



From Drafting to Publication: A Systematic Review on Genre-Based Pedagogy in EFL Academic Writing Instruction

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Abstract

This systematic review examines the application of genre-based pedagogy in English as a foreign language (EFL) academic writing instruction between 2015 and 2025. It addresses persistent challenges faced by learners, particularly their limited familiarity with academic genres and difficulties in managing disciplinary writing conventions. Genre-based pedagogy, which foregrounds explicit instruction in genre structures and communicative purposes, has gained recognition as an effective framework for enhancing learners' academic writing competence. Through a systematic search of peer-reviewed studies indexed in Scopus, this review synthesizes evidence on instructional approaches, learning outcomes, and teaching contexts. Findings reveal that genre-based instruction has been widely implemented in secondary and tertiary education, consistently leading to improved writing performance. Gains are especially evident in organization, cohesion, and genre awareness, alongside increased learner motivation, engagement, and confidence. The reviewed studies employed diverse models, ranging from traditional genre cycles and process-oriented strategies to technology-supported approaches using digital platforms. This diversity highlights the adaptability of genre-based pedagogy and its compatibility with learner-centered instruction. Nonetheless, significant gaps remain: most studies are short-term, emphasize conventional essay genres, and give limited attention to multimodal or interdisciplinary writing. Moreover, inadequate teacher preparation, particularly among preservice educators, continues to hinder effective implementation. To strengthen future research and practice, the review recommends longitudinal studies, broader genre coverage, and systematic teacher training. Overall, the synthesis affirms genre-based pedagogy as a flexible and dynamic approach that fosters both cognitive development and affective engagement in EFL academic writing.

Keywords: Genre-Based Pedagogy, Academic Writing, Genre Awareness, Writing Instruction

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INTRODUCTION

Proficiency in academic writing is essential for EFL learners, serving not only as a key determinant of academic achievement but also as a means of accessing and participating in scholarly communities. However, mastering academic writing in EFL contexts presents persistent challenges, including unfamiliarity with disciplinary discourse, limited exposure to academic genres, and insufficient instruction on textual organization and language use (Al-Hammadi & Sidek, 2015; Alsariera & Alsarairah, 2024;

Alzahrani, 2025; Bian & Wang, 2016; Cangır, 2022; Lama & Suhodolli, 2024; Prapobratanakul, 2024). In response to these challenges, researchers and educators have increasingly turned to more effective instructional frameworks – chief among them, genre-based pedagogy (GBP), which has gained recognition for its potential to enhance EFL students' academic writing competence (Damayanti et al., 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024; Robillos, 2023; Rusinovci, 2024).

Grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), GBP views writing as a social practice shaped by communicative purposes, audience expectations, and institutional norms (Gort & Hamm-Rodríguez, 2022; Y. Y. Lo & Jeong, 2018; Shum & Leung, 2025). Central to this approach is the Teaching-Learning Cycle (TLC), which guides students through stages of deconstructing model texts, jointly constructing new ones, and eventually producing independent compositions (Brisk et al., 2021; Ehiyazaryan-White, 2025; Varga et al., 2023). By explicitly modeling the structural and linguistic features of target genres, GBP enables learners to make informed rhetorical and grammatical choices aligned with academic conventions (Lim, 2017; J. Y. Liu, 2018; Walldén, 2019; Wijayanti et al., 2017). This explicit scaffolding has proven especially valuable in EFL contexts, where students often lack intuitive familiarity with the organizational norms and expectations of academic writing genres.

In practice, GBP has been implemented across a range of EFL educational contexts – from secondary schools to university-level writing programs – demonstrating considerable pedagogical flexibility and effectiveness. Numerous empirical studies have reported that GBP enhances learners' academic writing performance, particularly in areas such as text organization, coherence, and genre awareness (Alhammad, 2025; J. Y. Liu, 2018; Y.-H. G. Lo & Cheng, 2018; Negretti & McGrath, 2020). For example, research in Indonesian tertiary institutions has shown that students who received genre-based instruction exhibited stronger control over rhetorical structures and argument development (Arono & Arsyad, 2019; Kartika-Ningsih & Rose, 2021). Similarly, studies in Chinese EFL classrooms that implemented genre-based pedagogy through the Teaching-Learning Cycle (TLC) have found improvements in students' use of cohesive devices, clause complexity, and genre-specific language features (Cai, 2020; Fu & Ibrahim, 2022; C. Liu & Chen, 2022; Xiaoxiao & Ibrahim, 2023; Zhang & Zhang, 2021). However, while positive effects are frequently documented, the outcomes vary depending on factors such as learners' proficiency levels, instructional duration, teacher expertise, and the extent to which the full TLC is implemented (Choi & Kang, 2024; Kartika-Ningsih & Rose, 2021; C. Liu & Chen, 2022; Nurlaelawati & Novianti, 2017; Zarei & Khalili, 2017). These findings highlight not only the potential of GBP to support EFL academic writing but also the importance of contextual and pedagogical alignment.

Despite the growing body of research supporting the effectiveness of genre-based pedagogy in EFL academic writing instruction, existing studies are often fragmented across contexts, genres, and instructional models. Many focus narrowly on specific educational levels or regions, and relatively few synthesize how GBP has evolved over time or across modalities (e.g., face-to-face vs. digital instruction). Moreover, gaps remain in understanding how GBP is adapted to diverse classroom realities, how consistently it impacts different dimensions of writing performance, and what methodological patterns shape current research. To address these limitations, this systematic review seeks to consolidate empirical findings from the past decade and provide a comprehensive overview of GBP's instructional approaches, its reported effects on student writing, and the broader trends, contexts, and gaps characterizing this line of inquiry. Specifically, the review is guided by the following research questions:

1. What instructional approaches of genre-based pedagogy have been implemented in EFL academic writing instruction?

2. What are the reported effects of genre-based pedagogy on EFL learners' academic writing development and performance?
3. What trends, contexts, and gaps characterize current research on genre-based pedagogy in EFL writing over the last decade?

METHOD

This study adopted a systematic review methodology to investigate the implementation and outcomes of genre-based pedagogy (GBP) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) academic writing instruction. The review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to ensure transparency, reproducibility, and methodological rigor.

To identify relevant empirical studies, a comprehensive search was conducted using the Scopus database, chosen for its breadth and credibility in indexing peer-reviewed academic literature. The search focused on publications from January 2015 to May 2025 and utilized the following Boolean string: (“genre-based” OR “genre” OR “text type” OR “discourse type”) AND (“pedagogy” OR “teaching” OR “instruction” OR “education”) AND (“EFL” OR “ESL” OR “English as a foreign language” OR “English as a second language”) AND (“academic writing” OR “scholarly writing” OR “research writing” OR “writing skills”). The search terms were applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords. In addition to database searching, backward citation tracking was performed to locate additional studies.

The review focused exclusively on empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals and written in English. Studies were included if they examined genre-based pedagogy within EFL academic writing contexts at secondary or tertiary education levels. The inclusion criteria required that studies report on instructional design, learner outcomes, or both. Excluded were non-peer-reviewed materials, theoretical papers, studies in L1 or ESL contexts, or those focused on non-academic genres. This selection process yielded 18 eligible studies from an initial pool of 1,276 records, as illustrated in Figure 1.

For each included study, detailed data extraction was performed using a structured coding template. Extracted variables included bibliographic data, country of origin, participant characteristics, educational level, instructional modality, genre types, and pedagogical models (e.g., Teaching–Learning Cycle, corpus-informed tasks, blended learning). Further, outcome measures such as genre awareness, organization, fluency, cohesion, and motivation were systematically documented. The analysis plan combined qualitative content analysis with descriptive synthesis to identify instructional trends, learner outcomes, and research gaps. Descriptive statistics were used to capture distributional patterns by geography, genre, and educational level. Efforts were made to ensure validity and reliability at each review stage. The screening and selection process adhered strictly to predefined inclusion/exclusion criteria. Discrepancies during full-text assessment were resolved through consensus. To enhance replicability, the search strategy, coding scheme, and analytical procedures were transparently documented.

While the methodology enabled a comprehensive synthesis of current empirical work, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The reliance on Scopus as the sole database may have excluded relevant studies indexed elsewhere. Additionally, the exclusion of non-English publications may have limited the geographic and linguistic diversity of the review. Despite these constraints, the systematic procedures adopted ensured a high degree of rigor and relevance in addressing the research questions.

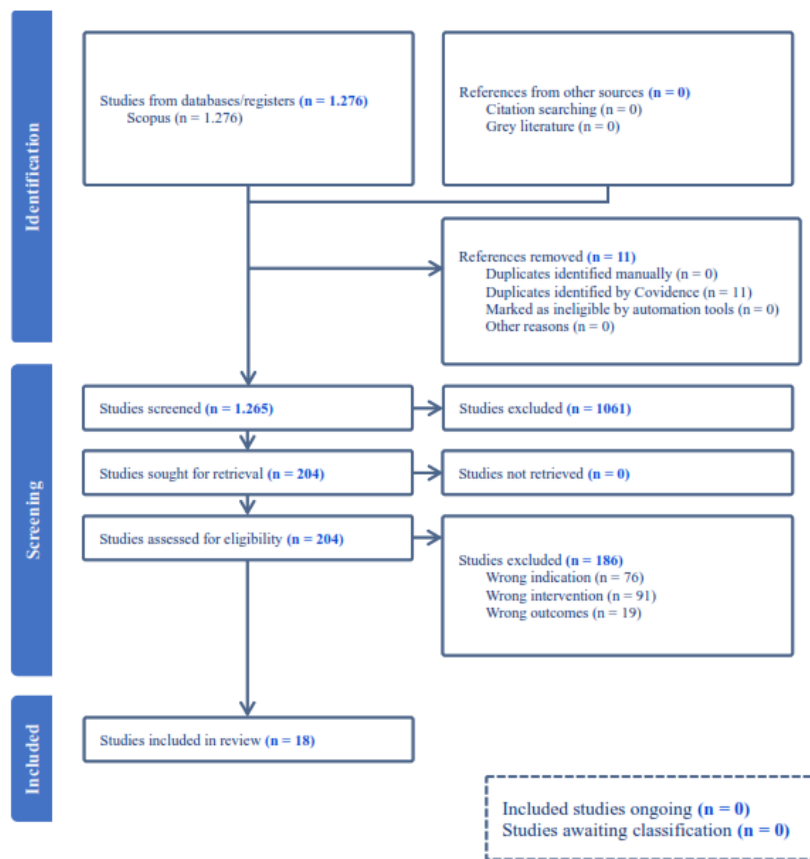


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Study Selection

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of selected studies reveals a wide range of instructional approaches used to implement GBP in EFL academic writing instruction. While all approaches share the foundational aim of making genre structures and communicative purposes explicit, they vary in how they are designed and delivered. Instructional models include traditional text-based lessons, corpus-informed activities, process-genre combinations, and blended formats that incorporate digital tools. These variations reflect GBP’s adaptability to different learner needs, institutional settings, and teaching goals. A summary of the instructional approaches and their reported outcomes is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Instructional Approaches of Genre-Based Pedagogy in EFL Academic Writing Instruction

References	Approach	Implementation	Reported Outcomes
Nagao (2023)	SFL Framework	Genre-based lessons grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics, including peer reviews and reflection activities	Enhanced top-down and bottom-up writing strategies; particularly beneficial for high-proficiency learners
Dong & Lu (2020)	Corpus-Based Genre Analysis	Students compiled discipline-specific corpora and engaged in guided genre analysis tasks	Improved understanding of rhetorical structures; increased genre-based writing competence

Jiang & Kalyuga (2022); Xu & Li (2018)	Process-Genre Approach	Collaborative tasks integrating process writing and genre analysis	Better writing performance; reduced cognitive load; greater engagement in writing
Pineh et al. (2017)	Text-Based Cyclical Teaching	Instructional cycle involving modeling, deconstruction, writing, peer analysis, and reflection	Rapid improvement in writing quality; stronger deployment of rhetorical strategies
Bostanci & Çavuşoğlu (2018)	Blended Learning Approach (BLA)	Combined process-genre pedagogy with online and offline (blended) instruction	Significant gains in essay writing performance; better outcomes in blended learning contexts
Robillos (2023)	FlipGrid Application Integration	Integration of FlipGrid with genre-based instruction, focusing on self-regulated learning	Enhanced writing skills; improved self-regulation; effective in narrative and process genres

Moving from instructional design to outcomes, the review also highlights the positive effects of GBP on EFL learners' academic writing development. Across the studies, learners consistently demonstrated improvements in both the structural aspects of writing – such as organization, coherence, and grammatical complexity – and in genre awareness. These gains indicate that GBP effectively supports students in mastering not only the form but also the rhetorical expectations of academic writing. Furthermore, although less frequently emphasized, some evidence suggests that GBP can also foster rhetorical flexibility, particularly when combined with process-oriented techniques. A comparative summary of these effects is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Reported Effects of Genre-Based Pedagogy Across EFL Learner Contexts

Study Context	Improved Writing Performance	Genre Awareness	Rhetorical Flexibility	Writing Motivation	Positive Perceptions	Reference
Saudi EFL Students	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	-	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	Abdel Latif et al. (2024); Alhammad (2025)
Thai EFL Students	✓ Yes	-	-	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	Robillos (2023)
Chinese EFL Learners	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	-	-	-	Dong & Lu (2020)
Malaysian Orang Asli Students	✓ Yes	-	-	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	Ganapathy et al. (2022)
Iranian Undergraduate Students	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	-	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	Pineh et al. (2017)

Taiwanese Undergraduate Students	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	✓ Yes	-	✓ Yes	Lo & Cheng (2018)
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Beyond academic performance, affective outcomes also emerged as a notable theme. Several studies reported increased writing motivation, higher self-efficacy, and more positive learner attitudes toward writing tasks. Students often expressed a preference for GBP over traditional methods, citing its structured and supportive nature as helpful for building confidence. These affective responses contribute to a more holistic understanding of GBP's impact on EFL writers.

In addition to instructional and learner-related findings, the review identifies patterns in research trends over time. Early studies primarily focused on developing genre awareness and improving structural writing skills. Over time, the research expanded to explore integrations with other pedagogical methods and to assess learner engagement more broadly. More recent studies place greater emphasis on digital tools, motivational factors, and reflective learning strategies. These evolving themes are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. Trends in Genre-Based Pedagogy Research in EFL Academic Writing (2015–2025)

Trend	Details	Supporting Studies
Increased Adoption and Effectiveness	Widespread implementation of GBP in secondary and tertiary EFL settings, leading to measurable improvements in students' writing performance (e.g., coherence, structure, accuracy).	Alhammad (2025); Ganapathy et al. (2022)
Diverse Genre Applications	GBP applied to a range of academic and functional genres, including descriptive writing, journalism, and research essays. This supports learners' genre awareness and structural control.	Alhammad (2025); Suksawas (2018))
Integration with Other Pedagogies	Recent efforts combine GBP with self-regulated learning, activity-based instruction, and reflective strategies to enhance student autonomy, engagement, and metacognitive awareness.	Lo & Cheng (2018); Wiboonwachara & Charubusp (2022)

As research has expanded, so too has the diversity of contexts in which GBP has been applied. The reviewed studies span a wide range of geographic regions, educational levels, and institutional environments. While university settings are most commonly represented, implementations in secondary schools and specialized programs are also increasing. These studies show that GBP is effective for both mainstream and marginalized learners, including those with lower proficiency levels. Table 5 provides a summary of the contexts represented in the selected literature.

Table 5. Contexts of Genre-Based Pedagogy Implementation in EFL Academic Writing Research

Context Category	Details	Key References
Educational Settings	Implemented in secondary schools, universities, and journalism-focused courses; effective for low-proficiency and marginalized learners	Ganapathy et al. (2022); Suksawas (2018)
Geographical Spread	Research conducted in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, China, Indonesia, and	Alhammad (2025); Liu & Chen (2022);

	Taiwan, reflecting global engagement	Nurlaelawati & Novianti (2017); Zhai & Razali (2023)
Teacher and Student Perspectives	Teachers appreciate GBP's structured approach; students report improved writing confidence and engagement	Alhammad (2025); Liu & Chen (2022); Nurlaelawati & Novianti (2017)

Despite these positive developments, several research gaps remain. Among the most pressing is the need for more robust teacher training, particularly to support pre-service educators in applying genre theory effectively in classroom practice. Another recurring gap is the limited range of genres explored; most studies focus on traditional academic essays, leaving multimodal and interdisciplinary genres underexplored. Additionally, the predominance of short-term studies limits understanding of GBP's long-term effects on writing development and genre transfer. These gaps are detailed in Table 6 and point to important areas for future research and instructional refinement.

Table 6. Research Gaps in Genre-Based Pedagogy in EFL Academic Writing

Research Gap	Details	Key References
Teacher Training and Implementation	Teachers, especially pre-service ones, struggle to apply GBP practically in areas like field knowledge and feedback	Liu & Chen (2022); Nurlaelawati & Novianti (2017)
Focus on Specific Genres	Limited genre range in current studies; little exploration of multimodal or cross-genre writing	Lo & Cheng (2018)
Need for Longitudinal Studies	Most research is short-term; long-term effects on writing development and genre transfer remain underexplored	Liu et al. (2024); Liu (2018)

Taken together, the findings of this review confirm GBP's versatility and pedagogical value in EFL academic writing instruction. At the same time, they emphasize the need for more comprehensive teacher preparation, expanded genre coverage, and longitudinal research to support sustained and transferable learning outcomes.

DISCUSSION

This systematic review aimed to synthesize how genre-based pedagogy (GBP) has been implemented in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) academic writing instruction over the past decade, focusing on instructional approaches, learning outcomes, and research developments. It responds to growing interest in genre-informed instruction as a means of addressing ongoing difficulties EFL learners face, such as unfamiliarity with academic discourse, limited genre awareness, and challenges in organizing ideas effectively (Al-Hammadi & Sidek, 2015; Alsariera & Alsarairah, 2024; Bian & Wang, 2016; Lama & Suhodolli, 2024). In line with the review's purpose, the findings provide a clearer picture of how GBP supports learners "from drafting to publication" while also revealing areas for further pedagogical and research advancement.

The findings demonstrate that GBP has been implemented through a range of instructional approaches. While many studies adopted the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)-based Teaching-Learning Cycle (TLC), others incorporated elements of corpus-based analysis, process writing, and digital tools. This diversity confirms GBP's adaptability to different institutional settings and student needs. For example, in Indonesian and Chinese EFL classrooms, GBP has been used to scaffold students' control over rhetorical structure, cohesion, and genre-specific features (Cai, 2020; Kartika-Ningsih & Rose, 2021; Zhang & Zhang, 2021). The application of TLC stages in these studies

provided learners with structured exposure to academic texts, enabling them to internalize and apply genre conventions more confidently (Fu & Ibrahim, 2022; Liu & Chen, 2022). These adaptations show that GBP is not a rigid model but a flexible instructional framework responsive to various classroom realities.

Another key finding is the consistent improvement in learners' academic writing performance following GBP instruction. Across studies, learners demonstrated gains in organization, coherence, clause complexity, and lexical control (Arono & Arsyad, 2019; Liu, 2018; Lo & Cheng, 2018). Importantly, several studies also documented affective improvements, such as increased writing confidence and motivation. In Chinese and Thai EFL contexts, learners exposed to TLC-based writing tasks reported feeling more engaged and supported in their learning process (Robillos, 2023; Xiaoxiao & Ibrahim, 2023). This affective dimension, although not the primary focus of earlier genre instruction, is gaining prominence and suggests that GBP can also serve as a motivational and confidence-building tool when implemented with appropriate scaffolding and learner involvement (Abdel Latif et al., 2024).

The review also highlights trends in how GBP research has evolved. Earlier studies tended to focus narrowly on textual features and genre reproduction, while more recent research emphasizes metacognition, learner agency, and integration with other approaches like self-regulated learning (Robillos, 2023; Wiboonwachara & Charubusp, 2022). This evolution is consistent with broader shifts in writing pedagogy, which now place greater emphasis on learners' strategic engagement and reflective practice. At the same time, the implementation of GBP remains concentrated in certain regions – particularly Asia and the Middle East – with growing interest in cross-level and interdisciplinary applications (Dong & Lu, 2020; Ganapathy et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, the review identifies several limitations in current research. Most studies are short-term and focus on conventional academic genres, such as descriptive or argumentative essays. There is a lack of exploration into multimodal or interdisciplinary writing, despite the increasing presence of such genres in academic and professional communication (Lo & Jeong, 2018; Varga et al., 2023). Furthermore, there is limited evidence of longitudinal studies that examine how students transfer genre knowledge across tasks, levels, or disciplines (Liu et al., 2024; Liu, 2018). These gaps restrict our understanding of GBP's long-term impact and transferability.

Teacher preparedness also emerges as a consistent challenge. Several studies indicate that many EFL teachers, particularly pre-service ones, struggle with implementing GBP effectively due to insufficient training or limited understanding of how to link language features to rhetorical purpose (Liu & Chen, 2022; Nurlaelawati & Novianti, 2017). This lack of pedagogical confidence can hinder the full realization of GBP's potential. Addressing this issue requires improvements in teacher education programs, including more emphasis on genre awareness, scaffolding techniques, and feedback practices aligned with genre expectations.

Overall, the review underscores the value of GBP as a dynamic and flexible instructional approach. It contributes to improved academic writing performance, while also supporting learner motivation and engagement. At the same time, it reveals key areas for growth: expanding the scope of genres taught, strengthening teacher training, and developing research designs that capture longer-term writing development. These findings position GBP not only as a means of teaching genre conventions, but as a multidimensional pedagogy capable of fostering academic literacy and learner empowerment in diverse EFL settings.

Despite these strengths, this review has several limitations that should be acknowledged. It relied exclusively on studies indexed in the Scopus database, which may have excluded relevant work published in other platforms or regional repositories. Additionally, only studies published in English were considered, potentially overlooking

valuable research written in other languages. The synthesis was also constrained by the quality and transparency of the reviewed studies, many of which lacked detailed methodological reporting or long-term data, limiting deeper conclusions about sustained outcomes.

Future research should aim to address these limitations by conducting longitudinal investigations that examine the lasting effects of genre-based pedagogy across different education levels and writing contexts. Moreover, there is a need for more studies focusing on multimodal, interdisciplinary, and digital genres, reflecting the evolving nature of academic communication. Research into effective models of teacher preparation, especially those integrating technology and reflective pedagogy, would further strengthen the field and expand the practical utility of genre-based instruction.

CONCLUSION

This review affirms GBP as a pedagogically sound and contextually adaptable approach for developing academic writing competence in EFL settings. By synthesizing findings across instructional models, learner outcomes, and research trends, the review illustrates GBP's capacity to support both the structural and affective dimensions of writing – enhancing genre awareness, rhetorical control, and learner motivation. Importantly, the review reveals how GBP has evolved from a text-centered model to a more flexible, process-informed pedagogy responsive to diverse learner needs and educational contexts. These insights matter because they position GBP as more than a method for organizing texts; they frame it as a comprehensive framework for empowering EFL learners to navigate academic discourse with clarity and confidence. As academic writing continues to evolve – across genres, modalities, and global contexts – GBP offers a principled yet adaptable means of instruction. However, the findings also expose limitations in the field, particularly regarding teacher preparedness, genre diversity, and the need for long-term impact assessment. Addressing these gaps is crucial not only for refining instructional practice but for advancing research that genuinely reflects the complex realities of writing in EFL classrooms. Ultimately, this review contributes to ongoing efforts to strengthen academic literacy in global EFL contexts. It encourages educators and researchers to view GBP not simply as a set of strategies, but as a dynamic pedagogy capable of fostering both competent writers and confident learners.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

All authors contributed to the development and completion of this study. IZ led the research from conceptualization to final manuscript preparation. SH and LN assisted in reviewing, analyzing the selected articles, and editing the final version of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the submitted version of the manuscript.

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