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**Investigating the home literacy environment and emergent
literacy skills of children as they start school in New Zealand**

A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

Home literacy environment (HLE) has been consistently linked with children's early literacy skills in international research, and is argued to be an important variable influencing the development of children's emergent literacy. However, there is very limited New Zealand research investigating this relationship. Therefore, to address this gap in the literature, the present study sought to explore whether there is a relationship between HLE and children's emergent literacy at school entry within the New Zealand context.

Additional research aims involved exploring the impact of years spent in early childhood education (ECE) on emergent literacy, and exploring the role of parent education level on both HLE and children's emergent literacy within the New Zealand context. The study used a correlational research design to explore these research aims. A total of 35 five-year old children and their parents participated in this study. Children were assessed using a range of emergent literacy assessments and HLE was measured through parental questionnaire.

Results showed that there was some correlation between HLE and children's emergent literacy. However the nature of these correlations differed depending on the component of HLE used in the analysis. Additionally, ECE attendance was not positively associated with any measure of children's emergent literacy. Further, parent educational level showed little or no correlation with children's emergent skills and HLE. Two particular implications associated with the present study include the importance of using a wide conceptualisation of HLE in research and the importance of considering proximal variables of influence, such as HLE, over distal variables of influence, such as socioeconomic status.

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