to formulate suggestions for previous policies, which ultimately

influence future policies (Arikunto, Suharsimi, Jabar, A. & Safrudin, 2008). This study was conducted in Indonesia and Malaysia. Indonesia includes Mondial International School, Semesta Bilingual School, and Gaussian Kamil School of Creativity. In addition, preschools in Malaysia include:

Genius Aulad Value and Smart Reader Kids Putra Negeri Sembilan Malaysia. Children in group B who are enrolled in schools and are between the ages of five and six are the subjects of the study. In this study, documentation, interviews, and observations are the methods used to collect data. Data reduction, data visualization, and conclusions are used in data analysis. Triangulation of sources and techniques is used in the data validation process. To obtain a realistic picture of the research program development process, a qualitative research approach was used in this study to uncover data in the field by describing and interpreting something similar to what is in the field and connecting cause and effect with something that happened during the study using the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model. This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of contextual teaching and learning (CTL) learning strategies in early childhood English language development. Kindergartens in Indonesia and Malaysia participated in this study. The initial survey produced interesting research subjects, and the authors reached some initial conclusions. (Aslan & Uygun, 2019).

Because the CIPP evaluation model is more comprehensive than other models, evaluators use it more often. Daniel Stufflebeam et al. (1967) created this assessment approach at Ohio State University. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESA) was first assessed using this evaluation technique. Context evaluation, which evaluates context; input evaluation, which assesses input; process evaluation, which assesses process; and product evaluation, which evaluates outcomes, are acronyms for CIPP. The four CIPP acronyms represent the evaluation components. (Latifa, 2016).

This study used a purposive sampling method to determine the location and participants of the study. The selection of locations involved schools in Indonesia and Malaysia that have implemented CTL (Contextual Teaching and Learning)-based learning methods in their curriculum. In Indonesia, the research locations included

Mondial International School, Semesta Bilingual School, and Gaussian Kamil School of Creativity. The research was conducted in Malaysia at Genius Aulad Value and Smart Reader Kids Putra Negeri Sembilan. These schools were selected because of their characteristics that support bilingual-based learning and the use of contextual learning methods.

The study participants were registered schoolchildren in group B (aged 5-6 years). The selection criteria included students' ability to participate in CTL-based learning activities and the availability of teachers who understand and apply this method. The sample size was adequate because it involved various schools with different cultural contexts and educational policies, providing representative data for comparative analysis.

The data collection procedure in this study involved three main methods: documentation, interviews, and observations. Documentation was conducted by reviewing the school curriculum, teaching materials, lesson plans, and student development assessment reports, which helped analyze the implementation of the CTL method, including how the teaching materials were adapted to the children's daily experiences and the relevance of the local context. Interviews were conducted with teachers, principals, and several parents to gain a comprehensive perspective on the implementation of CTL, the challenges faced, and its impact on children's English development. Interview questions were designed to explore the implementation of CTL and change in children's language skills, with teachers providing concrete examples of the CTL strategies used and parents being asked for their opinions on their children's development at home. Observations were conducted directly in the classroom during several learning sessions, with durations varying between 60 to 90 minutes per session, to see how teachers implemented the CTL method in daily interactions with children. The observations focused on activities such as singing, reading stories, and group projects, as well as recording children's responses, their interactions with peers and teachers, and their level of participation in the activities.

Implementing the CIPP Model in this study includes four elements of evaluation: context, input, process, and product. Context evaluation is conducted to understand the educational

environment in Indonesia and Malaysia, including curriculum policies, student needs, and the relevance of English language learning. In Indonesia, the focus is on implementing the flexible Merdeka Curriculum, while in Malaysia, the emphasis on the bilingual policy is the primary concern. Input evaluation includes an analysis of the resources used by the school, such as storybooks, learning videos, and other teaching aids that support the implementation of CTL, as well as teacher qualifications and training in the CTL method to understand their readiness to implement this approach. Process evaluation observes the implementation of CTL through classroom activities, such as how teachers facilitate experiential learning and engage students in interactive activities, to evaluate the effectiveness of contextual learning strategies. Product evaluation is conducted by analyzing learning outcomes to see the extent to which children's English language skills have improved after implementing the CTL method, through assessing student development before and after the implementation of CTL, as well as feedback from teachers and parents about children's communication skills.

The CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) model is used in this study to evaluate the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method in early childhood English learning in Indonesia and Malaysia. The context evaluation assesses the relevance of educational policies such as the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia based on projects and real-life experiences and the KSPK in Malaysia, encouraging a holistic approach based on everyday life. The input evaluation includes storybooks, learning videos, and interactive teaching materials. It also assesses teacher qualifications through interviews to ensure their suitability in implementing the CTL method. This approach helps understand the background and readiness of both countries to support experiential learning and real-life relevance.

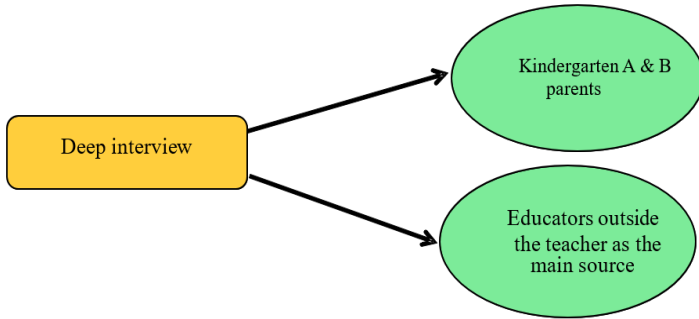


Figure 3.1 Technical Triangulation
Source: (Sugiyono, 2016)

Source triangulation is a data collection technique used to obtain data from multiple sources using the same technique.

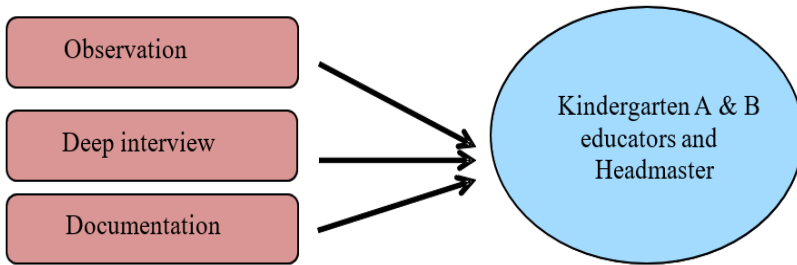


Figure 3.2 Source Triangulation
Source: (Sugiyono, 2016)

C. Results and Discussion

The study’s results showed that contextual learning methods can improve the English-speaking skills of children aged 5-7. This is evidenced by the increase in children’s English speaking skills at every meeting at Mondial Kindergarten Indonesia, Semesta Kindergarten Indonesia, Gaussian Kamil Kindergarten Indonesia, Genius Aulad Nilai Negeri Sembilan Malaysia, and Smart Reader Kids Putra Nilai Negeri Sembilan Malaysia.

Mondial Kindergarten Indonesia, Semesta Kindergarten Indonesia, and Gaussian Kamil Kindergarten Indonesia use the Merdeka curriculum, which we adjust to each school’s specificities. Mondial Kindergarten Indonesia, Semesta

Kindergarten Indonesia, and Gaussian Kamil Kindergarten Indonesia also use the Singapore curriculum as a learning reference. The three schools in Indonesia use project-based learning, so the Merdeka curriculum currently being implemented greatly supports learning activities in schools. In addition, it also uses the Montessori method to introduce English to children

Mondial Kindergarten Indonesia, Semesta Kindergarten Indonesia, Gaussian Kamil Kindergarten Indonesia, Genius Aulad Nilai Negeri Sembilan Malaysia, and Smart Reader Kids Putra Nilai Negeri Sembilan Malaysia apply the Contextual Teaching and Learning method in learning. All learning is done using the CTL method, where we facilitate children to do direct practice activities, such as when learning about fire extinguishers. We will facilitate bringing fire extinguishers to school, and children will get to know them directly. When learning about money, our children facilitate market day activities and work together with their friends when selling.

This school applies the contextual teaching and learning method by allowing students to get to know and develop their English skills directly through conversations with teachers and daily instructions they hear at school. We also facilitate children by reading/storytelling in English so that they become more familiar with English.

To motivate students to participate in English learning, the Contextual Teaching and Learning method for Kindergarten B students (aged 5-7 years) can be used. This method involves inviting students to enjoy the English learning process, which is packaged with singing, reading books together, projects, and so on because they do not feel that it is real learning.

Teachers take the steps to implement the Contextual Teaching and Learning method in developing the English language skills of Kindergarten B students (aged 5-7 years) in class by helping to facilitate children's development of their English language skills through fun singing and dancing activities, daily learning, and stories read to children.

Educational Resources in Implementing Contextual Learning Methods In developing English language skills in schools in Indonesia, are there any uses:

1. Basic Curriculum Framework and Early Childhood Education Curriculum Structure 2013, along with Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 137 of 2014 concerning National Standards for Early Childhood Education.
2. Accredited by universities and employers worldwide, the Cambridge International Curriculum sets the benchmark for education. We apply it to nursery and playgroup education.
3. Edu is a social-emotional learning program for students in grades Pre-K—6 that fosters communication and understanding between genders, builds community, and fosters relationships both inside and outside the classroom. The program also helps boys and girls grow into kind and caring individuals.
4. Reading comprehension with a purposefully built library of resources is the goal of the educational technology businesses Read Aloud and Learning A - Z.
5. According to the Montessori approach, children can begin to learn in a supportive and carefully designed environment because they are naturally curious and eager to learn. This approach encourages a child's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development.

The results of this study describe the Contextual Teaching and Learning method for developing English language skills in Indonesian and Malaysian kindergartens. This Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model is oriented toward children's dynamic experiences and emphasizes situational learning by actively involving children in interactions between teachers, friends, and the family environment. This can potentially train the speaking skills of children aged 5-7 years when carrying out learning activities at school. This learning approach does not place children as learning objects whose duties are to listen, take notes, and memorize. This CTL learning model can involve actively discovering one's knowledge through direct experience with group learning and working together to exchange knowledge.

Theoretically, Contextual Teaching and Learning teach children to dare to express their ideas. This approach can involve children actively because early childhood still thinks concretely about where children will construct the knowledge or information they obtain from others. This activity is believed to train children's

self-confidence and speaking skills. Applying this learning model to children aged 5-7 years will be more meaningful because in this learning, children work, find out for themselves, and independently construct their knowledge and speaking skills. The Contextual Teaching and Learning learning media uses media around the child's daily environment to influence the speaking skills of children aged 5-7 years. Practicing speaking English from an early age will increase self-confidence in expressing ideas and communicating well, as well as being skilled in completing tasks, social and cognitive skills for group B children, and English speaking skills for children aged 5-7 years.

Applying the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method in developing English language skills in kindergartens in Indonesia and Malaysia involves various contextual and fun activities, such as vocabulary repetition, songs, pictures, and games relevant to children's daily lives. Teachers use teaching aids such as LCDs, projectors, and storybooks to introduce vocabulary and teach science through outdoor activities. Teachers apply CTL to increase student engagement and motivation to learn and help children understand English more easily in real contexts. Teacher perceptions show that this method makes it easier for students to connect learning with everyday life, making it more fun and making children more active and confident. Students' attitudes towards learning English with CTL are very positive, with many students showing enthusiasm, actively communicating, and enjoying learning. In addition, the influence of CTL on students' English skills is seen in the improvement of speaking, listening, and communication skills between students and teachers. This learning is also inclusive, supporting various backgrounds and abilities of students and encouraging activeness and cooperation in groups. This learning model is interpreted as a learning concept for children by connecting meaning with real situations from children's teaching materials. This learning also emphasizes the importance of social interaction between children and teachers, teachers and children, and children's classmates so that children will ask more questions and focus on what the teacher guides.

This learning can create a learning environment that allows

children to become active students and be responsible for their tasks. The teacher's strategy when implementing this CTL learning model is as follows: 1) creating interrelated or interrelated meanings; 2) experiencing, in a contextual approach, one strategy is related to another strategy where the teacher addresses problems and solves them by providing knowledge that is already known with ongoing experiences; 3) learning strategies that motivate the need to understand concepts by building real life and relevance; 4) working together, teachers form group learning so that interactions occur such as sharing, responding and communicating with other students; 5) transferring is a learning strategy that is interpreted as the use of knowledge in a new context or current situation (Satriani et al., 2012) . This learning model has 7 essential components in its application, namely: 1) constructing children's knowledge; 2) conducting inquiry activities; 3) arousing curiosity by asking questions; 4) learning community (group formation); 5) showing learning models; 6) reflection; and 7) authentic assessment.

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Because the CIPP evaluation model is more comprehensive than other evaluation models, evaluators use it more often in practice. Context evaluation, which assesses the context, input evaluation, which assesses the input, process evaluation, which assesses the process, and product evaluation, which assesses the outcome, are the acronyms for CIPP. The evaluation components are represented by the four CIPP acronyms (Turmuzi et al., 2022).

The reasons for using a qualitative research approach with the CIPP model evaluation study include: 1) Based on empirical observations, it was found that most research reports were conducted in descriptive form. 2) Descriptive qualitative research methods are very useful for obtaining various problems related to the implementation of school work programs. 3) Having sensitivity and the ability to adapt to various influences arising from the patterns encountered. 4) The results of data analysis resulting from qualitative research with CIPP model evaluation studies in the form of concepts and categories can be used directly for policy development purposes and applied directly (Aziz et al., 2018).

The application of the Contextual Teaching and Learning method in English language learning in Indonesian and Malaysian Kindergartens can be explained as follows:

1. Initial context

English learning for children aged 5-7 years has not yet emerged and is still developing.

2. The initial condition of children speaking English is 5-7 years old, a total of 124 children in kindergartens in Indonesia and Malaysia, 50 children already have English speaking skills that are developing as expected and developing very well, and 75 children have English speaking skills. Children's English has not yet emerged and begun to develop. It is expected that the English speaking skills of children aged 5-7 years in kindergartens in Indonesia and Malaysia can develop optimally (75% of children develop very well and develop as expected).

3. Process

When the Contextual Teaching and Learning method in English learning in Indonesian and Malaysian kindergartens. 75% of children develop very well and develop as expected in speaking English.

4. Product evaluation

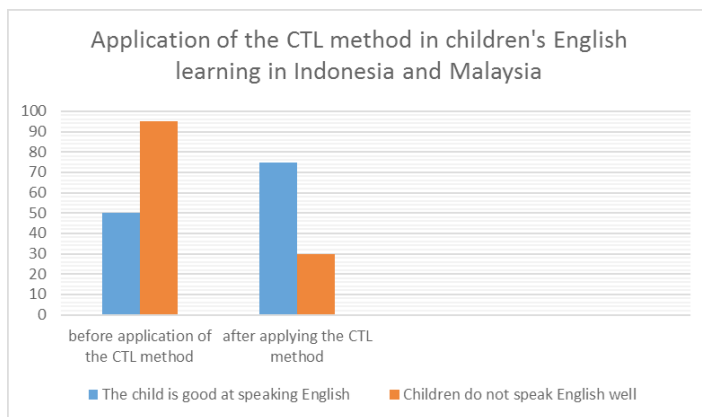


Figure 4.51 Application of the CTL method in children's English learning in Indonesia and Malaysia

From figure 4.51 it can be explained that the application Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method significant increase ability speak English child age early in Indonesia and Malaysia. Before implementation of CTL, only 50 children are able speak Language English with well, while 75 children Still not enough able. After implementation method this, the amount fluent child speak Language English increase to 95 children, with only 30 children are still alive show difficulties. Observation shows that activity is based on projects, such as singing, reading book together, and games interactive, creating atmosphere fun and relevant learning with life children. Interview data discloses that the teacher feels helped by the CTL approach in align learning with need students and context local . In Overall, the CTL method proved to be effective in create contextual, interactive, and problem-based learning experience real.

D. Conclusion

This study revealed that the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method successfully improved the English language skills of early childhood in Indonesia and Malaysia. The main findings showed that experiential activities, such as singing, story reading, and group projects, allowed students to learn in a fun and relevant atmosphere to everyday life. This significantly supported the development of English speaking, listening, and comprehension skills. The implementation of CTL is in line with educational policies, such as the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia and the KSPK in Malaysia, which both encourage activity-based learning, so this approach can be applied in various similar educational contexts. However, this study has several limitations. The limited sample size and specific research location make the generalization of the results less than optimal. In addition, this study is cross-sectional in nature so it cannot capture the long-term impact of the CTL method on students' language development. For future research, it is recommended to use a longitudinal study that can evaluate the long-term impact of CTL implementation on students' language skills. In addition, an experimental design with a control group can provide stronger evidence of the effectiveness of the CTL method. Studies that broaden the geographic context and include more diverse participant groups are also needed to increase the external validity of these findings.

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