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## Addressing Educational Gaps for Children of Foreign Origin in Japan: Insights from a Literature Review on Early Childhood Education and Care

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### Abstract

*Children of foreign origin in Japan face various hurdles in accessing educational opportunities, potentially limiting their strengths and abilities throughout their life course. This study aims to identify current research gaps and propose future directions for studies on early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children of foreign origin in Japan by reviewing extensive international research on this topic. Compared with the studies conducted in the U.S., research on ECEC opportunities for children of foreign origin living in Japan is still in its nascent stage. To ensure access to ECEC for children of foreign origin in Japan, it is critical to examine the impact of ECEC on children of foreign origin in Japan and determine which types of ECEC are most effective. Also, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the specific nationalities, family environments, living conditions, cultural backgrounds, and attitudes of parents who do not utilize ECEC opportunities, and detailed research involving parents of children not enrolled in ECEC is necessary to understand the barriers and decision-making factors related to ECEC enrollment.*

**Keywords:** early childhood education and care, children with foreign origin

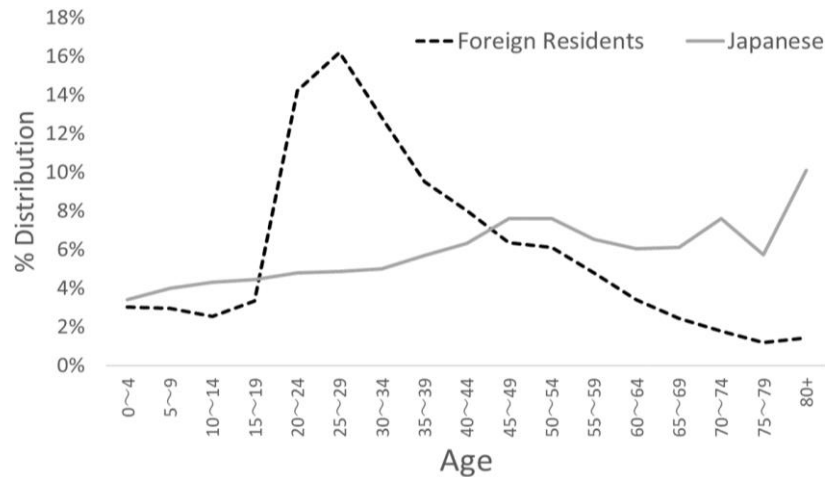
### Introduction

This study focuses on children of foreign origin (CFO) in Japan who are not fully included in educational opportunities from early childhood, potentially limiting their strengths and abilities throughout their life course. With the aim of increasing the inclusion of CFO in formal education, this paper reviews the literature to identify gaps and future research needs. This paper is structured as follows. First, an overview of CFO in Japan and the current situation of three types of formal educational opportunities for CFO are presented. Then, focusing on early childhood education, the paper summarizes the issues of mu-en-ji (children not enrolled in nursery schools/kindergartens), examining mainly what has been clarified in previous studies and what has not been sufficiently analyzed, to suggest future directions. In this paper, the term “early childhood education and care” (ECEC) is used to describe the care and education provided by nursery schools, preschools, and kindergartens.

#### 1. **Situation of children of foreign origin in Japan**

As of the end of June 2023, the number of foreign residents in Japan was approximately 3.22 million, an increase of 4.8% over the same period the previous year and a new record high (Immigration Services Agency of Japan, 2023). A comparison of the population by age in 2022 shows that the

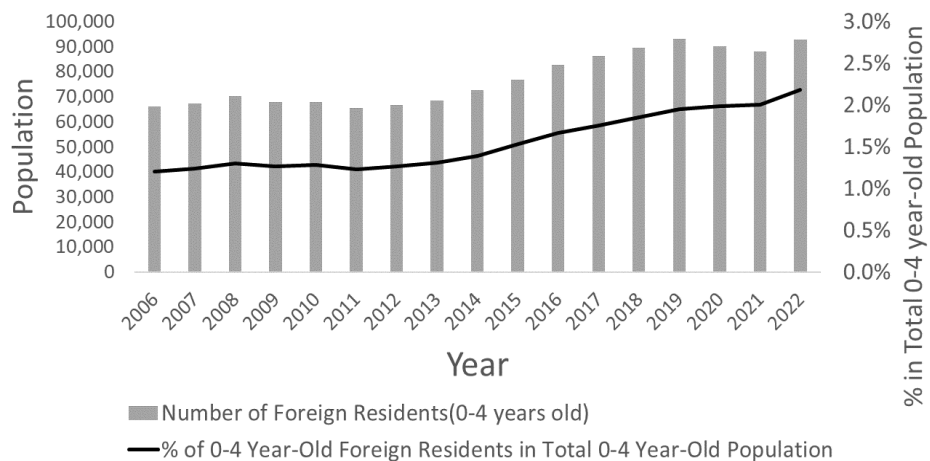
distribution of the Japanese population peaks in the 50s and above, while that of the foreign resident population is concentrated in the 20s and 30s as shown in Figure 1. Therefore, the population of foreign residents is dominated by people of child-rearing age, and it is expected that the population of child-rearing families with foreign origin will continue to increase even more in the future, making it necessary to provide multicultural support for these families and their children.



Note: Data are from the Immigration Services Agency of Japan (n.d.) & Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (n.d.)

Figure 1. Age distribution of foreign residents and Japanese population

As the population of foreign residents increases, the number of young CFO is also growing, with the number of CFO aged 0–4 years surpassing 90,000 at the end of 2019. Although this number fell during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is rising again. The percentage of CFO aged 0–4 years among the total population of children aged 0–4 years in Japan increased from 1.2% in 2006 to 2.2% in 2022 as shown in Figure 2.



Note: Data are from the Immigration Services Agency of Japan (n.d.) & Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (n.d.)

Figure 2. Population growth of 0 to 4-year-old foreign residents and percentage of 0 to 4-year-old foreign residents in total 0 to 4-year-old population in Japan

## **2. Children outside of educational opportunities**

This section describes the situation of CFO in Japan who are not included in or adequately helped by the Japanese childcare and education system by examining three types of educational opportunities: ECEC, compulsory education, and special needs education.

### **(1) Early childhood education and care (ECEC)**

A study by Kachi et al. (2020) reported that children whose parents are foreign nationals are 1.48 times less likely than children of Japanese parents to be enrolled in any type of ECEC. According to a survey conducted by Minato Ward, Tokyo (2023), 9.8% of children of foreign nationals do not attend nursery school or kindergarten and are cared for at home, compared with just 2% of children whose parents are both Japanese nationals. In addition, a survey conducted by the city of Ayase in Kanagawa Prefecture reported that 41% of the children of foreign nationals in the municipality were not enrolled in ECEC (Kanagawa International Foundation, 2023). In addition, a survey of 260 children of foreign nationals registered in the city of Hamamatsu in Shizuoka Prefecture who were about to enter the first grade showed that the overall rate of non-enrollment in ECEC was 10%, including 12% of Brazilians, 24% of Filipinos, and 7.6% of Peruvians (Hamamatsu City, 2018). Although nursery schools and kindergartens are not part of compulsory education in Japan, children aged 3 years and older are eligible for free preschool education, and about 91% of 3-year-olds, 97% of 4-year-olds, and 98% of 5-year-olds attend nursery schools and kindergartens (Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2021). Therefore, most children enter elementary school after receiving ECEC in Japan.

Even though CFO are not adequately accessing ECEC, the majority of support for these children is targeted primarily at school-age (Hayashi, 2017). Although various issues that arise for CFO during their school years can be addressed early on in the ECEC phase, there is a lack of research and practice on strategies for early intervention. One of the major factors contributing to this policy gap is the lack of integration of ECEC in Japan. In April 2023, the "Children and Families Agency" was established to comprehensively oversee child-related administration, which had previously been spread across multiple ministries. However, regarding ECEC, the traditional dual system persists, with the Children and Families Agency overseeing nursery schools (Hoikuen) and certified childcare centers (Kodomoen), while kindergartens (Yochien) remain under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. As a result, the full integration of ECEC systems and policies has been postponed (Miura, 2024). This fragmentation is one of the reasons why comprehensive policies and support for CFO in early childhood education remain limited, as there is no single government agency responsible for addressing their needs.

### **(2) Compulsory education (elementary and secondary schools)**

CFO face various educational obstacles even after starting school. In Japan, there are no legal provisions for the education of children without Japanese nationality, whose parents are not obliged to send their children to school. The position of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) is that even though foreign children are not obligated to do so, if they wish to attend public compulsory education schools, they should be accepted in accordance with international human rights covenants and other relevant regulations (MEXT, n.d.). The establishment of compulsory education guarantees the right of children in Japan to receive an education. However, the parents or guardians of CFO are not obligated to send their children to school, and if they do not follow schooling procedures, their children will not attend school, and CFO that do attend school are free to drop out if they wish to do so (Kojima, 2021). The core issue is that, since foreign nationals are not legally required to enroll their children in school, it is difficult to accurately ascertain whether parents have completed the enrollment procedures for Japanese schools or whether the children have enrolled in "foreign schools," which fall outside the jurisdiction of the National School Education Law in Japan. This lack of obligation results in the government's inability to fully grasp the actual enrollment situation of CFO. The issue of CFO not enrolling in schools is becoming a concern. Generally, Japanese children receive a school enrollment notice by mail from the local government before they start school. However, foreign families can enroll their children only after submitting an "application for schooling" to the school office. A government report found that 15.7% of local governments do not provide explanations regarding school enrollment when foreign residents register with their local city or ward office (MEXT, 2020). Particularly those who have recently arrived in Japan and lack knowledge of the Japanese education system or cannot understand the Japanese language, face significant challenges. There are concerns that explanations and guidebooks regarding school enrollment are not distributed thoroughly and that the available

information is often provided only in Japanese, without multilingual support (MEXT, 2020). As a result, there were approximately 8,000 school-age CFO who were not attending any type of school in Japan in 2023 (MEXT, 2023).

In addition, because formal education in Japan is conducted in Japanese, the acquisition of Japanese language skills is an important necessity for the children to follow along with their education. However, a government report noted that 5,628 school-aged CFO were enrolled in Japanese schools in 2022 but lacked sufficient Japanese language support (MEXT, 2022a). Many CFO are not receiving adequate support and are thus unable to keep up with their Japanese classmates, resulting in a situation where they are unable to continue to higher education. The dropout rate for high school students who need Japanese language support is 6.7% compared with 1% for high school students overall; the percentage of high school students who continue on to higher education such as college or university is 51.8% for CFO needing Japanese language support compared with 73.4% for high school students overall. The percentage of students who find non-permanent employment after graduating from high school such as part-time or contract work, is 39% for CFO who need Japanese language support compared with 3.3% for high school students overall (MEXT, 2022b). These statistics indicate that inadequate support for CFO has a substantial impact on the academic performance of CFO as well as their employment opportunities, profoundly impacting their life course.

### (3) Special Needs Education

In Japan, students with special educational needs in elementary, junior high, and high schools may be enrolled in special-needs classes instead of regular classes. Miura (2020) reported that in 25 cities and towns in Japan, the ratios of foreign nationals, foreign-rooted children, and Japanese students enrolled in special-needs classes were 5.72%, 4.64%, and 2.30%, respectively, with the ratio of foreign nationals being about 2.5 times that of Japanese students and the ratio of children with foreign origin being about twice that of Japanese students. It was found that 3.29% of CFO receiving Japanese language support and 8.19% of those not receiving Japanese language support were enrolled in special needs classes. This nearly 2.5-fold difference suggests that cultural and linguistic factors might not be adequately considered during child assessments. Matsuda and Nakagawa (2018) also conducted language proficiency tests and intelligence tests in Portuguese and Japanese in addition to behavioral observations on six Japanese-Brazilian children who were considered to have developmental disabilities. The results of the tests indicated that two of the children did not have any developmental disabilities, as previously suspected. These results suggest that conducting developmental tests for CFO in Japanese, which may not be the child's native language, leads to students without disabilities being enrolled in special education classes.

## Methods

As described above, in Japan, CFO are not always fully included in educational opportunities from the early childhood education stage and are not always given appropriate assistance, sometimes resulting in their not being able to fully demonstrate their strengths and abilities. In this paper, we focus on ECEC, the first formal educational opportunity for CFO, and summarize what has been clarified in previous studies and what has not been sufficiently analyzed based on the following three research questions.

1. What effect does ECEC have on CFO?
2. What are the ECEC participation rates of CFO?
3. What factors identified in previous research make CFO less likely to enroll in ECEC programs?

This study primarily reviews literature from the 2000s onward. However, it also includes some historically significant research on ECEC. Before examining previous studies, it is crucial to clarify the definition of ECEC. Education prior to formal school age has been called in different names. According to the OECD (2021), ECEC encompasses all arrangements that provide care and education for children below compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, operating hours, or program content, including home-based ECEC and regular center-based ECEC. Some others call Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) instead of ECEC to put emphasis on care components (UNESCO, 2002; UNESCO, 2024). However, both definitions view ECEC as an inclusive term encompassing all systems and institutions that provide care and education for children prior to reaching compulsory school age, regardless of facility organization, funding sources, operating hours, or program content (Suto, 2009).

It is also important to organize and understand whether a concept similar to mu-en-ji (children not enrolled in ECEC) in Japanese is used in studies in other countries. The term mu-en-ji combines two

meanings for en, kindergarten or nursery school, and, connection or network—signifying children lacking these elements. The term also refers to children who stay at home rather than attending any kind of early childhood education facility such as a kindergarten or nursery school (Kachi, 2020). Unlike children whose families are planning to enroll them in ECEC, the term *mu-en-ji* describes children for whom various barriers have deprived them of the opportunity to attend kindergarten or nursery school, preventing them from forming social connections (Kachi, 2020). In addition, the term “children with foreign origin/roots” (Kobari, 2014), referred to as CFO in the present paper, is commonly used to refer to children with diverse cultural backgrounds in Japan. CFO are defined as “children whose father and/or mother is of foreign origin, regardless of their nationality (Tanaka, 2015; Nagaro, 2018; Mitsubishi UFJ Research & Consulting, 2021 March).

Terms equivalent to the Japanese concept of “children with foreign origin/roots” used by researchers in other countries include “children in immigrant/refugee families” (Karoly & Gonzalez, 2011), “Hispanic-American, African, Latina/o, Mexican, Asian, and immigrant children” (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005; Crosnoe, 2007; Vesely, 2013), “Mexican-origin children/adolescents” (Crosnoe, 2007; Ackert et al., 2019), and “children born to immigrant parents” (Matthews & Ewen, 2006); similar to the Japanese term, these terms represent the child’s origin regardless of nationality. Meanwhile, the term “parents choosing to forego pre-schooling” (Fuller et al., 1996) would overlap, at least partly, with the term “*mu-en-ji*”, which might be broader in scope because it encompasses children’s status resulting from parents’ intentional as well as unintentional decisions to not enroll their children in ECEC. The terms “under-enrollment” (Kahn & Greenberg, 2010) and “low-level participation in ECEC” (Matthews & Ewen, 2006) have also been used to describe the state of not participating in ECEC.

## Results

### 1. *Effect of ECEC on CFO*

This section summarizes the benefits of ECEC for CFO, based mainly on previous research conducted in the U.S.

#### (1) Effects on children’s cognitive development and academic and social skills

Prior research suggests that ECEC opportunities may have lasting effects in preparing CFO, including immigrant and refugee children, for school and a range of activities later in life. Based on the idea that differences in children’s “readiness” when starting school affect their subsequent academic performance, recent research has investigated how participation or non-participation in ECEC and the different types of ECEC participation affect the readiness of CFO. For example, Crosnoe (2007) found that children from Mexican immigrant families were more likely to receive in-home care from their parents and less likely to receive center-based ECEC compared with their peers of other racial and ethnic groups. It was suggested that this difference in ECEC environments affects the children’s readiness and influences their post-school math achievement and the frequency of externalizing symptoms, including fighting with classmates, showing anger, and interfering with others. In addition, Heckman (2006) reports that providing preschool opportunities and early intervention to young socially disadvantaged children is more cost-effective than investing in programs for adults such as public job training and criminal justice programs. Heckman (2006) also pointed out that although the effectiveness of ECEC programs such as Head Start has been criticized based on the poor results of academic achievement tests and for failing to improve children’s IQs (Westinghouse Learning Corporation & Ohio University, 1969), they should instead be evaluated in terms of “non-cognitive ability,” as measured by children’s motivation, perseverance, or persistence. ECEC programs such as the Perry Preschool Program have been shown to improve non-cognitive ability over the long term, leading outcomes such as increased high school graduation rates, income, and homeownership rates, a lower percentage of receipt of welfare assistance compared with the control group (Schweinhart et al., 2005). A study by Gormley and Phillips (2005) examining the effects of Oklahoma’s Universal Early Childhood Education program found that the program led to improvements in language and cognitive skills for all participating children. Comparing the effects by racial and ethnic demographics, Hispanic children benefitted the most, with a 54% improvement in test scores and significant gains in cognitive development and language skills compared with their pre-program participation, and Black children’s test scores improved by 17%, although no statistically significant effects were found for white children overall. In addition, Magnuson et al. (2006) analyzed the results of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey and found that children whose mothers were born outside the U.S. were less likely to receive facility-based ECEC compared with other children. However, those participating in ECEC programs showed improvements in reading and math scores. The study also reported that Head Start was particularly effective for immigrant children, especially those whose mothers had less than a



high school education. Morland et al. (2016) also note that resettlement programs for refugees often have limited time to assist, pointing out the potential to enhance school readiness in children by integrating ECEC programs such as Head Start with resettlement programs for refugee families.

(2) **Impact of ECEC on parents**

ECEC has also been noted for its importance as a form of support for parents raising children. A study by Bromer and Henry (2009) targeting ECEC providers working with low-income families reported that these providers offer a range of support beyond childcare, including assistance with logistical tasks and economic considerations such as flexible fee structures and navigating subsidy system. This comprehensive support helps families balance work and parenting responsibilities effectively. In addition, Vesely et al. (2013) focused on the social-relational capital of immigrant families. ECEC facilities are often the first major public institutions that immigrant parents have daily contact with, usually for more than a year, and are considered important in building financial capital, human capital, and social capital as well as navigational capital (Yosso, 2005). There are also reported cases of immigrant mothers using ECEC to improve their mental health and gain educational opportunities such as attending English classes and pursuing a college degree. ECEC also contributes to the employment of parents.

When a formal ECEC program that meets the needs of foreign-rooted families is not available, these families are forced to rely on informal ECEC. In Japan, in 2021, there was an accident at an unlicensed day-care facility, where one director was taking care of seven CFO aged 1 to 3 years. A 1-year-old child choked on a piece of bread and died when the director took her eyes off the children while preparing lunch. The facility did not meet Japan's safety standards requiring multiple staffing levels (Asahi Shimbun, 2022). In Japan, families of foreign origin are reported to experience various types of stress because of cultural and communication differences in childbirth and parenting in a foreign country (Minamino, 2015). Despite these stresses, a survey by Hara (2013) of 459 parents with foreign origin raising children in Japan found that 35% lacked parenting peers to spend time with their children, only 2.6% had relationships with Japanese neighbors involving childcare exchange, and just 26.6% had interactions with Japanese people. In Japan, nursery schools and kindergartens are expected not only to provide ECEC for children but also parenting support for caregivers.

**2. ECEC participation rate of the CFO**

Several previous studies in the U.S. have examined participation in ECEC programs by immigrant and refugee children, and Brandon (2004) reports that children from immigrant families, especially those from low-income immigrant families, are less likely than other children to use center-based ECEC. Fuller et al. (1996) reported that among Latino families in which the mother works full-time, the percentage of young children enrolled in formal preschools and childcare centers is nearly 25% lower than the enrollment rate for Black families. Nord and Griffin (1999), using data from the National Educational Household Survey, found that children of immigrant families were less likely to enroll in ECEC programs compared with U.S.-born children with U.S.-born parents. It has also been reported that enrollment rates in ECEC programs vary among immigrant families in the U.S., with differences noted across generations and ethnicities. For example, children of Hispanic immigrants have lower enrollment rates compared with children of Asian immigrants. Karoly and Gonzalez (2011) compared the types of non-parental care used according to nativity status. They found that immigrant children have lower participation rates in all types of ECEC, including facility-based programs, care by non-relatives, and care by relatives, compared with children born in the U.S.

**3. Factors identified in previous research that make CFOs less likely to participate in ECEC programs**

Analyses have been conducted to determine what factors contribute to ECEC use by children of immigrant families. For example, Ackert et al. (2019) focused on recent immigrants from Latin America settling in parts of the U.S. where immigrants have traditionally not resided. They compared enrollment rates in ECEC programs between these new destinations and areas with established immigrant populations and found lower enrollment rates in ECEC programs for children living in these new destinations. This suggests that areas with increasing numbers of new immigrants might lack adequate systems to accommodate the children of these families compared with those with long-standing immigrant communities.

Fuller et al. (1996) analyzed a nationwide survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) and interviewed Hispanic immigrant mothers to ascertain why they tend not to use ECEC services. According to the NCES survey, only 32% of Hispanic American families in which the

mother works full-time use public ECEC. In addition, Hispanic American families' use of public ECEC programs was positively related to the mother's employment status and level of education as well as the family's income. Two-parent families, families with two or more children, and families with higher literacy levels were more likely to use public ECEC compared with single-parent families, one-child families, and families with lower literacy levels, respectively. In addition, interviews with Hispanic immigrant mothers highlighted cultural mismatches between the mothers and ECEC institutions, including the lack of Spanish-speaking staff at ECEC facilities and the mothers' conflict over not understanding the English words their children were learning in ECEC. Mothers expressed a desire for their children to learn both English and Spanish and recognized the need for caregivers and parents to come together. Despite sometimes feeling unwelcomed by ECEC staff, these mothers acknowledged the importance of early education in reading, writing, manners, and social development through interaction with peers, demonstrating their interest in preparing their children for school.

Johnson et al. (2017) analyzed a sample of 1,050 low-income immigrant children from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study - Birth Cohort. Their study suggests that factors such as mothers' low education level and history of receiving public benefits are significant predictors of public ECEC utilization. Additionally, they identified specific factors related to immigrant families' ECEC use, including English proficiency, citizenship status, availability of non-English-speaking caregivers, and state policies favorable to immigrants. In addition, Karoly and Gonzalez (2011) noted language barriers, bureaucratic complexity in accessing ECEC, distrust of government programs, undocumented immigrants not accessing ECEC programs even if their children are eligible for subsidies, and cultural preferences favoring parental care at home as factors contributing to the high rate of children from immigrant families not using ECEC.

Brandon (2004) analyzed 7,364 children from the Survey of Income and Program Participation, including 1,157 from immigrant families, and found that (1) children from low-income immigrant families tend to use center-based care less frequently; (2) large or two-parent immigrant families prioritize parental care; (3) single-income families use facility-based care services significantly less compared with multiple-income families; (4) poorer immigrants often live in isolated areas with fewer services; and (5) language barriers impede the use of ECEC services.

In Japan, Kachi et al. (2020) reported that non-enrollment in ECEC after the age of 3 years is more common among children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families, including those with low income, multiple children, or foreign nationality, as well as those facing developmental and health issues such as premature birth and congenital diseases. However, the research mainly compares enrollment rates between children with Japanese parents and those with foreign-national parents, leaving unclear specifics such as which nationalities are more likely to have non-enrolled children and how these children are cared for. Furthermore, few studies have investigated the impact of non-enrollment on the academic and non-cognitive development of CFO in Japan. To date, only a partial analysis of the factors contributing to the lower use of ECEC services among families with foreign origin compared with Japanese families has been conducted. Hamamatsu City (2018) conducted a survey of 19 guardians of 5–6-year-old CFO who were not enrolled in ECEC, asking them why they did not use the available ECEC services. The responses included "lack of funds" (4 people), "uncertainty about where and how to apply" (2 people), "availability of someone to take care of the child" (4 people), "no available spaces" (3 people), and various other reasons such as not working or preferring a Muslim school (7 people). It was also suggested that mothers who have recently arrived in Japan and are not working are more likely to have children not enrolled in ECEC.

A report by the NTT Data Institute of Management Consulting (2023) indicates that reasons for CFO not using ECEC services include reliance on community support within their own ethnic or national groups, residing in a place different from their registered address, and being unable to enroll due to language barriers. There is a lack of comprehensive research on why these children remain non-attendees of ECEC programs in Japan, and the details about how these families manage daily childcare, especially when parents are unable to provide care due to work commitments, are not well-documented. Thus, there is a need for more extensive quantitative research using large-scale data to identify the factors underlying this non-attendance.

## Conclusion

This study focused on the ECEC of CFO in Japan, recognizing that CFO often face limited access to educational opportunities during the ECEC stage and ongoing. This lack of inclusion impacts their ability to fully demonstrate their potential and strengths throughout their lives, even beyond school age. Through a review of existing research, this study highlights critical issues and suggests directions for future research in Japan. In Japan, support for CFO predominantly begins after they reach school age.

By organizing findings from international research on ECEC for CFO, this study provides valuable insights into the challenges and considerations for advancing research on ECEC for CFO in Japan. However, it is important to acknowledge that the ECEC systems, as well as the educational and support frameworks, differ significantly between countries such as the United States and Japan. Given the limitations of this study, further research is needed to address these differences and to develop strategies that ensure equitable access to ECEC for CFO in Japan. Such efforts will contribute to enhancing their educational opportunities from the earliest stages of development. Furthermore, policies related to ECEC for CFO in Japan remain fragmented as mentioned, as they fall under the jurisdiction of multiple government ministries. A thorough analysis of the existing policies concerning ECEC for CFO in Japan, alongside a comparative study of international ECEC policies, is essential to identify and address the policy gaps in the current system.

### **Suggestions**

The previous section covered (1) the effects of ECEC on CFO, (2) trends in ECEC participation among CFO, and (3) factors identified in previous research that make these children less likely to participate in ECEC programs. Based on these findings, this paper proposes future research directions for Japan, considering the similarities and differences in the situations of CFO in Japan and overseas.

First, research on the impact of accessing ECEC opportunities for CFO living in Japan is still in its nascent stage. Various initiatives such as multicultural education and care in kindergartens and nursery schools (Shinagawa, 2011; Sasaki, 2015, etc.), responses in childcare social work focusing on caregivers' cultural competencies (Oh, 2022, etc.), and preschool education for CFO (Yazawa & Takahashi, 2015; Yamada, 2022, etc.) are being implemented in Japan. However, few studies have measured and analyzed the effectiveness of these initiatives or conducted comparative verifications of their impacts. In the U.S., providing ECEC opportunities has been shown to positively impact socially disadvantaged children, especially those from low-income or immigrant backgrounds. Early intervention through ECEC services not only benefits children at school entry but also influences their entire life course. This approach has been confirmed by previous research to be more cost-effective than interventions during school age or adolescence. To ensure access to preschool education for CFO in Japan, it is critical to examine the impact of ECEC on CFO in Japan and to determine which types of ECEC are most effective.

Second, previous studies have confirmed that CFO are less likely to have access to ECEC services compared with children born in the U.S. In Japan, previous studies have verified to some extent that CFO are less likely to be enrolled in ECEC programs. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the specific nationalities, family environments, living conditions, cultural backgrounds, and parental attitudes toward early childhood education among these children. In addition, few studies have investigated the use of ECEC services by CFO at the municipal or national level, and no such studies have been conducted on an ongoing basis. With the rapid increase in the number of CFO, it is important to continuously monitor not only school-aged children but also preschool-aged children.

Third, in the U.S., national surveys have identified factors affecting ECEC utilization among CFO. In Japan, although there are anecdotal reports from organizations supporting migrants as well as from scholars in the field about the various barriers faced by foreign-rooted families at the time of school enrollment, there is a lack of detailed research involving the parents of children not enrolled in ECEC programs, making it difficult to elucidate the barriers and decision-making factors related to ECEC enrollment.

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