

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. (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2009)
- Despite their central role in providing instructional and individualized support, many paraprofessionals receive limited training, experience unclear role expectations, and report concerns about their self-efficacy in implementing instructional supports, including early literacy interventions (e.g., Azad et al., 2015; Douglas et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2021; Stewart, 2019)
- Research indicates that when paraprofessionals receive explicit training, coaching, and clear role expectations, they can successfully implement early literacy interventions and support improved student outcomes (e.g., Brock & Carter, 2013; Jones et al., 2021)
- In center-based early childhood programs, the number of assistant teachers increased by 51% between 2012 and 2019, compared with a 27% increase in teachers (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2024, using NSECE data).

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

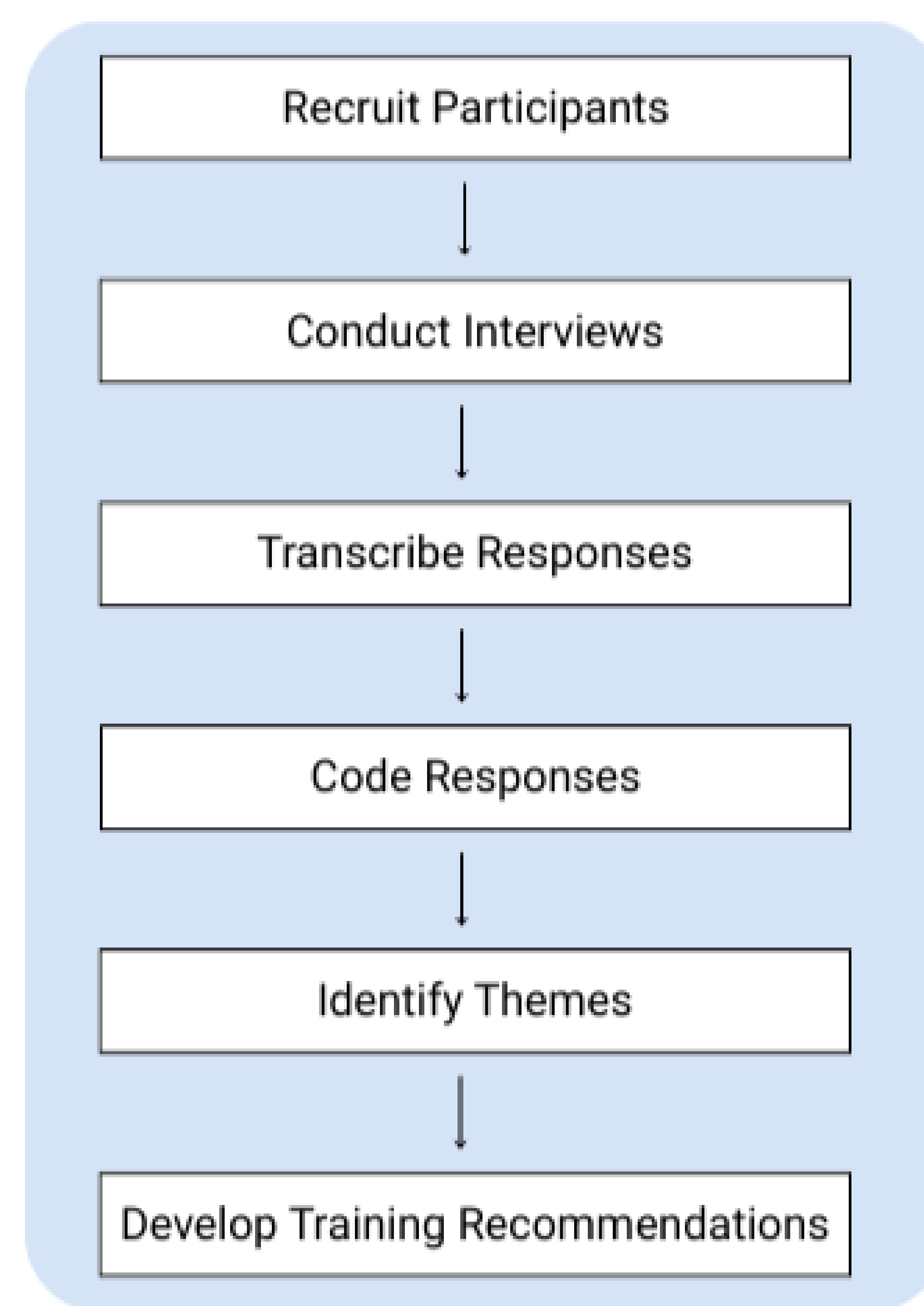
Data Analysis - Coding will identify patterns and common themes related to:

- 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

