



## **Implementation of Early Literacy Activities during Covid-19: A Parents Involvement Analysis**

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The purpose of this research is to discover how early literacy activities are implemented during Covid-19 pandemic in Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia. Since the offline meeting at school has been discontinued, the research sample consists of 400 parents in Pekanbaru who were recruited online. This research method is descriptive in quantitative terms and provides an overview of the performance of literacy activities in Pekanbaru Riau. A questionnaire with A Likert Scale Model was used to collect data. The percentage descriptive technique was used for data analysis with IBM SPSS for Windows Version 23. The results showed that the implementation of literacy activities in Pekanbaru kindergarten was carried out through the parent participation in early childhood literacy development. According to the findings, four indicators that children must have in order to develop early literacy well (vocabulary, narrative, print awareness, and print motivation) are in the high category or more than 65%. Meanwhile, the Letter Knowledge and Phonological Awareness skills are sufficient, at around 60%. Overall, the results of this study are in the high category (64.5%), indicating that literacy activities in Pekanbaru, Riau, Indonesia, have involved parents in the advancement of early childhood literacy skills.

Keywords: literacy activities, parents' involvement, early childhood, skills, kindergarten

### **INTRODUCTION**

Early childhood education is national education systemically governed under the National Education System Act No, 20, 2003, as a guidance aim to encourage and educate the child from birth to six years of age to support physical and spiritual growth and development so that children are prepared to enter further education. Children's literacy skills are the forerunners of children who have to be able to enter elementary school. This is done when children are unable to read and write in such a way that

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literacy activities are needed in the education unit so that they can improve their skills before entering further education (Niklas et al., 2015).

At the end of the twentieth century, the term "literacy" first appeared in specialized literature. At the most basic level, it refers to a skill and the ability to apply that skill that include writing, reading literacy, and mathematical skills (Wildova & Kropackova, 2015). The purpose of communication is to fulfill the function of exchanging thoughts and feelings. Language skills begin when the child is born. Crying, smiling, and babbling are the way babies communicate with the closest people. From babbling, it develops into words and phrases, then tells stories, or listens to stories at 2-3 years of age (Otto, 2016). Literacy skills have developed since then. Children's literacy skills gradually develop from expressions to communication. Language can be used in a variety of ways by children, such as questioning, dialogue, and singing. According to Kuder and Hasit (2012) literacy is defined as the process of reading, writing, speaking, listening, seeing, and having opinions. Moreover, Alwasilah (2012) adds that literacy means understanding, use, analyzing, and transforming texts. Literacy exercises, which include children's letter recognition and phonological awareness skills, are activities that improve their capacity to read, write, listen, see, and understand symbols before they can actually read (Riordan et al, 2021).

According to the Multnomah Public Library, one of Oregon's public libraries that focuses on addressing the emergence of literacy, and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD, 2001), children must have six skills in order to develop early literacy well, namely 1). Vocabulary skill, the ability of children to know the vocabulary. This skill is very important for children to have before able to read it. Children with the ability to hear and speak a broad vocabulary have an enormous advantage in learning to read because a vast reading comprehension depends on the ability to know the meaning (Pradipta, 2011). 2). Print motivation skills are pleasure or interest in reading books or printed symbols. 3). Print awareness skills are the ability to pay interest to or mark print symbols in the surroundings, know how to hold a book and understand how to follow writing. Print awareness is the child's realization that spoken language can be converted into written language. Children who learn print recognition skills can understand the relationship between oral language and written language, which is why print awareness is important in literacy development (Kumas, 2021). Susanto (2011) explains that reading actually translates symbols (letters) into sounds combined with words. Reading skills are the basis that children must have before taught to read. Before being able to read, children should have basic skills, namely that children can read pictures, to mention symbols of vowels and consonants that are known in their surroundings, to read pictures that have simple words/phrases, to recognize symbols that represent them for reading and writing. 4). Narrative skill is the ability to understand a story, tell a story, or describe something. Pradipta (2011) explains that narrative skill is the ability to describe something or activity, as well as the ability to reproduce the content of the story. 5). Letter knowledge skills are skills that involve children's ability to know that each letter has a name and that each letter is different and have a particular shape. Things to do are pointing out certain letters in a piece of paper, inviting children to look at various shapes, or encouraging the child to make letters with

a finger. 6) Phonological awareness skill is the ability to hear and play with the sounds of simple words. Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate the smallest sound of words includes the ability to hear, to create rhythm, to pronounce words, and to separate words according to the sound of each syllable.

### **Early Literacy Activities During Covid**

Early literacy is very useful for children's language development, particularly in reading and writing skills. Preschool literacy has a positive impact on children's academic success. It can help children to achieve their learning success later by stimulating them from a young age. It abruptly doesn't start in kindergarten or first class, unlike popular belief since reading and writing is a continuous process (Niklas, 2015). According to research, children are responsive to language even during pregnancy, but in the first few months after birth, communicative interactions are able to create an improvement than reciting words (Abuhammad & Johnson, 2021; Gunn et al, 2021; Serratrice, 2020). However, because there are no negative consequences to start reading to a child at a young age, it appears that the sooner the better is best (Moon et al., 2013; Partanen et al., 2013).

Early literacy is a prelude to the subsequent development of children's language, becoming a child's basic ability to read and understand writing. Strickland (2004) notes that there are three aspects of early childhood literacy should be known to caregivers and educators. To begin with, oral language and literacy develop concurrently. Listening and talking facilitate children to read and write. Second, children who lag behind in their verbal language and literacy development are less likely to succeed as beginning readers. Third, simply teaching early literacy skills in isolation is insufficient; by applying specific skills to children, they may have a considerably higher impact on their ability. As a result, using skills in everyday life will have a considerably stronger impact, especially when combined with frequent family guidance. Young children learn as they see their parents in everyday lives surrounded by environmental print such as sign and product labels (Neumann, 2018).

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced a global pandemic of the novel coronavirus Covid-19 since March 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). It is recommended to work from home, attend school from home, and maintain physical distance to slow the spread of coronavirus (Lau & Lee, 2020). The school closure has had an impact on the school-age population, including those in early childhood (Garbe et al., 2020). The transition to remote teaching and learning proved difficult for teachers, families, and children because to the complex and multifaceted character of early primary education (Yamamura & Tsustsui, 2021).

Parents and teachers at school are part of successful programs to connect home to school. Teachers and parents therefore need to work together well in order to encourage literacy at home. Parents and caregivers (later called parents) have a great deal of influence in the early learning of a child as the interactions between parent and child are regular and continuous. As a result, home teaching and learning necessitates that families aid their children not only in accessing learning resources shared remotely with

youngsters, but also in delivering instruction (Pramling et al., 2020). This necessitates that parent comprehend the learning objectives for all activities. Despite significant participation of families in their children's learning prior to the COVID-19 epidemic, the extra obligation for families to take on the role of the teacher in giving education proved difficult for parents (Timmons et al., 2020). Thus, home literacy is the setting in which kids first develop the language and knowledge needed to comprehend, explain, and take part in the world (Niklas & Schneider, 2013; Raikes et al., 2006; Guo, 2020).

In studies to support the development of child language skills, literacy parents/children's interactions in general with children, and reading in particular, have been shown (Lieberkind et al., 2014; Sénéchal, Pagan, Lever, & Ouellette, 2008). Reading to children, on the other hand, is an essential component of the home literacy environment (Bus, et. al, 1995; Niklas, et. al, 2016). Many studies focused on the effect of reading on children's language skill, but the age when parents should start reading to their children is little known (Edwards, 2014; Gjelaj, 2020; Raikes et al., 2006). In addition, Fawcet (2003) and Lyon (2002) state that early support of childhood linguistic skills is important, literacy is an important factor in everyday life and is important for education and life in general.

Considering that early childhood education programs generally play- and inquiry-based, with an emphasis on the social, psychological, and cognitive elements of learning, parents were particularly worried about the short- and long-term implications of distant teaching on early childhood learning (Timmons et al., 2021). The implications of this change on teachers, parents and students had to be investigated as such. The purpose of this study is to look into the implementation of early literacy activities with parental involvement during Covid-19. The study described in this article immediately responds to the educational issues faced in early childhood education during the school closure.

## **METHOD**

### **Participant**

This research is quantitative descriptive research aimed at finding out the conditions and practices of education based on fact. The research was conducted at three state kindergartens in Pekanbaru, named *Pembina State Kindergarten*, *Pembina II State Kindergarten*, and *Pembina III State Kindergarten*, with the parents as the population.

### **Procedure**

Due to the Covid pandemic situation the study was adjusted. Messaging applications are also used and research technology adjusted accordingly when face-to-face meetings are discontinued. As the study participant, the questionnaire was distributed to children's parents. The participants received and filled out it directly in the form of a link in an instant message request.

### **Data Collection & Data Analysis**

The sample was collected using a saturated sampling technique, which entails taking a sample from the entire population. This study used 400 parents as samples (i.e., 145, 125

& 130), who were then given a Parental Involvement in Early Literacy Activities During Covid-19 Questionnaire based on the six early literacy skills developed by the Multnomah Public Library and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), which included vocabulary skills, print motivation skills, print awareness, narrative skills, letter knowledge skills, and phonological awareness skills. Likert Scale Model was used to measure the data focusing on the interval and the scale of measurement of the instrument. Before the questionnaire was distributed, it went through the preliminary analysis stage, which included validity and reliability tests. The Cronbach's Alpha method was used to assess the questionnaire's reliability, and it yielded a value of 0.954, which is greater than the  $r$  table (0.632) with a level of 5% significance. This means that the questionnaire has been proven to be trustworthy. Meanwhile, the SPSS program is being used to test the validity of each item of the questionnaire by using the product moment correlation technique between the scores of each item of the questionnaire. The instrument is valid since the correlation value (pearson correlation) is positive and the correlation probability [sig. (2-tailed)] is lower than the level significant ( $\alpha$ )0.05. After the questionnaire was determined to be valid and reliable, it was distributed to 400 parents via Whatsapp in the form of a Google Form link.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Description of Research Results

The findings of this study begin by presenting the general results of the analysis of the implementation of early literacy activities in Pekanbaru. We present them on the table 1 below.

Table 1

Data distribution of literacy activities implementation in each skill

Skills	Number of Questions	M	SD	Categories
Vocabulary skill	4	67.23	21.06	High
Print motivation skill	4	64.16	23.84	High
Print awareness skill	3	66.14	24.69	High
Narrative skill	3	66.60	24.76	High
Letter knowledge skill	3	60.78	24.40	Moderate
Phonological awareness skill	2	60.03	24.62	Moderate

Overall, the engagement of parents on literacy activities was on high categories ( $M = 64.54\%$ ,  $SD = 23.04\%$ ). This value is derived from the total score of the first indicators, namely vocabulary skills, which consists of four questions. Among those skills, parents' engagement on vocabulary skills achieves the highest average score ( $M = 67.23\%$ ,  $SD = 21.06$ ), but it is not significantly different comparing to the other skills. On the other hand, parents' engagement on phonological awareness skill has the lowest average score ( $M = 60.03$ ,  $SD = 24.62$ ) with the criteria of moderate category.

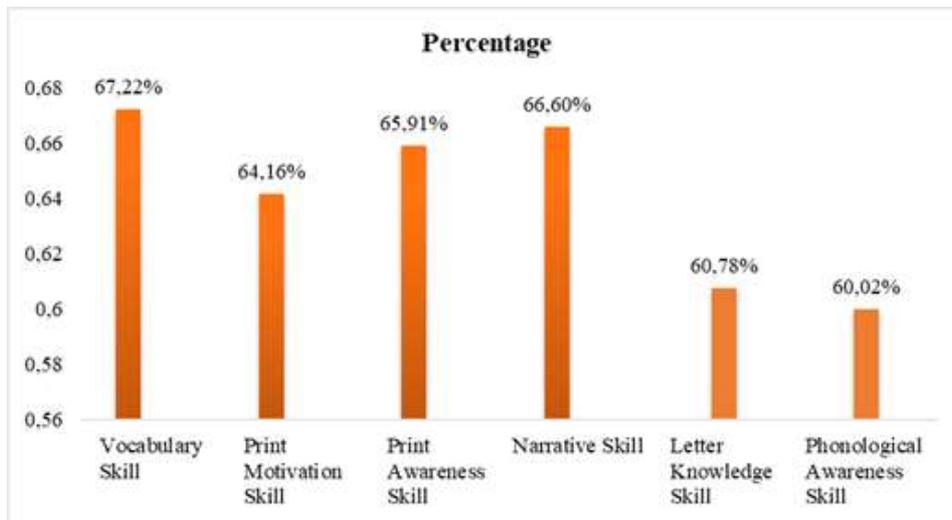


Figure 1

Analysis of the implementation of literacy activities at state kindergartens in Pekanbaru, Indonesia

The data distribution of literacy activities is shown below, along with the interval of the score. It is used to collect data on the frequency of a specific range of scores, from which meaningful summary information can be derived at a glance.

Table 2

Data distribution of literacy activities at state kindergartens in Pekanbaru, Indonesia

No	Interval	F	Percentage (%)
1	36-41	21	5.25
2	42-47	40	10
3	48-53	43	10.75
4	54-59	74	18.5
5	60-65	75	18.75
6	66-71	65	16.25
7	72-77	49	12.25
8	78-83	26	6.5
9	84-89	6	1.5
10	90-95	1	0.25
Total		400	100

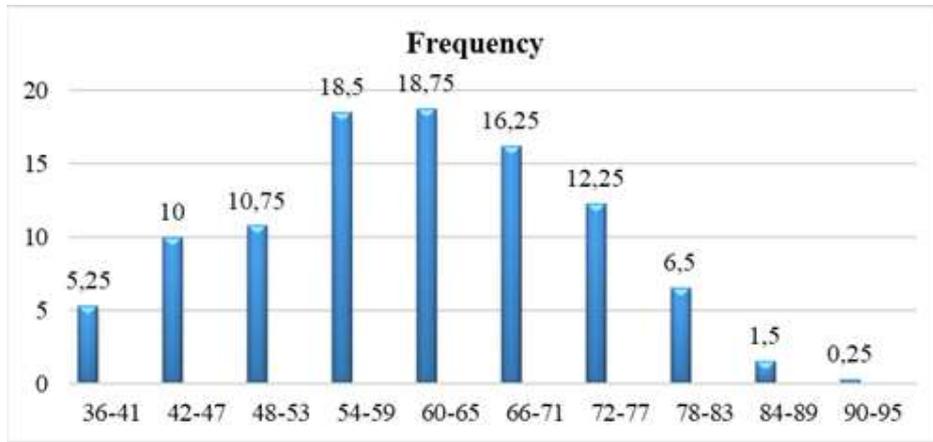


Figure 2  
Data distribution of literacy activities at state kindergartens in Pekanbaru, Indonesia

To have more understanding on parents’ involvement in the implementation of literacy activity, we present the results of each skill in details. This aims to give broader pictures to understand to what extent parents’ involvement in supporting children’s literacy during this pandemic.

The questionnaire used in this study is based on the six skills that children should have in order to effectively develop early literacy, which are Vocabulary, Print Motivation, Print Awareness, Narrative, Letter Knowledge, and Phonological. These abilities are translated into 19 questionnaire items, which are distributed as follows.

**Vocabulary Skill**

Table 3  
Parents’ engagement on supporting children’s vocabulary skills

No	Questionnaire	M	SD	Categories
1	I read books to my child without interpreting words that he/she does not know	65.25	22.86	High
2	I mention the names of objects to my child without showing the pictures	69.00	18.92	High
3	I ask my child to imitate some of the words I say	70.50	19.15	High
4	I am reluctant to ask my child to imitate some of the words I say	64.15	22.43	High

There are four questionnaire items in vocabulary skill to assess parents' involvement in supporting their children's literacy in terms of vocabulary skill. Each of the four items listed below is in the high category, with an average score of more than 65%. As shown in the table, point number four received the highest score of 70.50 percent, focusing on the children's behavior in imitating words. Imitation is important in language learning, especially in early literacy (Klinger et al., 2015).

## Print Motivation Skill

Table 4  
Parents' engagement on supporting children's print motivation skills

No	Questionnaire	M	SD	Categories
1	I tell my child about the benefits of reading (if you want to know something you should be able to read, if you want to know the story of a book, you have to read it)	55.9 0	23.68	Moderate
2	I use difficult language when explaining the benefits of reading	71.9 0	24.90	High
3	I invite my child to read texts on the cover of books, magazines, food wrappers and symbols (such as traffic signs and so on)	65.2 0	22.90	High
4	I let child learn to read on his/her own	63.6 5	21.04	High

The second indicator is print motivation skill, which is comprised of four questionnaire items. Three items are classified as high, while one item is classified as moderate, with a score of less than 60%. This item is related to teaching children the value of reading.

## Print Awareness Skills

Table 5  
Parents' engagement on supporting children's print awareness skills

No	Questionnaire	M	SD	Categories
1	I have difficulty when explaining the symbols that can represent something to my child	74.65 6	21.0	High
2	I am not very responsive in showing letters when teaching my child to read sentences	67.68 5	25.3	High
3	I get bored easily when teaching my child to recognize letters and early reading	56.10 2	23.9	Moderate

A child gains print awareness by learning what print looks, how it works, and what it means (Strickland & Schickedanz, 2009). Print concepts refer to a child's ability to comprehend and acknowledge the ways in which print functions for the reasons of reading, particularly with regard to books.

## Narrative Skills

Table 6  
Parents' engagement on supporting children's narrative skills

No	Questionnaire	M	SD	Categories
1	I find my ability to read story books boring	73.90	22.72	High
2	I listen to everything that my child tells and I tell him/her about anything (such as animal stories, what I am going to do, things)	55.80	23.87	Moderate
3	I am busy so I do not have time to listen to stories and tell stories with my child	70.10	23.95	High

For a variety of applications, children should be encouraged to utilize spoken language, including answers to inquiries and express themselves. This is related to the development of oral language skills in children, which leads to their narrative skills. Children's narrative skills develop the most at home during their preschool years (Brown, 2014). Unfortunately, parental support for their children's narrative skills is inadequate. According to the questionnaire items in the table above, parents are less interested in encouraging their children's narrative skills.

### Letter Knowledge Skills

Table 7  
Parents' engagement on supporting children's letter knowledge skills

No	Questionnaire	M	SD	Categories
1	The letters that I point to the ones I sound are different	64.90	22.9 2	High
2	I have a hard time teaching my child to recognize letters using games	61.35	25.6 7	High
3	I gave a difficult example of the same prefix to my child	56.10	23.8 0	Moderate

The principle of word related to the capacity of a reader, beginning with the recognition of letters, to match spoken words with written words when reading. There are numerous activities that can be used to assist children in letter recognition. According to the above table, parents continue to struggle with engaging their children in letter recognition activities. The problems are seen to be in the high category overall.

### Phonological Awareness Skills

Table 8  
Parents' engagement on supporting children's phonological awareness skills

No	Questionnaire	M	SD	Categories
1	I stimulate my child by singing along with him/her	63.95	24.72	High
2	I introduce the sound of the letter (a-z) in a strong tone	56.10	23.92	Moderate

Phonological awareness means being capable of recognizing that the words consist of a range of sound units. Phonological awareness is a broad term that encompasses a variety of sound-related skills required for reading development (Lane, 2007). Children learn to recognize patterns among words and use this knowledge to read and build words by engaging in language and word play. The table above demonstrates that parents are actively involved and capable of stimulating their children's phonological awareness through singing together. This activity encourages students to become more aware of the rhythms and sounds of language. Thus, entertaining sounds were shown to improve phonological awareness, particularly phonological awareness of large phonological units (Dege & Schwarzer, 2011)

### DISCUSSION

Based on the results of research conducted at schools in Pekanbaru Riau with parental literacy activities in schools, the involvement of parents in school literacy activities went

well or was included in the high category with a percentage of 64.5%. It can be assumed that basic literacy of early childhood from three state kindergartens in Pekanbaru, named *Pembina State Kindergarten*, *Pembina II State Kindergarten*, and *Pembina III State Kindergarten* is considered in good category. Early literacy skills have been linked to more successful reading and writing acquisition processes (Marojano, et al, 2021), and include the ability to discriminate, encode, and manipulate language sound structures (i.e., phonological awareness; Bar-Kochva & Nevo, 2019) in primary school. This is consistent with the indicators in this study, which include vocabulary skill, print motivation skill, print awareness skill, narrative skill, letter knowledge skill, and phonological awareness skill. In order to create children's literacy activities that are fun and do not make children feel burdened, creative efforts by teachers and parents are needed to improve children's literacy skills in particular by creating a pleasant and comfortable atmosphere, for example through games, picture books or intermediary tools that are interesting for children to play (Winarni, et. al., 2020)

Moreover, school literacy activities have become a concern for parents so that parents are willing to work together to develop their children's early reading skills at home. This can be seen from the results of the literacy analysis based on the highest score indicator, a vocabulary skill indicator with a percentage of 67.22% and in high category. This demonstrates that parents are involved in the development of skills for recognizing many children's vocabulary. The most common thing to do is to assist children in identifying and naming objects. In terms of language skills and early learning skills, parents may have a positive attitude toward early childhood education (Gjelaj, et al, 2020). Moreover, research conducted by Huttenloncer (2010) shows that the involvement of parents who prolong their conversation with children will improve children's capacity to vastly learn vocabulary. The development of children's language skills, especially in developing children's early reading skills, includes being able to say more than 2600 words, children's sentences reaching six to eight words, understanding more than 20,000 words, being able to communicate clearly. In terms of explaining simple words, being able to use conjunctions, prepositions, and articles, the scope of spoken vocabulary including color, shape, size, taste, smell, temperature, view and speed, knowing letters, able to participate in a conversation and express himself (Pebriana, 2017).

In 66.6% of cases, narrative skills are the second highest indicator. The ability to understand stories, tell stories, or describe things is referred to as narrative or storytelling skills. The percentage of results shown above indicates that parents are assisting in the development of children's storytelling abilities. Narrative skills can help children understand what they read later in life (Kirby, et al., 2021). According to longitudinal research, children's narrative-based oral language and listening comprehension skills at the age of five directly contribute to reading comprehension skills at the age of ten (Babayigit et al., 2021). Parents must play an important role in assisting children's literacy development (narrative skills).

Print awareness skills (recognition and awareness of writing) show a high level of 65.91%. This demonstrates that parents are involved in assisting children to recognize and be aware of writing, and while they frequently assist children in writing their names

or family names. A child's symbol awareness is a process that starts with an interest in visuals (Decker & Decker, 2016) and progresses to noticing symbols around him or herself, which is considered vital for print awareness (Saracho, 2017). According to Lachlan and Arrow (2014), teaching letter knowledge to children can be accomplished by encouraging the child to know the shape of the letter as well as the shape, pronunciation, and sound of each letter. Given how the stimuli, attitudes, and behaviors provided by parents to their children affect the print awareness skills of children in the family, it is critical to determine how much the family contributes to their children's print awareness skills and to address identified deficiencies as soon as possible (Vedat, 2018). Fortunately, kindergarten parents in Pekanbaru, Riau, are actively involved in the development of children's writing recognition and awareness.

Print motivation skills (interested in symbols/printed writing) show a high-category ratio of 64.16 %, which shows that parents are involved in developing children's print motivation skills. Based on the distribution of questionnaires by researchers, parents' print motivation skills often read writing on objects they find, such as books, food wrappers, advertising writing, or roadside writing. Print motivation skills are a pleasure or an interest in reading books or printed symbols. In research, Afiah Nuraeni (2016) argues that in order to increase children's interest in reading, parents or educators must be able to make reading activities fun by always involving children in reading activities, using intonation when reading stories, playing voice games while reading, and using a comfortable reading room. Parents can also be role models for children who like to read in such a way that children are interested in reading even though they experience difficulties.

In a sufficient category, the Letter Knowledge Skills (Letter Recognition Skills) represents a percentage of 60.7%. National Early Literacy Panel (2018) states that the sound of letters and recognition of letter shapes are important predictors of the development of child literacy skills; however, parents continue to struggle with activities to introduce letters to their children. According to Afiah Nuraeni (2016), recognizing early age letters is very beneficial to children's language development because it helps children prepare to read easily. Letter recognition in early childhood is done very slowly and without torture. It also necessitates a lengthy process and a good strategy so that children can receive letter recognition activities without feeling burdened.

The percentage of phonological awareness is 60.02%, which is sufficient. This demonstrates that parents are sufficiently involved in assisting their child's development to become aware of or sensitive to sound. The introduction of the letter a-z sound is the most common form of parental involvement in sound recognition. Phonological awareness is a general term which includes a range of sound skills required for the development of reading (Lane, 2007). Thus, language and word playing help children to learn how to read and build words in the patterns between words. (Brown, 2014).

The results of early literacy skills influence development considerably and knowledge of children in the next stage of life. Chairilisyah (2019) explains that children's literacy skills affect socio-emotional development, emotion, cognitive development and most importantly, language development. The peak of early childhood literacy skills is when

the child is able to read properly and correctly so that children's literacy skills need to be trained through the introduction of reading.

This study is limited to the extent of early literacy activities carried out by parents during the covid pandemic, and it is based on six early childhood literacy indicators. As a result of the study's findings, there is a need for better collaboration on the types of activities that parents can do at home, as well as more efforts for the home environment to improve literacy activities.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the research, Riau has been found to be highly qualified by implementing parental literacy at state children's garden in Pekanbaru, implies that parents' participation in school literacy work is well carried out. Moreover, parents are willing to participate more in helping to develop children's skills in a variety of aspects and in particular in terms of introductory skills. Parent literacy activities can make children interested and help children read, write, tell stories, and listen to children's sensitivities.

Children can begin learning languages at a young age. Children's language includes not only spoken language, but also sign language and written language (Neumann, 2018). Early language literacy skills are acquired by children in amazing ways. There are ways to help children develop literacy skills more easily, such as using oral language, providing books, reading approaches, writing outcomes for children, an integrated curriculum, understanding diversity, and facilitating family support for the introduction of letters to children.

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