

Home Environment Literacy Practices in Early Childhood Families : A Scoping review

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Abstract. Home Environment Literacy (HEL) is widely regarded as a foundational context for early literacy development, yet HEL practices are labelled inconsistently and studies across diverse populations, contexts, and methods. This scoping review maps empirical evidence on HEL practices in families with children in early childhood 3-7 years, following the Arksey and O'Malley framework as refined by Levac and colleagues, reported using PRISMA-ScR. A Scopus search identified 376 initial records, narrowed to 62 after database filters, 26 after title and abstract screening, and 25 after an early-childhood age criterion. The 25 included studies, across fourteen countries, were synthesized into six themes: literacy activities, parental beliefs, socioeconomic and cultural context, digital practices, pandemic-related disruption, and implications for the Indonesian early-childhood (PAUD) context. HEL practices appear shaped by an interacting set of parental beliefs, resources, and sociocultural conditions rather than a single dominant factor; no included study was conducted in Indonesia, indicating a contextual gap.

Keywords: Home environment literacy, early childhood, family literacy practices, scoping review, PAUD.

1 Introduction

The home is widely regarded as the most immediate and enduring layer of a child's ecological environment, and the literacy-related interactions that take place within it are consistently linked to early language and literacy outcomes [4]. The Home Literacy Model distinguishes formal, code-related activities such as teaching letters and words from informal, meaning-related activities such as shared storybook reading, and proposes that both pathways contribute independently to children's emergent literacy [26]. Building on this foundation, the umbrella term 'Home Environment Literacy' (HEL) has been used to capture a broader set of practices, resources, and beliefs that families enact to support early literacy, extending beyond shared reading to include digital literacy activities, parental teaching behaviours, and the material and attitudinal resources available in the home.

Empirical operationalizations of HEL vary considerably across studies. Beltran-Sierra and colleagues identified five interacting practice dimensions in Mexican families, including the physical literacy environment and the frequency of shared interactions [2]. Liu and colleagues showed that parenting style and the quality of the parent-child relationship shape the literacy environment itself, treating HEL as an outcome rather than solely a predictor [16]. Jin and colleagues described parental scaffolding practices for early English literacy across culturally and linguistically diverse households [12], while Gonzalez-Pulido and colleagues showed that

family literacy involvement is associated with children's interest in becoming literate [9]. This diversity of operationalizations, populations, and designs makes HEL a fragmented body of evidence that is difficult to synthesize without an explicit mapping exercise.

In Indonesia, early childhood education (Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, PAUD) is formally defined as provision for children from birth to six years of age [13]. Family-based literacy practices are widely assumed to be an important pedagogical complement to formal PAUD provision, yet, to the authors knowledge, no scoping review has specifically mapped the international empirical evidence on HEL practices in a way that could inform the Indonesian early-childhood context. Related literature reviews tend to focus on adjacent constructs – such as home numeracy environments, bilingual language development, or teacher-facilitated literacy programs rather than directly mapping HEL practices as the locus within the family unit.

This scoping review therefore aims to map the scope, characteristics, and nature of empirical evidence on HEL, practices among families with children in early childhood, defined for this review as approximately 3-7 years age. A scoping review design was chosen over a systematic review because the objective is to map the extent and nature of available evidence across a fragmented literature rather than to evaluate the effectiveness of a specific intervention [1].

2 Methods

The authors adopted a scoping review design following the five-stage framework established by Arksey and O'Malley [1], enhanced by the recommendations of Levac and colleagues [14], and reported following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) [28].

The research question guiding this review was: How does empirical evidence map the practices, characteristics, and correlates of Home Environment Literacy (HEL) among families with children in early childhood?. A search was conducted in the Scopus database on 6 September 2026 using the Boolean search string shown in Box 1 (TITLE-ABS-KEY field).

Box 1. Scopus search strategy (TITLE-ABS-KEY), searched 6 September 2026

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TITLE-ABS-KEY(
  "home literacy environment" OR "home literacy practices" OR
  "family literacy practices" OR "family literacy environment"
)
AND TITLE-ABS-KEY(
  "early childhood" OR "early childhood education" OR preschool OR
  "preschool children" OR "young children" OR "early years"
)

Filters applied: 2021-2026; Subject area: Social Sciences; Document type: Article;
Open Access; Language: English
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Box 1. Scoping search strategy (TITLE-ABS-KEY), searched 6 September 2026.

The initial search yielded 376 records. Database filters were then applied for publication years 2021-2026, the Social Sciences subject area, the Article document type Open access availability, and English language, narrowing the set to 62 records.

During title and abstract screening, records were assessed against the following inclusion criteria: (a) primary empirical search (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods); (b) an explicit focus on home or family literacy environment, activities, resources, or beliefs; (c) a family or home setting; and (d) publication as an English-language peer-reviewed journal

article. Of the 62 records, 36 were excluded: 26 because their primary focus was a distal outcome (e.g., vocabulary, brain structure, academic competence) rather than a description of HEL practices themselves, 2 because they were reviews rather than primary studies, 2 because their focus was neuroimaging outcomes, 2 because HEL was treated only as a statistical covariate, and for population or contextual mismatch (a non-family clinical-culture study, a study of children aged 4,5-18,25 years, a psychometric invariance study, and a program-effect study). This left 26 records.

At the eligibility stage, the population was further restricted to children in early childhood, operationalized as approximately 3-7 years of age to align with Indonesian kindergarten (TK A and TK B). One further record was excluded because its sample was aged 19-29 months, yielding 25 included studies. This age check was based on information reported in the abstract; where an exact numeric age was not reported, the conventional use of the term ‘preschool’ (approximately 3-6 years) was taken as consistent with the criterion. Full-text verification of participant age was not undertaken for all 25 records, which is acknowledged as a limitation.

For each included study, the following information was charted: author(s) and year, country, research design and participants, the definition or operationalization of HEL used, and the key finding(s) relevant to the review question (Table 1). Findings were then synthesized inductively into six broad practice-related themes. As a further, more granular layer of synthesis applied after the search-based evidence had been charted, the specific practices described within the 25 included studies were also re-grouped into recurring practice sub-domains (Section 4.7); this sub-domain grouping is a post-hoc interpretive lens applied by the authors to the already synthesized evidence and was not itself a search or eligibility criterion, and no additional records were retrieved for it. Beyond the 25 core studies, six additional sources were used to establish the theoretical and methodological framework of this review (an ecological perspective [4], the Home Literacy Model [26], the scoping review methodology [1,14,28], and the Indonesian early-childhood policy definition [13]); these supporting sources are not part of the charted evidence base in Table 1 and are cited separately in the Introduction, Methods, and Discussion.

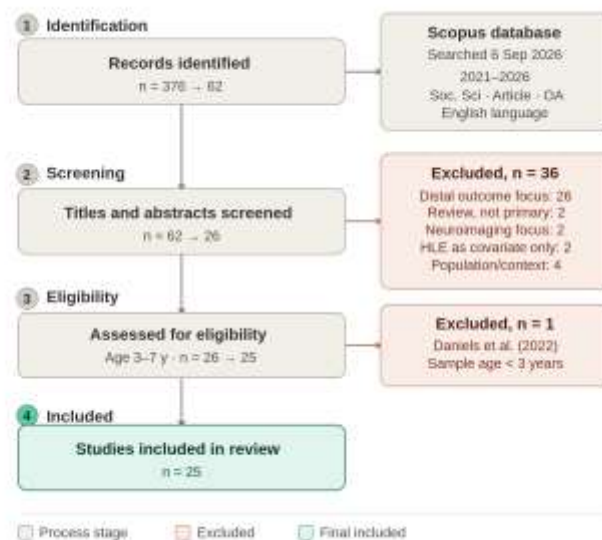


Fig. 1. PRISMA-ScR flow diagram of study identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

3 Results

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the 25 included studies. The studies were conducted across at least fourteen identifiable Portugal, the United States, Mexico, Malaysia, Canada, Chile, the United Kingdom, Germany, China, South Africa, Turkey, Spain, and India with the country not explicitly reported in seven studies. Research designs were predominantly quantitative survey based, with several qualitative and mixed methods studies and one program evaluation. No study in the reviewed set was conducted in Indonesia.

Table 1. Characteristics of included studies (n = 25).

No	Author & Year	Country	Design & Participants	HEL Definition/Operationalization	Key Finding
1	Beltrán-Sierra et al. (2024) [2]	Mexico (northwest)	Qualitative constructivist; interviews with 102 mothers of preschoolers	Practice dimensions: limiting environment, literacy interface, physical environment, interaction frequency, beliefs	Shared time was the main activity promoting reading/writing; parental strategies were often academic/remedial and sometimes misaligned with children's developmental stage.
2	Bergman Deitcher et al. (2024) [3]	Not reported	Longitudinal; 50 preschoolers & parents, 2 waves 6 months apart	Parents' literacy beliefs & home literacy activities	Stability and progress of literacy beliefs/activities approaching first grade were linked to children's early literacy skills.
3	Crook et al. (2026) [5]	United States	Qualitative design-based research; family literacy initiative with caregivers & teachers	Home literacy practices via caregiver-selected multilingual/multi modal text resources	Five themes shaped text selection (content, language, cultural relevance, curricular alignment, collaborative modification), supporting multilingual home literacy practices.
4	Dan et al. (2025) [6]	China	Quantitative survey; 975 parents of Chinese preschoolers	Bilingual reading resources & parental reading habits (Mandarin/English), by income level	Lower-income families faced greater challenges accessing bilingual reading resources and maintaining consistent reading habits.

No	Author & Year	Country	Design & Participants	HEL Definition/Operationalization	Key Finding
5	Dolean et al. (2022) [7]	Not reported	Longitudinal case study; bilingual children	Home literacy practices supporting language/literacy development, net of SES	Home support practices related to bilingual children's language-literacy trajectories independent of SES.
6	Ehiyazaryan-White (2025) [8]	Not reported	Qualitative (artifactual literacies); migrant/multilingual parents & children	Early literacy practices via translanguaging & cultural/linguistic artifacts at home	Parents used translanguaging and artefacts to convey linguistic/cultural knowledge; new meanings of literacy and identity emerged in heteroglossic home contexts.
7	González-Pulido et al. (2025) [9]	Spain (Asturias)	Quantitative exploratory; 612 families with young children, HLEQ questionnaire	Family involvement in literacy, parents' reading habits, perceived child interest (3 factors)	Greater family literacy involvement predicted greater child interest in literacy; differences linked to employment status and income.
8	Hall et al. (2024) [10]	United Kingdom	Qualitative interviews; 29 parents/carers of preschoolers	Shared-reading practice viewed through a temporal/sociological lens	Shared reading served relational and temporal functions in families, shaped by routines and finite time.
9	Hamilton et al. (2021) [11]	Not reported	Exploratory study; children at family risk of dyslexia	Quality of shared storybook-reading interaction	Shared reading interactions in dyslexia-risk families were described in an under-studied population.
10	Jin et al. (2026) [12]	Not reported (multilingual households)	Survey; 523 parents of preschoolers aged 4-6	Parental scaffolding practices & home-based resource access for early English literacy	Parental scaffolding practices supporting early English literacy were described across diverse linguistic/SES backgrounds.

No	Author & Year	Country	Design & Participants	HEL Definition/Operationalization	Key Finding
11	Lin et al. (2023) [15]	United States	Quantitative; 47 families, children aged 5-6, pre/during COVID-19	Home literacy & technology practices (parent survey)	Literacy and technology practices differed before vs. during COVID-19 and varied by household income.
12	Liu et al. (2025) [16]	Malaysia (Kota Kinabalu)	Quantitative; 385 mothers of ethnic-Chinese preschoolers	HLE as outcome, shaped by parenting styles & child-parent relationship	Parenting styles and child-parent relationship significantly influenced the home literacy environment.
13	Meoded Karabanov et al. (2026) [17]	Israel	Mixed-methods; 121 parents & preschool children	Digital home environment (DHE): joint digital/traditional literacy activities, parental involvement in content selection, child interest	Joint digital literacy activity was the strongest predictor of children's digital-literacy interest; parental content-selection involvement was negatively associated with it.
14	Napoli et al. (2021) [18]	United States	Quantitative; 199 preschoolers aged 3.00-5.17 (M=4.16)	Frequency of parent-child literacy & numeracy practices (parent report)	Parent education and child age related positively to literacy/numeracy practice frequency; numeracy (not literacy) beliefs predicted numeracy-practice frequency.
15	Nkomo (2023) [19]	South Africa	Semi-ethnographic case study; two 3-year-old children during COVID-19 lockdown	Home literacy experiences/practices (caregiver-reported)	Literacy practices differed across the two cases but were not of lesser quality; the home still offered learning opportunities during lockdown.
16	Ozturk et al. (2022) [20]	Turkey	Questionnaire; parents of children aged approx. 5-7	Home digital literacy practices (device types & purposes)	Types and purposes of digital technology accessed by young children at home were identified.

No	Author & Year	Country	Design & Participants	HEL Definition/Operationalization	Key Finding
17	Pandith et al. (2022) [21]	India	Quantitative questionnaire; 100 parents of typically developing preschoolers	Reading exposure patterns, child interest, storybook-reading practices & beliefs	Most parents began storybook reading around age 2+; frequency/duration were low; higher SES was linked to better-quality HLE.
18	Park (2023) [22]	United States (Asian American families)	Qualitative (counterstory/portraiture)	Practices cultivating bilingualism/biliteracy (planting-pollinating-pruning metaphor)	A justice-centered framework of three cultivating practices across space and time positioned parents as active agents in bilingual/biliteracy development.
19	Peixoto et al. (2022) [23]	Portugal	Quantitative; 57 mother-child dyads, 2 waves (end preschool & end Grade 1)	Home literacy experiences + mothers' interactive reading behaviours + literacy beliefs	Maternal education and literacy beliefs explained moderate variance in home literacy experiences; beliefs contributed independently of education.
20	Ratka-Pauler et al. (2024) [24]	Germany	Qualitative elicitation study (Theory of Planned Behavior); N=25 parents	Parental attitudes toward joint literacy activities	A comprehensive category system of parental beliefs about joint literacy activities was mapped using the Theory of Planned Behavior.
21	Read et al. (2022) [25]	Not reported	Survey; 85 parents of children aged 2-5, 2 waves (Feb & Oct 2020)	Shared-reading frequency, screen-mediated reading, book preferences, caregiving changes	Shared-reading frequency stayed stable across the pandemic, but screen-mediated reading rose and fewer adults read regularly with children.

No	Author & Year	Country	Design & Participants	HEL Definition/Operationalization	Key Finding
22	Susperreguy et al. (2022) [27]	Canada, Mexico, Chile	Quantitative comparative; children aged 3-5 (Mexico n=54, Chile n=41) vs Canada	Home numeracy & literacy environment (activities & resources)	Cross-cultural comparison showed differing home literacy/numeracy environment characteristics across the three countries.
23	Tura et al. (2023) [29]	United Kingdom	Program evaluation (DPIL book gifting); n=286 vs n=197 non-participants	Reading behaviour: frequency/duration of parent-child reading, daily reading likelihood	Longer DPIL participation (≥ 1 year) was associated with more frequent and more consistent daily parent-child reading.
24	Turco et al. (2023) [30]	United States	Quantitative-qualitative; 65 families, children aged 3, e-book interaction	Parent-child interaction profiles during e-book use	Distinct parent profiles emerged in e-book interactions, enriching understanding of digital home literacy practices.
25	Valcárcel Jiménez et al. (2026) [31]	Not reported	Quantitative; N=500 preschoolers (M age approx. 60.97 months)	Quantitative (activity frequency) & qualitative (interaction quality) aspects of HLE	Interaction quality within the HLE related to literacy development beyond mere activity quantity.

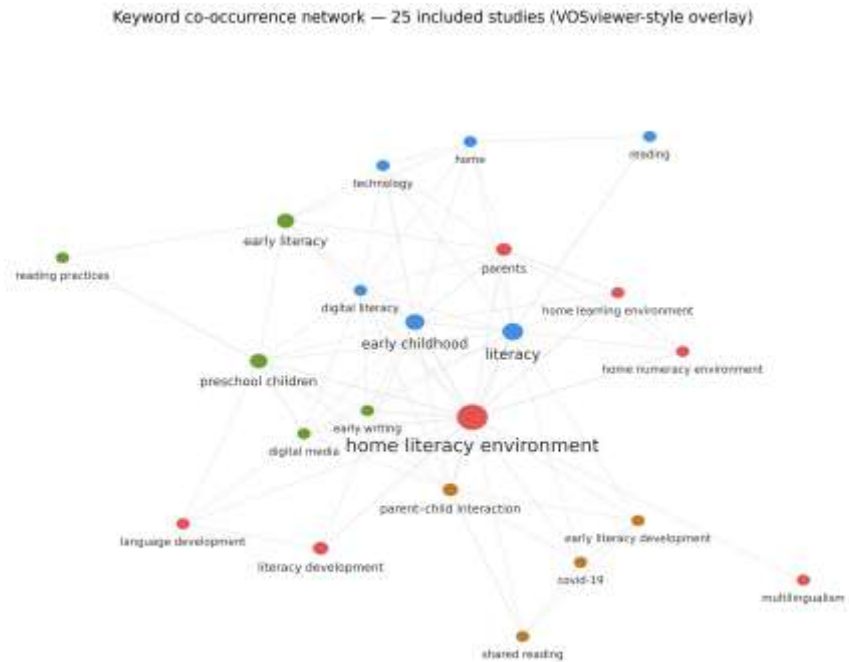


Fig. 2. Keyword co-occurrence network (VOSviewer-style overlay) of author keywords occurring in ≥ 2 of the 25 included studies.

The keyword network in Fig. 2 shows ‘home literacy environment’ as the dominant, most-connected node, clustered with terms reflecting home resources and learning environments (red cluster), literacy activities and digital literacy (blue cluster), parent-child interaction and preschool-age terms (green cluster), and a smaller cluster linking shared reading, COVID-19, and early literacy development (amber cluster). This pattern corroborates the six-theme synthesis below: literacy activities and digital practices form a closely linked conceptual core, while pandemic-related terms form a more peripheral, time-bound cluster.

Table 2. Thematic synthesis matrix mapping included studies to the six review themes.

Theme	Studies (citation no.)	n	Representative countries	Synthesis
1. Types of literacy activities at home	[17], [11], [18], [30]	4	Israel, United States	Shared reading and joint/independent digital activities co-exist as distinct but related practice types.
2. Parental beliefs and attitudes	[24], [23], [16], [3], [9]	5	Germany, Portugal, Malaysia, Spain	Beliefs shape practices independently of behaviour frequency and of parental education.
3. Socioeconomic and cultural context	[6], [27], [21], [2]	4	China, Canada/Mexico/Chile, India, Mexico	Income and national/cultural context pattern both the resources available and the strategies used.
4. Digital and technology-mediated practices	[20], [15], [30]	3	Turkey, United States	Digital literacy is an emerging, distinct practice domain shaped by parental mediation style.
5. Practices under pandemic disruption	[25], [15], [19]	3	United States, South Africa	Shared reading was largely resilient; screen-mediated reading increased as a partial substitute.
6. Implications for the Indonesian PAUD context	[13] + patterns from Themes 1–4	0 (Indonesia)	—	No included study was conducted in Indonesia; patterns above are plausible but empirically unverified locally.

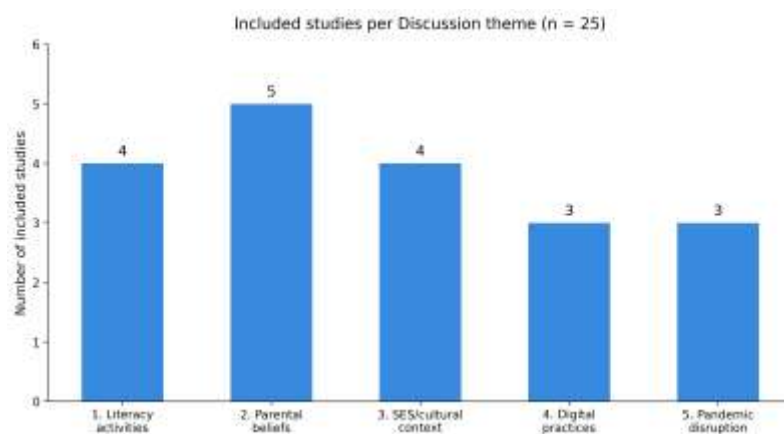


Fig. 3. Number of included studies contributing evidence to each of the five Discussion themes with at least one study (of n = 25 included studies in total); bars are not mutually exclusive, as individual studies may contribute evidence to more than one theme.

4 Discussion

4.1 Types of Literacy Activities at Home

Across the included studies, home literacy activities ranged from shared storybook reading to joint digital literacy engagement. Meoded Karabanov and colleagues found that joint digital literacy activity was the strongest predictor of children's interest in digital literacy, more so than either general digital exposure or parental content selection [17]. Hamilton and colleagues described the quality of shared storybook-reading interactions in an under-studied population of families at risk of dyslexia [11], while Napoli and colleagues showed that the frequency of parent-child literacy and numeracy practices was jointly related to parent education and child age [18]. Turco and colleagues identified distinct parent profiles in e-book interactions, suggesting that digital reading is not a single uniform practice but a family of related behaviours [30]. Taken together, these studies indicate that HEL practices are multidimensional, spanning traditional and digital modalities, and that the specific configuration of activities not merely their presence appears to matter for child outcomes.

4.2 Parental Beliefs and Attitudes

Parental beliefs emerged as a recurring construct shaping HEL practices independent of behaviour frequency alone. Ratka-Pauler and colleagues used the Theory of Planned Behavior to map a comprehensive category system of parental attitudes toward joint literacy activities [24]. Peixoto and colleagues found that maternal literacy beliefs contributed independently of maternal education to variance in home literacy experiences [23], while Liu and colleagues showed that parenting style and the child-parent relationship significantly shaped the literacy environment itself [16]. Bergman Deitcher and colleagues traced the stability and progress of parents' literacy beliefs and activities as children approached first grade [3], and González-Pulido and colleagues linked family literacy involvement to children's interest in becoming literate [9]. These findings suggest that beliefs and practices are mutually reinforcing rather than independent constructs.

4.3 Socioeconomic and Cultural Context

Family income and cultural context patterned HEL practices in several studies. Dan and colleagues found that lower-income Chinese families faced greater difficulty accessing bilingual reading resources and maintaining consistent reading habits than higher-income families [6]. Susperreguy and colleagues' cross-cultural comparison of Canada, Mexico, and Chile showed that home literacy and numeracy environment characteristics differed meaningfully by national context [27]. Pandith and colleagues reported that higher socioeconomic status was associated with better-quality home literacy environment factors among Indian families [21], and Beltrán-Sierra and colleagues found that literacy strategies used by Mexican mothers were often academic or remedial in orientation, sometimes misaligned with children's developmental stage [2]. Collectively, this evidence indicates that HEL practices cannot be interpreted independently of the socioeconomic and cultural conditions in which families are situated.

4.4 Digital and Technology-Mediated Practices

A distinct cluster of studies examined digital literacy practices specifically. Ozturk and colleagues identified the types and purposes of digital technologies accessed by young children at home in Turkey [20], while Lin and colleagues compared home literacy and technology

practices before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, finding variation by household income [15]. Turco and colleagues' parent-interaction profiles during e-book use further suggest that digital literacy engagement is shaped by how, not only whether, parents mediate technology use [30]. These studies point to digital HEL as an increasingly important but still under-theorized dimension of family literacy practice.

4.5 Practices Under Pandemic Disruption

Three studies specifically examined HEL practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Read and colleagues found that shared-reading frequency remained stable among American families across the pandemic, but screen-mediated reading increased and fewer adults regularly read with children [25]. Lin and colleagues similarly compared literacy and technology practices before and during the pandemic [15], while Nkomo's semi-ethnographic study of two South African children during lockdown found that literacy practices differed across household contexts but were not of lesser quality, with the home still providing learning opportunities despite external constraints [19]. These findings suggest that HEL practices showed resilience during disruption, with technology serving as a partial substitute rather than a wholesale replacement for shared reading.

4.6 Implications for the Indonesian Early-Childhood (PAUD) Context

None of the 25 included studies were conducted in Indonesia, despite Indonesian early-childhood education (PAUD) being formally defined for children from birth to six years [13]. The patterns identified in this review the independent role of parental beliefs [24,23], the sensitivity of HEL practices to socioeconomic and cultural context [27,21,6], and the emerging importance of digital literacy practices [20,15] are plausible starting points for Indonesian research but cannot be assumed to generalize without local empirical study. Given the cross-cultural variation documented by Susperreguy and colleagues [27] and the culturally specific parenting-style effects documented by Liu and colleagues in a Chinese-heritage Southeast Asian sample [16], there is a clear rationale for context-specific empirical research examining how Indonesian families enact HEL practices within their own cultural and institutional settings.

4.7 Granularity of Practice Domains Within the Reviewed Evidence

Beyond the six broad themes above, the practices described in the 25 included studies can be further disaggregated into four recurring practice sub-domains commonly used to characterize home literacy environments: book/reading practices, writing practices, household or environmental-print practices, and oral-language practices. Book/reading practices were by far the most frequently and specifically studied sub-domain, addressed directly in at least 9 of the 25 included studies [17,11,23,29,30,21,9,25,6]. By contrast, writing practices and household/environmental-print practices were not isolated as distinct constructs in any of the 25 studies; where related content appeared, it was folded into a composite HLE or HLE/HNE score rather than measured as a separate sub-domain [2,7,18,27,31]. Oral-language practices were addressed explicitly in only three studies, mostly framed around multilingual scaffolding or biliteracy cultivation rather than everyday storytelling and talk [22,8,12]. A fifth practice domain, not captured by this four-part categorization, emerged repeatedly across the reviewed literature: digital or technology-mediated literacy practices, addressed in at least four studies [17,15,20,30].

This finer-grained mapping indicates that the writing and household-print sub-domains remain comparatively under-studied as distinct constructs relative to book/reading practices, and that digital practices constitute a fifth, increasingly prominent sub-domain not captured by earlier four-part conceptualizations of home literacy environment. These gaps may be informative starting points for future instrument-based research on HEL practices in additional cultural contexts, including Indonesia.

5 Limitations

This scoping review has several limitations. First, database searching was restricted to Scopus, and relevant literature indexed exclusively in other databases (e.g., ERIC) may have been omitted. Second, consistent with scoping review conventions, a formal methodological quality appraisal of included studies was not conducted [1]. Third, the search and screening were restricted to English-language publications, which may have excluded relevant literature published in other languages, including Indonesian. Fourth, the age-based eligibility criterion (3-7 years) was applied primarily using information available in each study's abstract; for 13 of the 25 included studies, an exact numeric participant age was not reported and eligibility was inferred from the conventional use of the term 'preschool', without full-text verification. Fifth, screening and eligibility decisions were made by a single reviewer against explicit, pre-specified criteria, rather than independently by two reviewers, which is recommended best practice for scoping reviews.

6 Conclusion

This scoping review mapped 25 empirical studies on Home Environment Literacy practices among families with children in early childhood into seven themes: literacy activities, parental beliefs, socioeconomic and cultural context, digital practices, pandemic-period practices, implications for the Indonesian PAUD context, and the granularity of underlying practice sub-domains. The evidence indicates that HEL practices are shaped by an interacting set of parental beliefs, resources, and sociocultural conditions rather than any single dominant factor, and that digital literacy practices constitute an increasingly distinct dimension of family literacy engagement not well captured by earlier four-part conceptualizations of home literacy environment. Book/reading practices dominate the empirical base, while writing and household-print practices remain comparatively under-studied as distinct constructs. The absence of any Indonesian study within the reviewed evidence base indicates a clear contextual gap. Future instrument-based research should examine how each practice sub-domain and, potentially, digital practices as a fifth sub-domain is enacted within Indonesian families with children in early childhood.

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