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Background

Children in refugee and immigrant families are less likely to utilize publicly funded early childhood services than nonimmigrant children, such as child care,¹ Head Start,² early intervention,³ and home visiting.⁴

Underutilization of these programs among children in refugee and immigrant families is concerning, as they face a range of inequities that high-quality programming can ameliorate^{5,6}. Yet there is limited understanding of the factors associated with improved enrollment or of the strategies to improve access to early childhood services.

This study addresses this gap by conducting a systematic review of the factors and strategies associated with increased access and utilization of early childhood services among newcomer families.

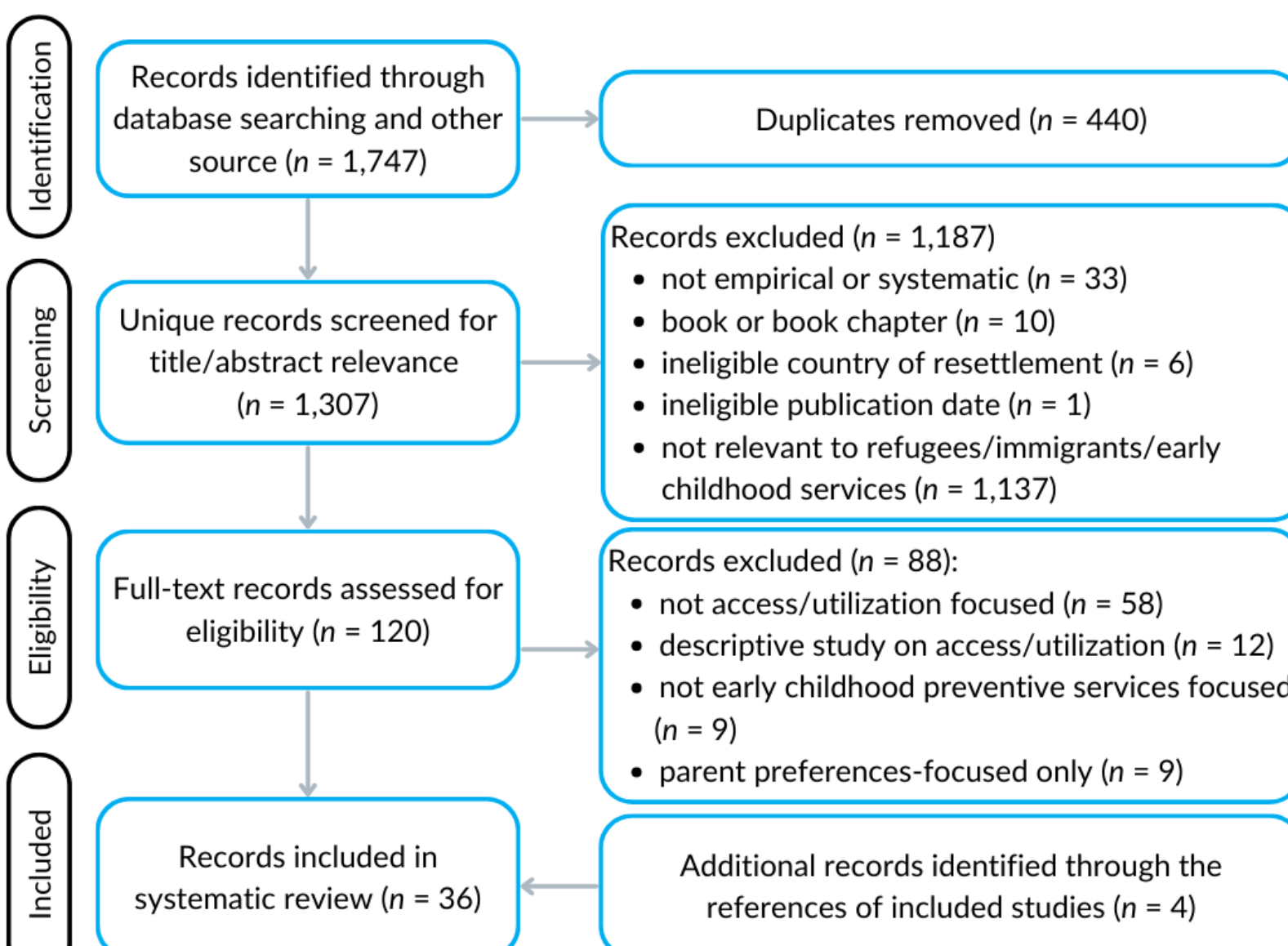
Research Questions

1. What **factors** are associated with greater rates of enrollment and utilization of early childhood services among refugee and immigrant families with young children?
2. What **strategies** are associated with improved enrollment and utilization of early childhood services among refugee and immigrant families with young children?

Methods

Five databases and five website repositories were searched for articles from the past 10 years using key terms, such as refugee, immigrant, early childhood services, early education, child care, preschool, Head Start, home visiting, and early intervention. Included studies were based primarily in the US, European countries, Canada, and Australia.

PRISMA Table



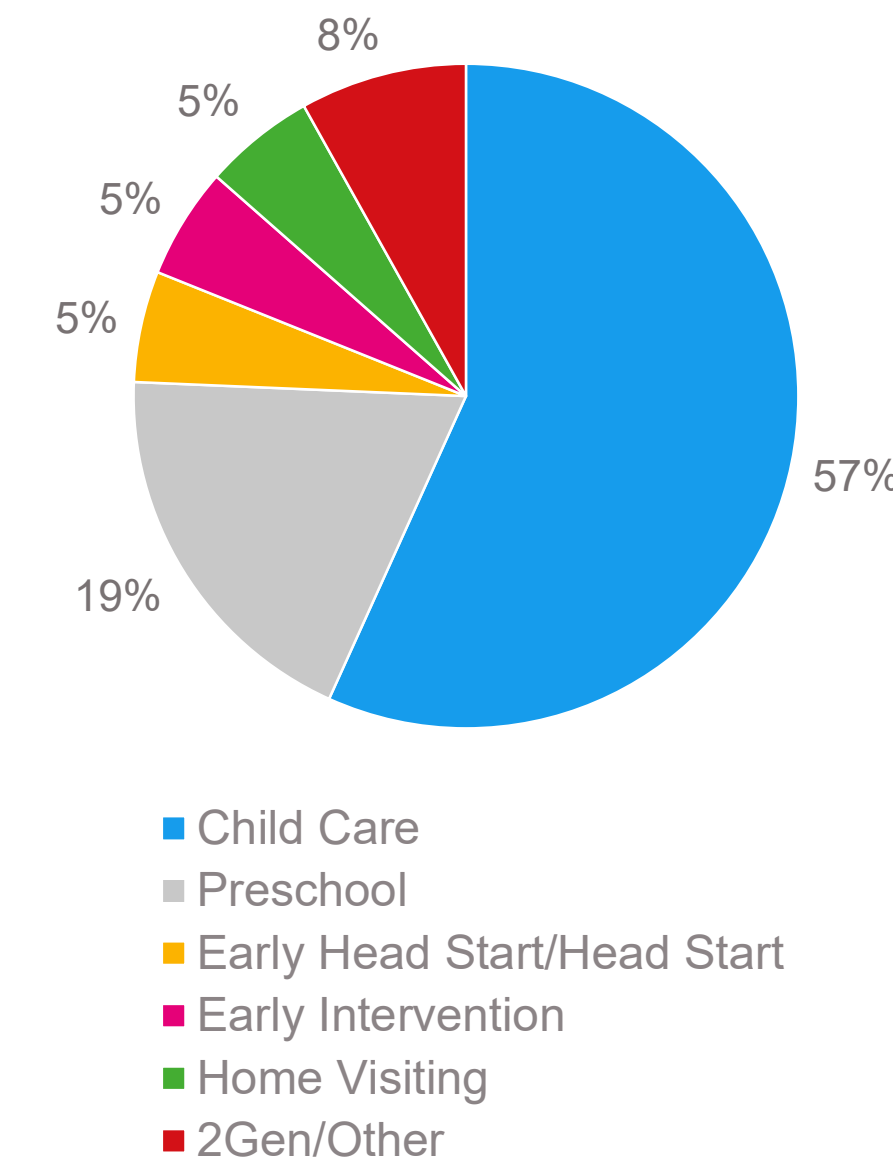
From: Moher D, Liberati A, Tetzlaff J, Altman DG, The PRISMA Group (2009). Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses: The PRISMA Statement. PLoS Med 6(6): e1000097. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed1000097

For more information, visit www.prisma-statement.org.

Results

Strategies to Promote Access to Early Childhood Services	21 studies*
Program responsiveness (e.g., interpretation services, on-site resources for parents)	67%
Outreach (e.g., community/provider liaisons, translated materials)	57%
Workforce responsiveness (e.g., linguistically matched staff, preparation)	57%
Added supports (e.g., transportation, food, referrals)	52%
Location (e.g., colocating services, home visits)	52%
Funding support (e.g., subsidized and free programs)	48%
Social networks (e.g., enhanced social supports and connections)	43%
Program policies (e.g., modified enrollment criteria, tracking needs)	43%
Partnerships (intersectoral collaborations, e.g., with resettlement agencies)	43%
Federal, state, and local policies (e.g., driver's license eligibility)	29%
Flexibility (e.g., modified program hours)	10%

* 21/36 studies raised strategies related to increasing access or addressing barriers to early childhood programs.



Factors Associated with Increased Enrollment in Child Care

Construct	Ansari, 2017	Ansari & Crosnoe, 2015	Ferreira van Leer & Coley, 2023	Galarza-Heras, 2014	Greenberg, Rosenblom, & Adams, 2019	Ha & Ybarra, 2014	Homouth et al., 2021	Johnson et al., 2017	Lin, 2020 (Study 1)	Lin, 2020 (Study 2)	Miller et al., 2013	Miller et al., 2014	Ressler et al., 2020	Shuey & Leventhal, 2018	Van Lancker & Pavolini, 2023	Xing, 2020
Sample size	5850	6250	744	100	19820	862	4223, 2183	1050	269511	8640	2500	10700	6400	999	47366	14212
Immigrant subsample	750	1650	-	-	6330	-	3008	-	75463	2219	-	2950	-	420	9288	2814
Immigration characteristics																
Years since immigration					+		+		+							+
Immigration status/citizenship						m		+	+							+
Parent/family characteristics																
Parent education					+		+	+			+	+	+	+	+	+
Parent employment			+		+	+	+	+			+	+	+	+	+	-
Family socioeconomic status					+		+				m	+			+	
Public benefit receipt								+								
Language proficiency	+						+	+			+	+				
Single-parent household					+	+	+	+				+				
Child characteristics																
Age (older)	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	-		+				+	
Gender (male)																
Race/ethnicity						m						m				
Developmental delay/special needs	+												+	+		
Number of children in the home																
Community characteristics																
Supply of care							+	m		+		+				+
Non-English care								+		+	+	+				
Concentration of immigrants/immigrant-serving resources	+		m													-

+ Factor is positively associated with enrollment
 - Factor is negatively associated with enrollment

Factor was examined but was not associated with enrollment
 m Factor has mixed findings associated with enrollment

Results Continued

Most studies (30, 84%) examined enrollment in child care and early education (CCEE); fewer examined home visiting and early intervention.

Strategies to Promote Access to Early Childhood Services

21 studies examined strategies to improve access to a range of early childhood services; 76% of these studies used qualitative research methods.

- Most studies described **program responsiveness** as a strategy, including cultural responsiveness and language supports.
- Studies also commonly described **outreach**, such as community liaisons, and **workforce responsiveness**, such as culturally and linguistically diverse staff.

Factors Associated with Increased Enrollment in CCEE

15 studies examined factors associated with greater enrollment in CCEE among immigrant and refugee households.

- **75% of studies examined parent socioeconomic status (SES)**. Of these, 58% found no effect on enrollment.
- **69% of studies examined child age**. Of these, 73% of studies found a positive effect of older child age on enrollment.
- **69% of studies examined parent employment and 69% examined parent education**. Of those examining employment, 82% found a positive effect on enrollment. Of those examining education, 73% found a positive effect
- **56% of studies examined the supply of child care**. Of these, 44% found a positive effect on enrollment and 44% found no effect on enrollment. The supply of non-English speaking care providers was positively associated with enrollment in four cases.

Conclusion and Implications

Across **strategies**, program and workforce responsiveness are commonly noted via culturally and linguistically responsive information, outreach, and experiences.

Across **factors**, parent employment, higher education, and older child age are associated with greater enrollment in CCEE. Parent socioeconomic status and the supply of child care have mixed findings and appear inconclusively related to enrollment.

Families with infants and toddlers, parents with less education, and parents without employment may have less access to early childhood services. These families may especially benefit from culturally and linguistically tailored outreach efforts and programming that features culturally responsive staffing and language supports.

¹ Matthews, H., & Ewen, D. (2006). *Reaching all children? Understanding early care and education participation among immigrant families*. Center for Law and Social Policy, Inc.(CLASP).
² Hardy, E., & Huber, R. (2020). *Unequal neighborhood availability of head start: Exploring patterns in the Data*. diversitydatakids.org.
³ Gallegos, A., Dudovitz, R., Biely, C., Chung, P. J., Coker, T. R., Barnert, E., ... & Nelson, B. B. (2021). *Racial disparities in developmental delay diagnosis and services received in early childhood*. *Academic pediatrics*, 21(7), 1230-1238
⁴ Park, M., & Katsiaficas, C. (2019). *Leveraging the potential of home visiting programs to serve immigrant and dual language learner families*. Migration Policy Institute, August.
⁵ Suárez-Orozco, C., Yoshikawa, H., & Tseng, V. (2015). *Intersecting Inequalities: Research to Reduce Inequality for Immigrant-Origin Children and Youth*. William T. Grant Foundation.
⁶ Davis Schoch, A., Simons Gerson, C., Halle, T., & Bredeson, M. (2023). *Children's learning and development benefits from high-quality early care and education: A summary of the evidence*. OPRE Report #2023-226. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services.

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