

# Paraprofessionals Supporting Early Literacy

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## INTRODUCTION

- Literacy skills (oral language, vocabulary, print awareness) develop during preschool and can predict later reading success.
- Preschools are key environments for building foundational literacy skills.
- Paraprofessionals are important members of classroom staff and often:
  - Assist during reading and language activities
  - Provide individualized help to special-needs students
- Despite this role, many paraprofessionals:
  - Receive limited formal/informal training in early literacy strategies
  - Have unclear role expectations
  - Report low confidence in implementing literacy support
- From 2012-2019, assistant teachers increased 51%, compared to 27% growth in lead teachers.

## METHODS

**Research Design** - This is a qualitative study exploring paraprofessionals' perceptions/experiences, confidence levels, challenges, & training needs.

**Participants** - Paraprofessionals working in preschool classrooms in Tallahassee with varying levels of training & experience levels.

**Data Collection** – Through interviews with paraprofessionals, where they are asked about: their role in literacy instruction, challenges in supporting literacy, training and preparation experiences, etc.

- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed

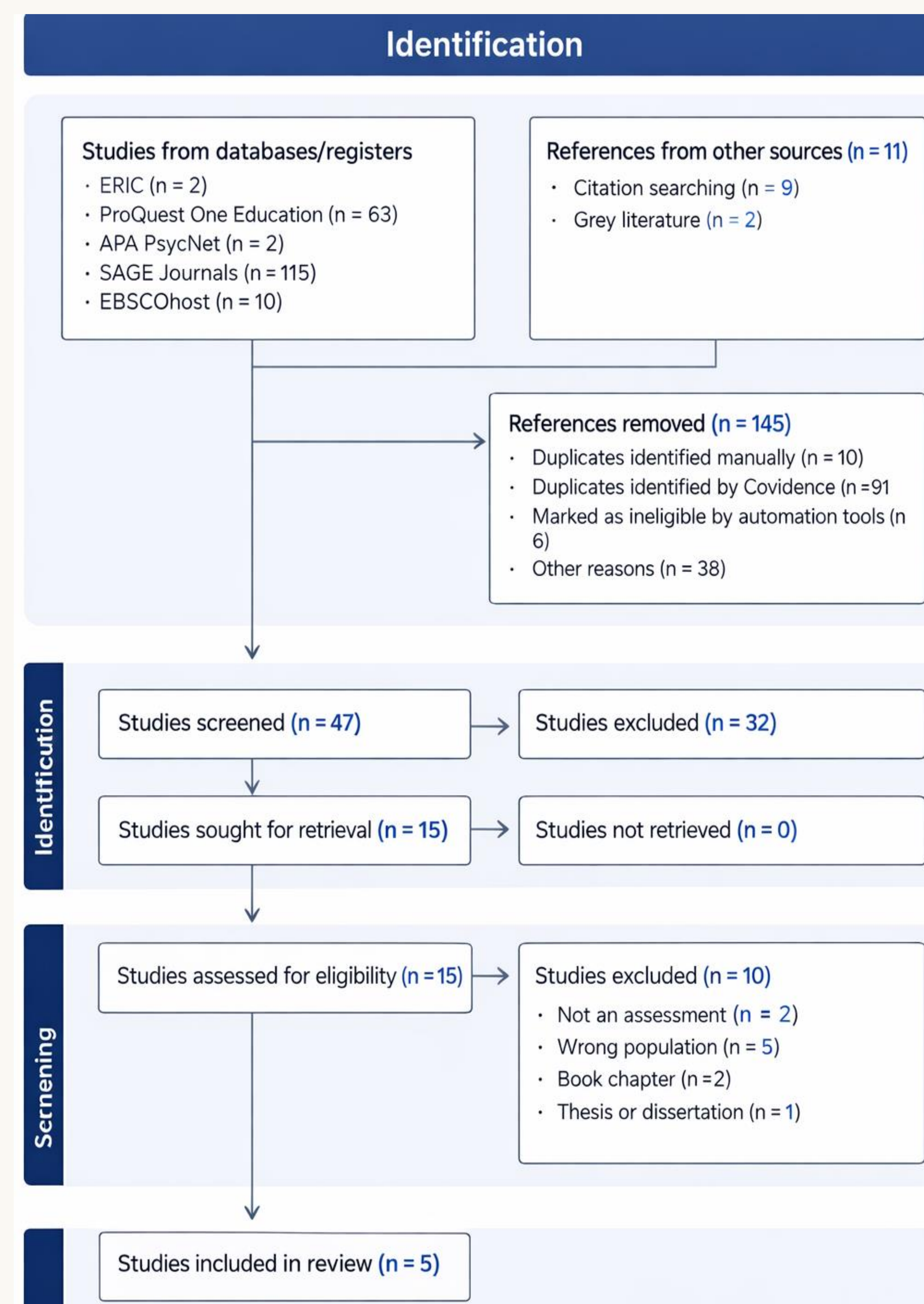
**Data Analysis** - Coding will identify patterns and common themes related to:

- Perception of role in classrooms
- Confidence levels
- Training needs/gaps
- Classroom challenges

**Current Project Status** - Data collection has not yet started but will start in the coming months. Findings will be analyzed in later stages of the project.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

**What are paraprofessionals' role in early literacy and what current perceived gaps exist in training and support for people in this role?**



## CONCLUSION

- Paraprofessionals play a key role in supporting early literacy in preschool classrooms.
- Many have limited formal training in literacy instruction.
- Stronger training and clearer role expectations could improve classroom support and student outcomes.
- Findings will help identify common training needs/deficits and strategies.
- It is important to note that qualitative research study excel in their ability to provide in-depth understanding but can be held back in its ability to be replicated and the effect that a researcher's bias can have on the study.

## FUTURE APPLICATION

- The value and importance of paraprofessionals is often underscored.
- Many report being underpaid and overworked.
- Their roles are especially important because they primarily work with students with physical or cognitive disabilities who already face educational challenges.
- When paraprofessionals are not provided with adequate training or resources, the gap for special needs children increases.
- Identifying deficits in confidence, training, or resources would allow these problems to be addressed and help close the gap for special needs students.

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## REFERENCES

