

# **BRAZILIAN SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION ABOUT JAPAN: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY**

## **A PRODUÇÃO CIENTÍFICA BRASILEIRA SOBRE O JAPÃO: PERSPECTIVAS NA ÁREA DA PSICOLOGIA**

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**Abstract:** Japan is highly influential both economically and culturally on a global scale. Despite its cultural influence, economic ties, and the presence of Japanese immigrants in Brazil, Japan appears to receive relatively little attention in Brazilian academia. Brazilian academia has been primarily influenced by European and American academic traditions, which is evident in scientific research across various fields, including psychology. This study aims to quantify and analyse Brazilian research on Japan within psychology. An analysis of 142 publications revealed themes including culture, immigration, psychology and related fields, and others. The study also examined the influence of authors of Japanese descent. Although there are a reasonable number of publications about Japan, this number is relatively low compared to publications on European, Latin American, or U.S. topics.

**Keywords:** Psychology, Japan-Brazil relationship, Culture, Nikkei, Social Science

**Resumo:** O Japão é um país muito influente no mundo, tanto econômica quanto culturalmente. Apesar da influência cultural, econômica e da imigração japonesa no Brasil, o Japão parece não atrair tanta atenção dentro da academia brasileira, quando comparado às potências ocidentais. A academia brasileira teve e tem como principais influências as academias europeias e estadunidense. Isso se reflete na produção científica brasileira em diversas áreas, incluindo

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na psicologia. O objetivo deste estudo foi quantificar e analisar a produção brasileira sobre o Japão dentro do campo da psicologia. 142 publicações foram analisadas e classificadas nos temas: cultura, imigração, psicologia e áreas relacionadas, e outros. A influência de autores com ascendência japonesa também foi analisada. Apesar da quantidade razoável de publicações sobre o Japão, o número ainda é baixo comparado a publicações sobre países europeus, latino-americanos ou EUA.

**Palavras-chave:** Psicologia, Relação Brasil-Japão, Intercultural, Nikkei, Ciências sociais

## 1. Introduction

### Immigration

Brazil and Japan established diplomatic relations in 1895. Although the treaty between the two countries did not mention immigration, both countries were interested in it. Japan, having recently opened to the world, was industrializing, militarizing, and expanding its global influence. Also, it faced an internal population surplus. The government's strategy was to promote emigration and establish Japanese colonies in diverse regions, solving the population surplus issue and expanding its international influence. Conversely, Brazil had recently abolished slavery and become a republic. It was trying to modernize following the United States model, transitioning from slave labour to wage labour, and promoting immigration (YAMAMURA, 2011).

Japanese immigration to Brazil began in 1908. Despite various difficulties, the Japanese immigrants and their descendants adapted to Brazil, with many achieving prominent positions in the country. From the late 1980s, the reverse movement began as Japanese and Japanese descendants living in Brazil sought economic opportunities in Japan, forming a Brazilian community there (SASAKI, 2006). In recent decades, these transnational movements - Japanese communities in Brazil and Brazilian communities in Japan - have been the most studied topic in Japanese studies in Brazil, surpassing other themes such as bilateral relations and studies about Japan and its society. Traditionally, the Brazilian academia is more concerned about themes related to itself and to Western culture, reflecting its European origins and neglecting the other influences that shaped Brazil (PEREIRA, 2003).

Academic production about the Japanese-Brazilian community reflects the social dynamics between the community itself and the broader Brazilian and Japanese societies. The integration and upward social mobility of many members of the Japanese community in Brazil were driven by high levels of education, highly valued within the community (SHIBATA, 2009, 2016), making the community in general highly educated (NINOMIYA, 2008). Historically, the community provided schools for the maintenance of the Japanese language and culture among Japanese descendants. These schools, along with the opportunities to study in Japan and pursue a career in Japanese companies boosted the interest in Japanese culture within the community (MORALES,

2011). Additionally, Japan has invested in Brazil and other Latin American countries to strengthen its economic relationships with those countries (UEHARA, 2008), support the Japanese community in Brazil (JICA, 2020), and promote the community as a “bridge” between Japan and the region (ROJAS, 2022).

### **Japanese Culture in Brazil**

After World War II, Japan began expanding its international influence through rather pacific means, notably by exporting cultural products. Japan exported its cultural products to various regions across the globe, including Brazil, where people have been consuming Japanese pop culture in diverse forms since 1964. In recent decades, Japan intensified its promotion of video games, anime, and manga worldwide through the “Cool Japan” initiative (ISSHIKI & MIYAZAKI, 2016). Today, it is not uncommon to see young Brazilians, regardless of ancestry, carrying a deep interest in Japan and its culture.

Beyond pop culture, Japanese traditional culture also became part of Brazilian life. Japanese religions such as the Japanese Buddhism, the Church of World Messianity, and Perfect Liberty have grown in popularity among Brazilians (TOMITA, 2004; SHOJI, 2002). Japanese martial arts, including sumo, kendo, judo, and aikido are practiced and their philosophies studied in Brazil (GOMES, 2008). Many popular Japanese literature books have been translated into Brazilian Portuguese and reached popularity among literature enthusiasts, to such a degree that contemporary Brazilian literature has influences and depictions of Japan (VEJMEJKA, 2014). Currently, Japanese cuisine is highly appreciated and frequently consumed in Brazil, with restaurants found in every major city (MORI, 2003).

### **Psychology in Brazil and in Japan**

The emergence of Psychology in Brazil, between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, like in many other parts of the world, began intertwined with philosophy and gradually solidified its foundations in medicine, heavily influenced by American and European studies. Between the 1920s and 1960s, psychology also grew in the field of education, with various Brazilian authors being predominantly influenced by Northern American and European educators (SOARES, 2010). However, the establishment of Psychology as a profession, through the creation of regulatory laws, professional entities, and councils, was only consolidated during the Military Dictatorship that lasted from 1964 to 1984 (SILVA, 2017).

Due to the characteristics of this regime, psychologists were heavily influenced by Northern American psychology, focusing on individualized approaches in their practice, having to ignore any social aspects involved in psychological processes that could, even remotely, be related to political views. After democracy was re-established

in Brazil, psychologists directed their attention towards social issues inherent to Brazil, began establishing stronger academic ties with other Latin American countries, and became somehow distant from trends in Northern American psychology (FERREIRA, 2010; SILVA, 2017).

In the late 19th century, psychology was introduced to Japan, drawing upon Western methodologies and practices for research, study, and application, despite the influence of Indian, Buddhist, and Chinese philosophical traditions on Japanese intellectual history (SATO & GRAHAM, 1954). After the Pacific War ended in 1945, Japan was occupied by the United States. In line with prevailing trends observed in various fields, the influence of psychology in Japan was primarily derived from the United States for a significant period, shaping the development and direction of the discipline. (SUZUKI et al, 1995).

In contemporary times, Japanese psychology continues to align closely with theoretical frameworks and practices from the United States and Europe. This alignment is evident in the presence of Japanese psychologists in academic positions worldwide, demonstrating their active engagement in scholarly discourse beyond national boundaries. Furthermore, their research contributions have become increasingly prevalent in international journals and conferences, reflecting the growing recognition and dissemination of Japanese psychological research on a global scale (IMADA & TANAKA-MATSUMI, 2016; HASLAM & KASHIMA, 2010).

Japan has gained international importance in psychology as a counterpoint to Western countries, achieving notable importance in subfields such as cultural psychology (e.g., MARKUS & KITAYAMA, 1991) and primatology (MATSUZAWA & MCGREW, 2008).

## **The Present Study**

Psychology is a crucial field of study as it provides insights into the workings of the human mind, behaviour, and emotions. It is relevant in various areas, including healthcare, education, business, social services, other social sciences, and humanities. In today's globalising world, it is very important to understand other cultures and diversify research in all fields, including psychology.

Previous research has shown a lack of diversity in mainstream psychology, which is predominantly composed of the so called Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) samples (HENRICH et al, 2010). However, little is known about local publications in psychology, especially those in languages other than English. To address this gap, the present research aims to identify and classify the main themes regarding Japan in Brazilian psychological scientific publications through a systematic literature review.

## 2. Method

Searches were conducted in Portuguese within the EBSCO database using the descriptors “*Japão*” (Japan), “*japonês*” (Japanese), “*nipônico*” (nipponic), as well as their gender and plural variations, individually combined with the descriptor “*Psicologia*” (Psychology). The search was conducted in Portuguese to assess how Brazilian researchers approach this theme for a Brazilian audience<sup>3</sup>. There was no publication time restriction in the search. EBSCO database was selected because of its large scopes and convenient data output. Scielo and Google Scholar databases were also tried, however, since they yielded similar results, EBSCO was used for convenience. All studies that resulted from this search were then processed and analysed (see Figure 1).

A total of 196 studies published between 1977 and 2020 were retrieved on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October 2021. The same procedure was conducted using the “*Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações*” (Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations or BDTD), which yielded 108 works on the same day. Additionally, searches were conducted using the term “*psicologia*” in four Brazilian journals dedicated to Japanese studies or Oriental studies: *Estudos Japoneses* (USP), *Revista de Estudos Orientais* (USP), *Prajna: Revista de Culturas Orientais* (UEL), and *Hon no Mushi* (UFAM). These searches only yielded one result from *Estudos Japoneses* (USP).

The searches were conducted by both authors, the search terms were chosen to be as broad and inclusive as possible.

The results from the searched databases were grouped. In this step, the following kinds of publications were excluded: duplicates, those without available abstracts, those not in Portuguese, or those published outside of Brazil (e.g., Portugal). After exclusions, a total of 142 publications were analysed (see Figure 1).

The publications were grouped into four categories based on their dominant theme:

**Culture** (n = 39): Publications focusing on cultural aspects of Japan, including traditional (e.g., religion, martial arts, origami, literature, philosophy) and popular (e.g., *manga*, cosplay, games) culture.

**Immigration** (n = 33): Publications related to Japanese immigrants in Brazil or Brazilians immigrants in Japan, migration processes and their consequences (e.g., *dekasegi*, immigrant education; prejudice, cultural adaptation).

**Psychology and Related Fields** (n = 35): Publications related to different areas of psychology (e.g., organizational, educational, mental health, social, sport) and fields related to psychology (e.g., nursing, gerontology, physical education).

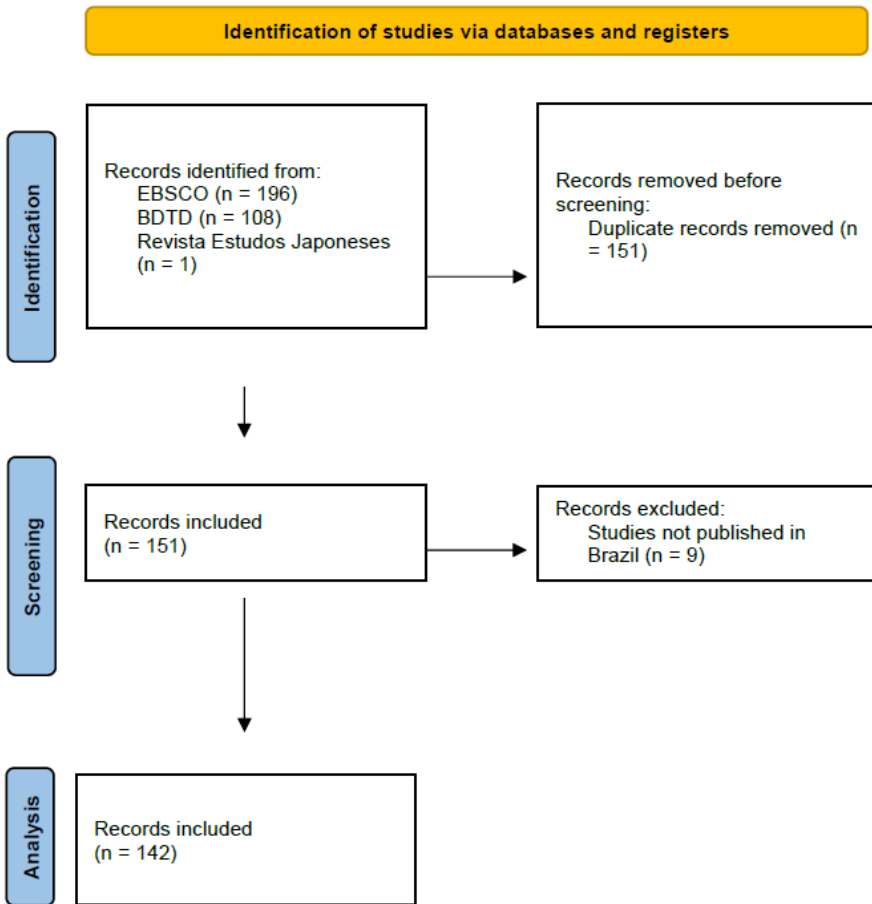
**Other** (n = 35): Publications from other fields, whose focus did not fit into the previous categories, but mentioned studies or theories from psychology in their analyses (e.g., tourism, law, arts, translation).

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3 It is common practice for Brazilian researchers to publish in English or other languages when they target a global audience.

As a secondary analysis, publications were classified based on whether they had at least one author who is of Japanese descent (Nikkei) or not having Japanese ancestry (non-Nikkei). This classification was based solely on the authors' surnames.

**Figure 1.0 –PRISMA diagram (2020) with screening**



### 3. Results

Table 1 shows the distribution of publications in each category and among *Nikkei* and non-*Nikkei* authors. The analysed data does not show a dominant category, suggesting a well-balanced diversity of themes related to Japan in Brazilian psychological publications. However, when considering Japanese ancestry, the proportions vary. Publications authored by *Nikkei* individuals constitute the majority (65%) in the immigration category and represent 25% of the publications in the culture category.

**TABLE 1 – Distribution of publications**

Category	Nikkei	Non-Nikkei	Total
Culture	10	29	39
Immigration	23	10	33
Psychology and related fields	5	30	35
Other	4	31	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>142</b>

Publications have been increasing overtime, especially after 2010. Regarding the distribution of categories, the data shows that Culture has been the prevalent topic most of the time (see FIGURE 1).

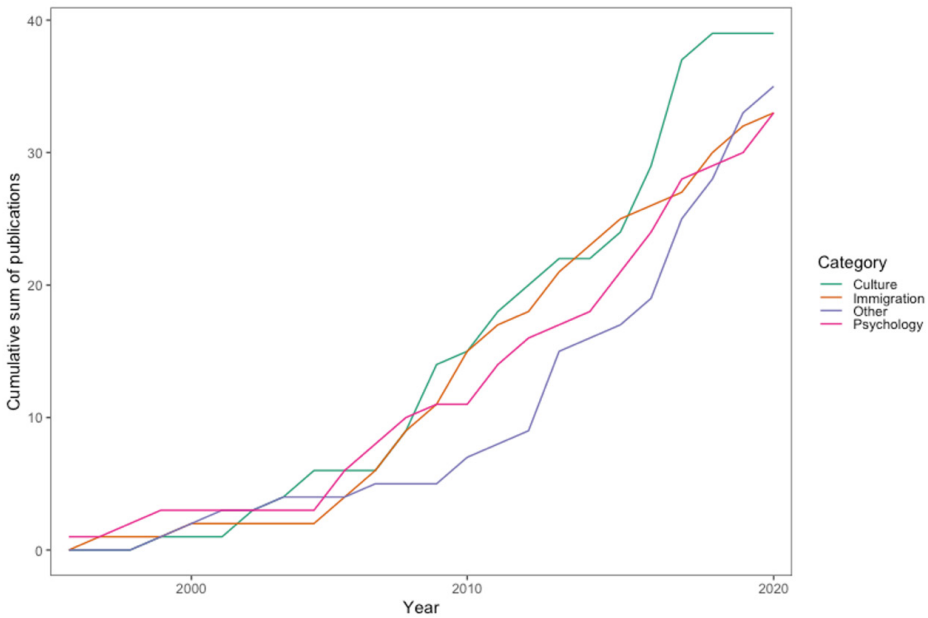


FIGURE 1: Cumulative sum of publications related to Japan in Brazilian psychology from 1977 to 2020.

### 3.1. Culture

Publications related to Japanese culture were subcategorized into popular (n = 14) and traditional (n = 25). Studies focusing on *manga*, *anime*, *cosplay*, and games, were accounted for in the subcategory popular; while those related to religion and arts in general (e.g. martial arts, origami, and literature) were placed in the subcategory traditional.

Regarding traditional culture, most studies focused on religion (n= 8), followed by martial arts (n= 5) and literature (n= 5). Studies on religion predominantly explored new Japanese religions and their Brazilian followers; while studies about martial arts were focused on karate and other modalities. Studies about literature and popular culture were mostly focused on the analysis of specific works or cultural products.

Out of 39 publications about culture, roughly 25% (n = 10) had Nikkei scholars among the authors.

### 3.2. Immigration

This category had the highest proportion of Nikkei authors (n = 23) compared to non-Nikkei authors (n = 10), reflecting their intrinsic interest in their own communities. Publications in this category focus both on Brazilians living in Japan, especially those of Japanese descent; and Japanese and their descendants living in Brazil. Despite the Brazilian immigration to Japan taking place from the 1980s (SASAKI, 2006), publications related to this topic in psychology commenced in 2007 and have since grown in number.

### 3.3. Psychology and related fields

Publications whose central theme was linked to psychology - in its various areas - or other health sciences, and that would not fit in the culture or immigration categories were classified in this category.

Ten publications were related to the subfield of organisational psychology. Most of these studies discussed the implementation of Japanese organisational models and comparison with Western models, as well as their adaptation by Brazilian companies.

Publications related to other subfields of psychology related to various themes were found, such as educational psychology (e.g., teaching methodology, bullying, intellectual disabilities), sport psychology (e.g., personality traits in high performance judoka athletes), mental health (e.g., perception of Japanese nurses regarding psychiatric patients, play activities with the elderly, social withdrawal/*hikikomori*), experimental psychology (e.g. Japanese primatology, Japanese definitions of culture), and geriatric psychology (e.g., caregivers, active aging).

The remaining studies are reviews on Japan and its culture, and psychology or fields related to psychology (see TABLE 2).



**TABLE 2 – Review studied relating psychology and themes associated to Japan**

<b>Title (in Portuguese)</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Considerações gerais sobre a Psicologia no Japão	NOVAES, V. P.	1977	Comparison between Japanese and Brazilian psychologies.
Itinerário diagnóstico e terapêutico das famílias e dos pacientes com doenças órfãs	MOURA, R. M.	2013	Comparison of public health policies in Japan, Brazil, European Union and the United States.
O Marco Civil da internet no Brasil: reflexões sobre a psicologia, pornografia infantil e a pedofilia	JUNIOR, L. L. C.; OKABE, M. S.	2015	Analysis of Brazilian Civil Rights Framework for the Internet regarding psychology, pornography and pedophilia (mentions Japanese pornographic comics and animations).
A psique japonesa: grandes temas dos contos de fadas japoneses	PIRES, L. S.	2016	Publication of the Japanese psychologist Kawai Hayao.
Amae: uma emoção para compreender a psique japonesa	ALMEIDA, I.; NAKAO, G.	2020	Cultural and academic importance of the Japanese concept “amae”.

### 3.4. Other

Publications that did not fit in the aforementioned categories were classified as “Other”. This category includes publications from various fields such as education, language and translation, gerontology, history, law, philosophy, health sciences, business administration, agriculture, geosciences, design, tourism and arts.

In general, most of the studies in this category had no direct relationship with Japan or its culture. Possibly, these studies were identified by the search engines

due to words present in the reference list, a reference to Japan, or an example of some Japanese phenomena. Publications focused on themes related to Japan are listed on TABLE 3.

**Table 3 – Publications focused on Japan in the “Other” category**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Authors</b>	<b>Field</b>	<b>Theme</b>
Pornografia infantil e internet: uma visão internacional	AZEVEDO, A. M. S.	Law	Legislative comparison on child pornography around the world.
Design de vestuário íntimo: o sutiã sob a abordagem de conforto	KAGIYAMA, W.	Clothing Design	Comparison of the perception of underwear use between Brazilian and Japanese women.
Da contemplação à imersão e subjetividade: estéticas dos museus de arte contemporânea e centros culturais	IGREJA, P. A. P.	Architecture and Design	Semiotic analysis of the contemporary art museums architectures.

Title	Authors	Field	Theme
A mediação semiótica de instrumentos culturais na aprendizagem do conceito de radioatividade no Ensino Médio	GOMES, I. C. P.	Education	Cultural tools in the physics learning process for high school students.
M E D I D A S OROFACIAIS EM NIPOBRASILEIROS APÓS CRESCIMENTO PUBERAL.	SÁ, T. B. F.; CATTONI, D. M.; NEMR, K.	Anthropometry	Comparison of facial measurements of black, white, and Japanese-Brazilian women.
Aspecto motivacional dos alunos de língua japonesa: estudo de turmas básico e intermediário de uma escola de idiomas	ALVARENGA, A. C.;	Education	Motivation of Japanese language students in Brazil.
RELIGIÃO E ARTE COMO PROPAGANDA DE GUERRA JAPONESA NO BRASIL.	OLIVEIRA, A. G. C.	History	Analysis of the Catholic discourse used by Japan as war propaganda.

Title	Authors	Field	Theme
O Som do Silêncio: traduções/adaptações de onomatopoeias e mimesis japonesas nos mangás traduzidos para a língua portuguesa	LEITAO, R. G. C.	Language	Analysis of onomatopoeia translations in Japanese comics published in Brazil.
Cooperação entre atores da agricultura familiar: o caso da cooperativa COOP-GRANDE no município de Campo Grande - MS	SILVA, G. G.	Agribusiness Management	Social Capital analysis in a Cooperative founded by Nikkei people.
Crenças e altitudes linguísticas: um estudo comparativo de línguas em contato em duas comunidades do Oeste paranaense	FENNER, A. L.	Language	Study of sociolinguistics in multicultural regions, with one of the analyzed communities was also integrated by Nikkei.
Ideogames: uma proposta metodológica transcultural	TSUTSUMI, H. T.	Education	Development of digital game for Japanese ideograms teaching.

## Conclusion

In general, the analysis of Japanese cultural products represents a good part of the Brazilian studies on Japanese culture and presents a tendency to investigate its influences on the consumer public. There is a notable trend towards investigating Japanese popular culture media as a form of soft power, contributing to the dissemination of positive images of Japan in different countries, particularly in Asian countries (IWABUCHI, 2015; OTMAZGIN, 2007). Further research could explore these issues further, analysing the consequences of these products in Brazil.

Some specific works in psychology reference or study phenomena commonly studied in Japan or concepts originating from the country (Hikkikomori, Japanese organizational model, old age, *amae*). We recommend conducting new literature

reviews that focus on these terms individually, to provide a comprehensive overview of such studies in Brazil.

Various publications in the “Psychology and Related Fields” and “Others” categories did not have a direct relationship with Japan, but referenced studies from Japan. This suggests a relative influence of Japanese researchers in international academia.

Although Brazilians of Japanese ancestry comprise only about 1% of the total Brazilian population (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2022), *Nikkei* authors were present in all categories, being the majority in the immigration category. On the one hand, members of the Japanese community receive internal and external incentives to engage in activities related to their community and the relationship between Brazil and Japan, including research (Morales, 2011; JICA, 2020; Rojas, 2022). On the other hand, non-*Nikkei* Brazilian scholars are heavily influenced by scholars from Europe and Northern America, and when they relate to scholars and themes from other regions, it is usually Latin America (PEREIRA, 2003; SILVA, 2017).

From the data analysed, it can be inferred that theoretical and empirical aspects of the professional practice of Japanese psychology are nearly absent in Brazilian literature. There seems to be minimal exchange of information, data, and experiences between the two countries in psychological research. This finding carries significant meaning – there is little to no influence of Japanese psychology in Brazil. The scientific community and the general population in Brazil could greatly benefit from and enrich their perspectives from incorporating Japanese perspectives. This can be further explored in future research and psychological training.

To support this argument, additional searches were conducted similar to the main study presented here. The term “*psicologia*” (psychology) along with the names of several countries and one region was searched on the EBSCO platform. Each of the searched terms had more results than Japan, corroborating to the argument that psychological research in Brazil is still lacking studies related to Japan (see TABLE 4).

**Table 4 – Results from searches on the EBSCO platform**

Country or Region	Number of results
United States	2.395
Latin America	1.837
Mexico	814
France	657
England	549

As mentioned in the introduction, most of the publication in mainstream psychology is directly related to the so called WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Demographic) samples (HENRICH et al, 2010). Publications related to other regions are not

as common and are usually either comparisons between a WEIRD culture and a non-WEIRD culture, or researchers simply ignore cultural differences. Consequently, many cultures and their characteristics are overlooked in psychological research, or unrelated cultures become wrongly generalized as non-WEIRD (see KRYS et al, 2022 for a discussion on how Latin Americans were for a long time considered similar to East Asians in terms of self-construal). It is important to foster research about Japan in Brazil, as well as about other countries and cultures. Otherwise, cultural biases, as well as incorrect generalizations about psychological phenomena will persist in the field. In today's interconnected and globalised world, cultural mutual understanding is more critical than. The results of this study aim to encourage scholars to conduct research across diverse cultures.

The present research has a few limitations. Firstly, only academic journals, theses and dissertations were researched. Books, which are a rather common outlet of research in Brazil were left out from the analysis due to the lack of a database containing similar information about this publication modality. Secondly, publications not indexed in the consulted databases were also left out. Thirdly, the analysis presented here are focused on the theme of the studies in the databases; alternatively, the analyses could be focused on the nature, methodological, or temporal aspects of the studies.

Despite these limitations, the authors believe that the consulted databases have enough information to assess the current state of research about Japan in Brazilian psychological research.

Finally, the data presented here can be used by researchers to plan future studies. As shown and discussed above, there is a lack of studies about Japan in Brazil, as well as a lack of studies comparing or analysing the relationship between these two countries. We live in a globalised world where relationships between countries are no longer centred around Europe or the USA. With the internet and other tools currently available, it is possible to increase the number of studies and exchanges between Brazil and Japan. The authors hope that this manuscript can give support to future research.

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