Integration of social skills values into simulation learning: A bibliometric and systematic literature review analysis

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ABSTRACT

21st-century education currently demands that students not only understand learning in theory, but also develop individual social skills in the learning process. Contextual learning such as simulation has great potential to improve social skills, but not many have reviewed it in a structured manner and its development at the elementary school level. This study aims to analyze the development, co-occurrence network, and integration of social skill values through simulation learning through activities such as role play, sociodrama, and peer teaching. The results of this study reveal: 1) The development of simulation learning research reached its peak in 2025, with 6 articles and Japan was the largest country with a total of 4 articles published. 2) The co-occurrence network in simulation learning research produced 5 clusters, consisting of learning and curriculum clusters. 3) The integration of social skills in simulation learning for social science subjects at the elementary school/madrasah ibtidaiyah level refers to 5 social skill values, namely cooperation, communication, empathy and tolerance, responsibility and problem solving.

Keywords: *Simulation Method; Social Skills; Elementary School; Communication*

Introduction

21st-century education currently demands that students not only understand theoretical learning but also develop individual social skills during the learning process (Muliawati et al., 2023). These skills are essential for teachers in developing students' ability to collaborate, interact socially, and solve problems by contributing to the learning process as active participants in community life, particularly in learning. These skills can be developed through the teacher's approach to knowledge (Tamami & Mijianti, 2025).

In line with the nature of science learning, it is a form of independent curriculum learning that integrates science, encompassing students' understanding of social life, knowledge related to history and economics,

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geography, and culture (Esha & Bhaskara, 2025). This learning is also interdisciplinary, relevant to real life, holistic and integrated. Therefore, this learning has great potential to develop knowledge, skills, and social awareness that can be useful for individuals, their families, and the community and the nation. This potential is part of the skills that every student must possess, namely social skills (Ramadhan et al., 2025)..

Basically, these social skills are part of the ability to overcome problems that arise from interactions in the social environment (Zurhaida et al., 2025), so these social skills usually involve the application of norms that apply in everyday life (Adawiyah et al., 2024). These social skills can be the main pillar in the communication aspect that can lead students to be brave in conveying and communicating ideas and thoughts as well as feelings orally with the aim of influencing, inviting, educating, changing opinions, providing explanations and providing information to listeners.

However, in fact, the social skills that occur in elementary school/Islamic elementary school students are relatively low, this is proven based on previous research conducted by Rizal & Pebriana, (2025) which revealed that students' social skills in communicating with their peers are still not running well. This can be seen from students who seem shy in expressing or communicating about their opinions. This statement is in line with research conducted by Az-zahra et al., (2025) showing that social studies lessons are not popular among elementary school/Islamic elementary school students. They consider the learning very boring to concentrate because the material in the learning has a broad scope of theory and is rote. Another cause is the explanation presented by the teacher is very monotonous, such as just listening and taking notes on the material given by the teacher.

in problems can be a common thread in the research conducted by Rizal & Pebriana, (2025), which shows that social skills are crucial to instill in students as a form of effort to build good interactions within them. These skills are supported by innovative teaching methods in the learning process. In social studies learning, a method that supports the development of these skills can be a simulation method, which in the process provides students with direct opportunities to engage in direct interaction with their peers.

This method allows students to act out specific situations or roles, solve problems, and make decisions in a realistic environment (Babo et al., 2023). Through simulations, students are encouraged to actively engage, negotiate, share responsibilities, and experience the impact of collective decisions, indirectly developing each individual's social skills. Therefore, this method serves as a supportive tool for teachers to improve students' social skills and communication skills with their peers (Ridwan & Kembuan, 2021). This evidenced by Albert Bandura's theory on social learning (Wahab & Rosnawati, 2021).

Based on the above argument regarding the text above, contextual learning, such as simulations, has great potential to improve social skills. However, there has been little structured review and development of its application in elementary schools. The findings of this study can contribute to the development of an educational framework for a curriculum that integrates 21st-century learning, particularly contextual simulations, in relation to student skills. The research questions (RQs) include:

RQ1: How has research on simulation learning developed in elementary schools from 2000 to 2025?
RQ2: How is the network analysis of research on simulation learning in social studies at the elementary school level?
RQ3: How are social skills values integrated into research on simulation learning methods?

Method

This study uses bibliometric analysis to examine the development of publications related to elementary school simulation method research from 2000 to 2025. Data were obtained from Scopus, one of the most trusted indexed databases for scientific literature (Zhu & Liu, 2020) The bibliometric approach was chosen because of its ability to map research trends, collaboration between researchers, and keyword co-occurrence analysis. This study conducted data analysis through a systematic review using the PRISMA guidelines. This process can be seen in Figure 1 of the PRISMA flowchart below:

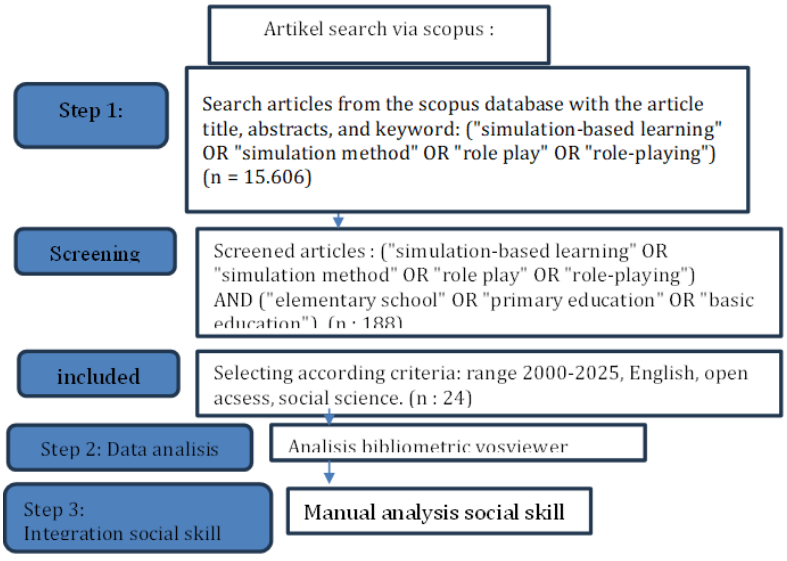

Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart

The analysis process begins with identifying relevant articles for this research. After selecting articles based on keywords, the next step is to filter the articles to eliminate those irrelevant to the research topic. This elimination stage is carried out by considering the titles, keywords, and abstracts of the collected articles. The data collection procedure was based on Scopus data using a keyword search (("simulation-based learning" OR "simulation method" OR "role play" OR "role-playing"). The first identification stage identified 15,606 publications. This was then further screened specifically for research at the elementary school level. The keywords used were ((("simulation-based learning" OR "simulation method" OR "role play" OR "role-playing") and ("elementary school" OR "primary education" OR "basic education"). The subsequent screening resulted in 188 relevant articles. The next identification stage was filtered based on articles from 2000-2025, social sciences, and open access articles, resulting in 24 articles selected for analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using bibliometric software, namely biblioshiny and Vosviewer. Biblioshiny was used to search for data on the

development of simulation learning research in elementary school education, covering annual, country-based, and thematic scientific output. Meanwhile, Vosviewer was used to obtain co-occurrence data from authors. After collecting the data, the author conducted a manual analysis related to the integration of social skill values using a simulation method with literature from articles from Scopus and Google Scholar.

Results

RQ1 concerns the development of simulation learning research in elementary schools from 2000-2025. The findings show the development of simulation learning research in elementary schools from 2000-2025. This can be explained based on the results of Annual Scientific Production (see Figure 2), scientific producing countries (see Figure 3), and thematic research (see Figure 4). An analysis of 24 articles sourced from Scopus data revealed research trends from 2000-2025.

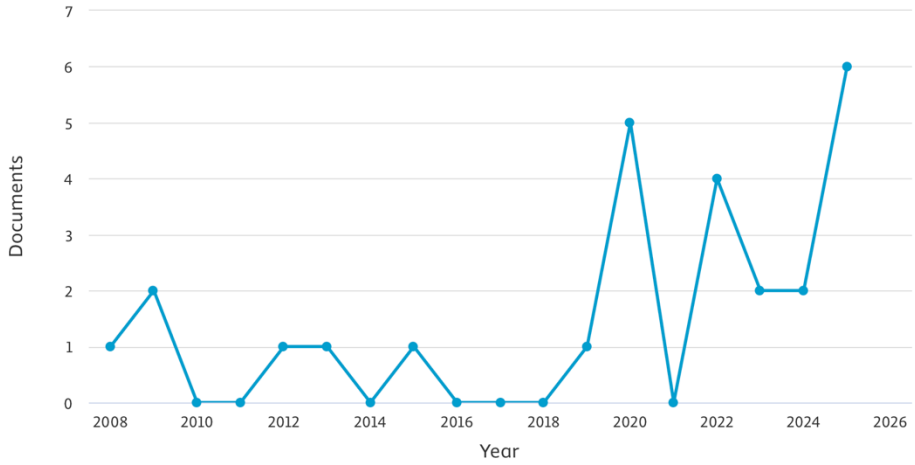

Figure 2. Annual Scientific Production on Social Studies Simulation Learning in Elementary Schools (Bibliometric Output)

Figure 2 displays an overview of publication output based on data integrated into the Scopus database. The x-axis indicates the year, and the y-axis shows the cumulative total of articles for the period 2000–2025. The number of articles on social studies simulation learning in elementary schools began in 2008 with 1, followed by 2 in 2009 with 2, and 1 in 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2019. It increased with 5 publications in 2020, 4 in 2022, 2023–2024, and 2025 with 6 articles.

The development of research on the topic of social studies simulation learning in elementary schools is also analyzed based on national scientific output, as presented in Figure 3.

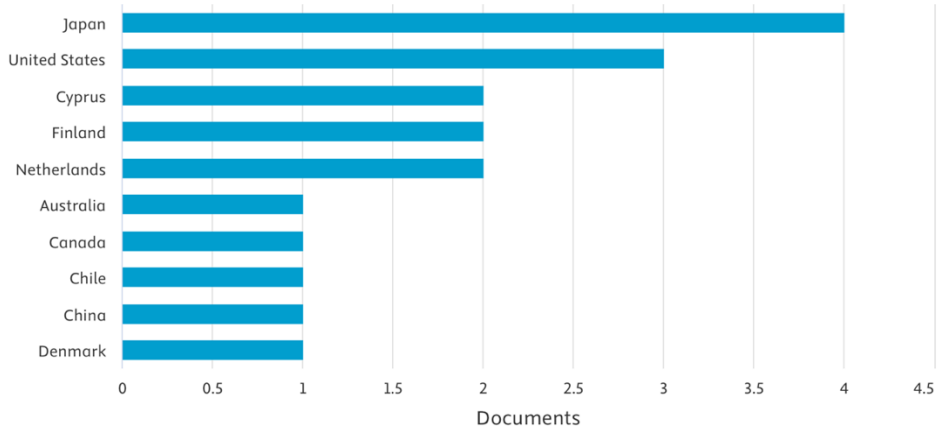

Figure 3. State Scientific Production on simulation learning in elementary schools (Biblioshiny Output)

Figure 3 shows scientific products by country for social studies simulation learning in elementary schools, based on Scopus data. Japan leads with a total of four articles, demonstrating strong involvement in this field. The US follows with three articles, while Cyprus, Finland, and the Netherlands contribute two articles each. Australia, Canada, Chile, China, and Denmark each contribute one article each.

RQ 2, regarding network analysis related to the topic of social studies simulation learning in elementary schools, can be answered using Vos Viewer software analysis based on keyword co-occurrence (see Figure 4).

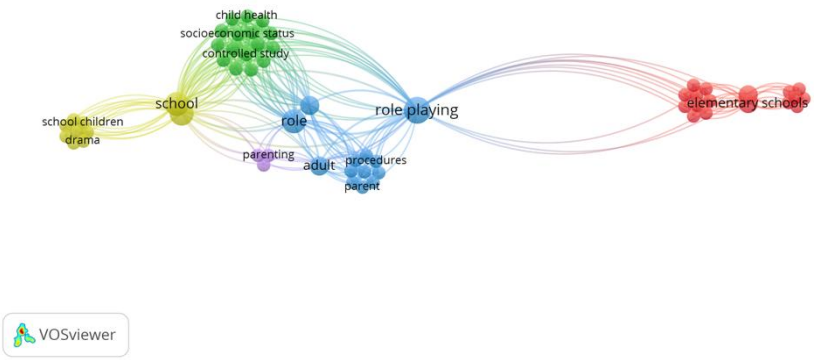

Figure 4. Co-Occurrence Network of social science study simulation learning in elementary school (Vos viewer output)

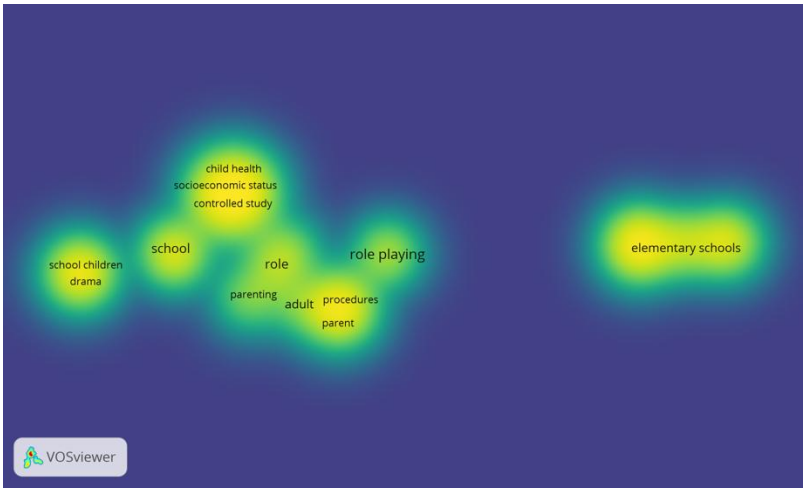

Figure 5: Co-Occurrence Density Analysis of Social Studies Simulation Learning in Elementary Schools (Vos Viewer Output)

Figures 4 and 5 show that the keyword-based network analysis yielded five research clusters, revealing five distinct groups that summarize common themes in the literature on education, learning, and curriculum. The mapped clusters include:

1. Cluster 1
   Cluster 1 consists of action research, authentic learning, elementary school, school location, school student, student, quick response, federated learning, game approach, game design, earthquakes, floods.
2. Cluster 2
   Cluster 2 consists of human experiment, control study, child health, physical activity, primary school, teacher, training, motivation, physical education, sedentary youth, team pentathlon.
3. Cluster 3
   Cluster 3 consists of attitudes to health, health education, collaboration, curriculum, procedure, psychology, role-playing, and school health promotion.
4. Cluster 4
   Cluster 4 consists of school, school children, school behavior, social relationships, evaluation, drama, human relations, and interpersonal relationships.
5. Cluster 5
   Cluster 5 relates to child-parent relations and parenting.

RQ3: How are social skills values integrated into simulation learning research?

Table 1. Integration of simulation learning in social studies in elementary schools

Social Skills Values	Integration in Simulation Learning	author
Cooperation	Students work in groups to carry out social roles	(Dewi et al., 2020; Evagorou et al., 2009)
Effective Communication:	Expressing opinions, engaging in dialogue, and negotiating within the roles played	(Commeyras, 2009; Joronen et al., 2012; Sepúlveda, 2020; van den Berg & van der Spek, 2019)

Social Skills Values	Integration in Simulation Learning	author
Empathy	Students understand and play the roles of others well	(Joronen et al., 2012)
Self-Control & Tolerance:	Students learn to control their emotions	(Joronen et al., 2012; Kajiwara et al., 2023)
Responsibility	Taking responsibility for the roles played in the community	(Dewi et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2016; Teke et al., 2015)
Problem Solving:	Simulations create collaborative solutions to complex problems	(Gadais et al., 2020; Makinoshima et al., 2022; Peddle et al., 2020; Pedrosa et al., 2020)

Source: Manual analysis based on Scopus output (Author, October 2025)

Discussion

This The development of research on simulation learning in social science studies in elementary schools is evidenced by bibliometric data through annual scientific production. The output of annual scientific production shows that the peak of research occurred in 2025, namely 6 articles supported by research results (Figure 2) which explains that the number of studies on simulation learning in elementary schools is increasing and recognized benefits as contextual learning. This is certainly not without reason because, as explained by Jorone 2012, roleplay simulation learning and sociodrama can improve students' social skills and instill the values of tolerance and empathy because the drama and theater methods of relationships between students and as an anti-bullying role among students.

The country's scientific output shows that Japan is the largest country with a total of 4 published articles. This is supported by the results of the (Shimabukuro et al., 2022) study, which found that Japan is developing, especially in the areas of social awareness and responsive action to the surrounding environment. Schools in Japan utilize the surrounding environment as a role-playing process to improve social skills. Meanwhile, (Makinoshima et al., 2022) revealed that role-playing simulations increase social network awareness and evacuation in the surrounding community, considering that Japan is one of the countries affected by the tsunami and has a geographic location prone to earthquakes. Shimabukuro 2022 further strengthened the results by finding that role-playing simulations can increase social and environmental awareness in clean water management at the elementary school level.

The co-occurrence network of simulation learning resulted in five clusters, consisting of learning clusters and social attitudes. These results align with research conducted by (Joronen et al., 2012) on the integration of simulation learning into a role-playing curriculum that can improve student networking and camaraderie, thus supporting the development, implementation, and evaluation of a school-based drama program to improve social relationships and reduce bullying in grades 4-5. Furthermore, research by (Dewi et al., 2020)on role-playing learning aims to introduce rapid response for elementary school students when disasters occur at their schools.

Simulation learning in elementary school education can be integrated to enhance social skills values in the learning process. These three aspects are

interrelated in building a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of living things, the environment, and human responsibility in the teaching and learning process, as explained below:

1. Cooperation

   In elementary school social studies, students learn about human relationships through sociology, anthropology, and social studies. Social studies learning in elementary school provides opportunities to observe social phenomena in society. Through simulation/roleplay methods, students learn roles in groups, directly in their natural habitat. The perspective of cooperation values in social skills teaches that in social life, people not only live individually but also in groups, whether within the family, urban community, or workplace. This requires strong social cooperation skills. In line with this, Celine (Buchs & Butera, n.d.)created innovative cooperative learning situations that will support long-term social and cognitive growth in the classroom.
2. Communication

   In elementary school social studies, students learn about the role of the environment and the impacts that human actions can have. Simulation learning, particularly sociodrama, allows students to directly observe and communicate various societal phenomena related to social issues. This aligns with the integration of social skills, particularly communication skills, into elementary school social studies through simulations. In simulations, students learn to engage in direct dialogue through role-playing. This aligns with the development of 21st-century education, particularly in supporting students in developing the 4C skills, one of which is (Wrahatnolo & Munoto, 2018) communication skills.
3. Empathy and Tolerance

   Simulation learning often involves interactions with fellow creatures of God, including plants, animals, and the social environment. In this context, social skills such as tolerance and empathy are essential. For example, to reduce bullying among schoolchildren, good relationships are needed among students by fostering them through sociodramas or role-playing.
4. Responsibility

   Social life requires responsibility, both to oneself, the environment, and the group. Through role-playing, students understand their respective roles and the interconnected responsibilities of these roles.
5. Problem-solving

   In social studies, students learn that social life is not always smooth sailing, and that the ability to solve social problems is essential, both in the economic sphere of buying and selling and social interaction, as well as in managing social issues. Problem-solving skills need to be instilled from elementary school, especially in line with 21st-century learning. (Md, 2019)agrees that knowledge alone is not enough to ensure success in the world; social problem-solving skills are also essential for survival in the 21st century.

The integration of social skills is part of a student's self-development abilities, aimed at expressing verbal social interactions, assisting students in adjusting to their social environment (Oktaviana et al., 2022), and being able to express sympathy for their peers and the community. In the context of elementary

school social studies (SD/MI) learning, social skills are a developmental skill that trains students' communication skills to solve social problems within the educational environment, such as group discussions, deliberations, expressing opinions, and so on (Ekaprasetya et al., 2022).

The characteristics of students with good social skills can be seen from several specific perspectives, including: a tendency toward interpersonal behavior (Rohartati et al., 2022), the ability to relate to problems faced within themselves (Ramadhan et al., 2025), a sense of openness toward peers in the realm of ideas or thoughts they wish to express, and a personality that easily communicates with new people (Chandra, 2022). These characteristics can play a role in improving individual students' social skills during the elementary school social studies (SD/MI) learning process. This role is fundamentally important in shaping students' personalities and their concern for societal conditions. It is hoped that social studies learning can solve various problems that arise in the community (Aulia et al., 2023)

The application of simulation methods in learning aligns with modern learning trends, which emphasize student engagement, both individually and in small groups, and encourages them to discover knowledge independently through a heuristic approach. Simulation is a form of learning that mimics real-world situations in the surrounding environment, designed to provide students with direct experience in dealing with various social situations. Through this approach, students can test their reactions, learn from their experiences, and understand the concept of decision-making. This model aims to activate students' thinking skills by equating the learning process with real-life situations. For effective results, simulations are structured to mimic reality, with control over complex elements, for example through the use of tools such as simulators (Rezania & Afandi, 2020).

In general, the form of this simulation method is almost similar to other types of cooperative learning, including role-playing demonstrations, sociodramas, professional guessing games, and peer teaching (Haliyah et al., 2025). If implemented optimally, these learning strategies can: 1) train students in speaking with peers, 2) train students' understanding in solving problems in groups, 3) train students' active speaking skills in class, 4) train students in expressing ideas and thoughts in groups, and 5) train them to respect the feelings of their peers (Rezania & Afandi, 2020).

The advantages of this simulation method include: 1) nurturing students' creativity, 2) fostering student creativity in the simulation activities, 3) providing students with experience speaking in front of the class based on their ideas, 4) fostering students' courage in carrying out the simulations presented (Babo et al., 2023). These advantages can enable teachers to be more interactive in developing methods used in elementary school social studies (SMP/MI) learning. Furthermore, this method significantly enhances the development of individual skills, such as social, creative, communication, and critical thinking (Chotimah et al., 2025).

When using this simulation method, educators should also review the shortcomings often experienced by students learning with this model, including: 1) The experiences gained through this method are not entirely accurate in reflecting the real-life situations experienced by students; 2) Simulation implementation often becomes rigid, misguided, and even incongruous due to students' lack of experience in dealing with real-world roles; 3) Students'

emotional states are not reflected in the demonstration process, due to the diverse characters of each student who is skeptical of the simulation; 4) The imaginations of teachers and students are not aligned properly (Sulaiman, 2022).

Simulation methods have become an important pillar of modern education, offering broad implications that go beyond the acquisition of cognitive knowledge. This approach effectively facilitates the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as students are placed in scenarios that require realistic analysis and decision-making. Moreover, simulations have been shown to be essential for honing social-emotional skills, such as empathy, collaboration, and effective communication, which are crucial for real-world interactions. The active engagement inherent in this method also significantly increases student motivation and participation in the learning process (Ridwan & Kembuan, 2021).

The success of applying the procedures of this simulation method, as a form of simulation implementation, is therefore highly dependent on teacher competence in designing and facilitating learning experiences. Adequate teacher training is crucial to equip educators with the ability to design relevant, challenging, and educational scenarios, as well as to effectively manage classroom dynamics during simulations. Educators must be able to lead in-depth learning, guiding students to reflect on experiences, identify learning outcomes, and connect them to theoretical concepts. Without this training, the potential of simulations may not be optimally utilized (He et al., 2024).

To maximize the impact of simulations on social development, adapting the curriculum and learning modules created is essential for comprehensive integration ((Zurhaida et al., 2025). The curriculum must explicitly prioritize learning objectives that focus on student competencies emphasized in the 21st century, such as collaboration, communication, and responsible decision-making, as integral parts of learning outcomes. Learning modules must detail simulation scenarios that encourage social interactions and ethical dilemmas, complemented by assessment strategies that measure not only students' knowledge but also their social skills, as observed during and after the simulation (Hasbullah, 2021).

Essentially, simulation methods function as a form of active learning based on social values. By placing students in roles and situations that require ethical considerations, simulations encourage them to analyze the consequences of decisions on others, consider fairness, develop a sense of social responsibility, and practice pro-social behaviors such as helping and empathy. Simulations create a social environment where values such as integrity, respect, and cooperation are not only taught but also directly experienced and internalized, developing more competent, empathetic, and responsible individuals in society. For example, simulations can begin with materials related to social interactions, buying and selling activities, cultural diversity, and so on (Siregar, 2024).

The implications of this method are effectively rooted in a deep understanding of how students think and process information. Teachers must recognize that students, especially in preschool and early elementary school, do not think like adults and require an approach tailored to their stage of cognitive development. Teachers play a central role in facilitating this process, where student engagement is crucial through direct involvement in exploration and discovery. The structure of teaching materials must also be logical, progressing from simple to complex, to help students organize information and build solid understanding, thus creating meaningful learning. Equally important, attention to

individual student differences is key to ensuring each student can reach their full potential. In this context, the implications of cognitive learning theory align closely with Albert Bandura's ideas on social (or socio-cognitive) learning theory (Hamruni et al., 2021).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the simulation method is highly suitable as a reference for educators to modify learning as a form of teacher creativity in improving the social skills of diverse students. However, this method is also an equivalent consideration, considering that this method must be aligned with the students' self-confidence to become what they are playing, and the imagination that educators expect must be in line with the imagination that students play. The limitations in this study are only as supporting material for literature reviews that support that the simulation method in improving social skills depends on the learning environment applied.

Conclusion

This The results of this study reveal: 1) The development of simulation learning research reached its peak in 2025, with 6 articles and Japan was the largest country with a total publication of 4 articles. 2) The co-occurrence network in simulation learning research produced 5 clusters, consisting of learning and curriculum clusters. 3) The integration of social skills in simulation learning for elementary school social science subjects refers to 5 social skill values, namely cooperation, communication, empathy and tolerance, responsibility and problem solving. Through simulation, elementary school students/Madrasah Ibtidaiah are trained to be directly involved in various social roles that require them to interact. However, there is a challenge that the simulation method will be even better if it is collaborated with technology according to current developments.

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