

# A Scoping Review of Supports on College and University Campuses for Autistic Post-Secondary Students

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## Background

- Increasing post-secondary (PS) enrollment of autistic students (Barnhill, 2016; Shattuck et al., 2012; Kuder & Accardo, 2018)
- Particularly in the last decade, there has been rapid growth in literature on the availability and efficacy of supports for autistic students on PS campuses, and autistic people's postsecondary experiences
- Comprehensive review of international literature on the wide range of PS supports is needed

## Objectives

- Map the current international peer-reviewed literature exploring post-secondary supports for autistic PS students and identify existing contributors and challenges of these supports on PS campuses
- Integrate the perspectives of autistic students into mapping post-secondary supports

## Methods

**Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) framework** for scoping reviews incorporating consultation with an **'expert panel' of four autistic self-advocates** with lived experience in PS education, and autistic members of the research team.

The expert panel, or **the Autistic Community Partners (ACP) consulted at key points** to shape research direction and coding frameworks.

### Search Strategy:

- Databases: Web of Science (Clarivate), APA PsycINFO (Ovid), Medline (Ovid), Embase (Ovid), ERIC (EBSCO), Social Work Abstracts (EBSCO), Social Services Abstracts (ProQuest) and Emcare (Ovid).
- Publication Range: January 1, 2012 - May 26, 2022
- Language: English

Included articles were coded under **1) the four PASS domains, 2) ten support categories, and 3) nine emergent themes**

- The PASS taxonomy (Dukes et al., 2017) was designed to organize literature addressing PS education for students with disabilities to identify the focus of the research being conducted
- Building from previous categorization (Widman & Lopez-Reyna, 2020) and ACP consultation, ten support categories were identified. Each article was noted for presence of evidence of beneficial supports and/or challenges.
- ACP consultation addressed experiential elements not captured in other frameworks. Iterative, inductive coding captured emergent themes informing autistic experiences, and navigation of supports, on PS campuses. Each article was noted for presence of evidence of beneficial elements and/or challenges.

## Results

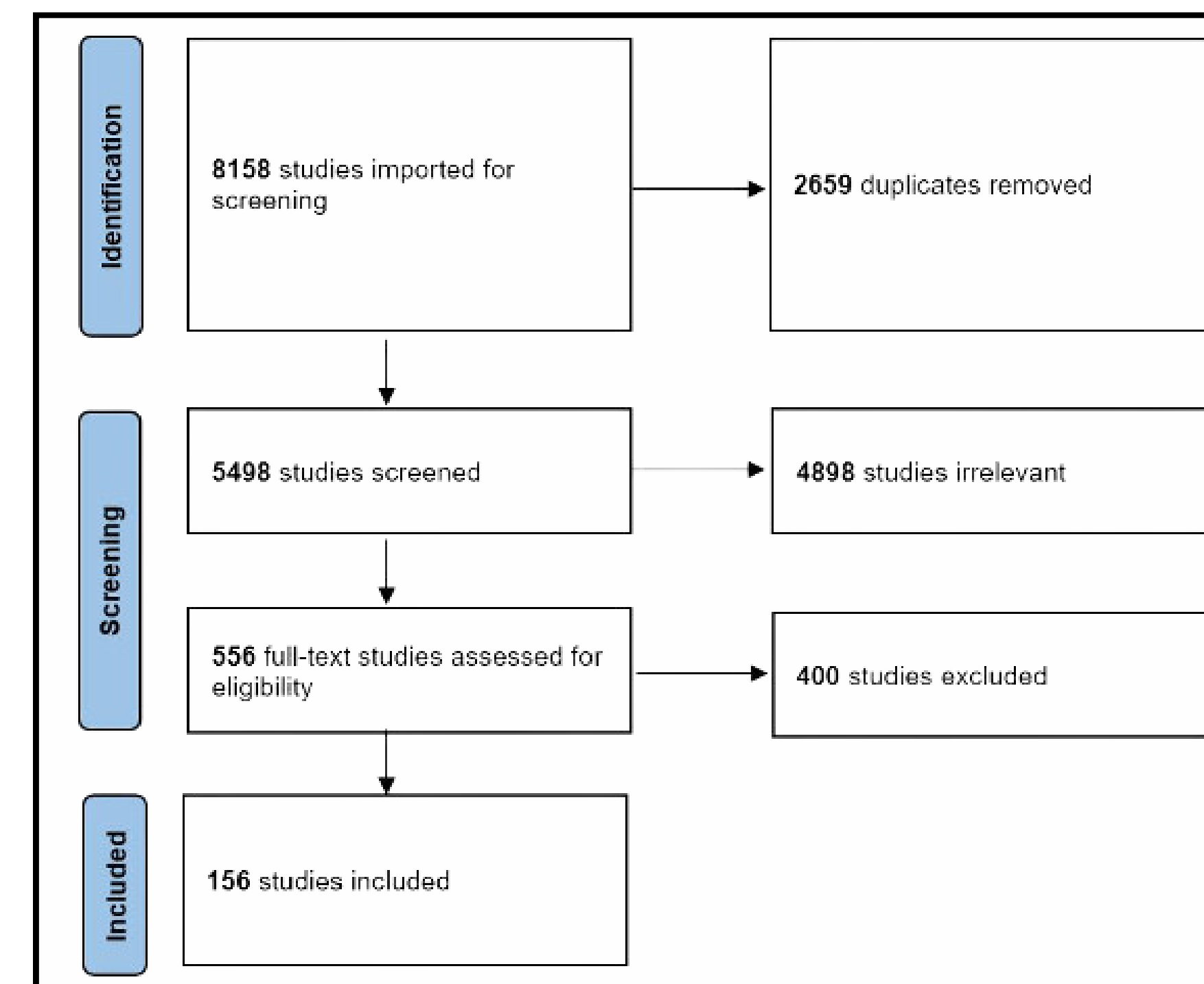


Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR Chart

PASS Domain	Frequency Count
1. Institutional	20
2. Faculty & Peers	40
Faculty	20
Peers	12
Family	5
Non-specific	3
3. Autistic PS students (individual)	114
4. Concept Development and/or Intervention	44
Multiple Domains	55

Table 1. Institutional supports offered according to PASS Domains

Categories	Contributors	Challenges
Social	54	62
Academic	63	55
Communication	17	15
Emotional	29	47
Independent Living Skills	22	24
Vocational	16	21
Transitions	21	27
Reliance on Other Sources	27	9
Financial	3	12
Sexual Health/Education	1	2

Table 2. Frequency of Types of Support Categories in Included Studies as Contributors or Challenges for Support on PS campus

Themes	Contributors	Challenges
Interpersonal	28	9
Individualized	13	23
Sensory Environment	8	36
Attitudinal	21	51
Service Navigation	14	27
Diagnosis	1	13
Disclosure	12	30
Identity Management	13	17
Intersectionality	2	32

Table 3. Frequencies of Emergent Areas of Support Themes in Included Studies as Contributors or Challenges for Support on PS Campus

## Discussion

- PS support research primarily focuses on autistic students rather than potential environmental contributors (Table 1)
- Overlaps between categories of supports indicate the need for multi-faceted strategies to address the integrated nature of PS campuses (Table 2)
- Disproportionate representation of challenges, over contributors to support, amplifies the ongoing call for proactive and effective supports for autistic PS students (Table 2)
- Support accessibility, design and delivery are identified as key to the efficacy of supports from the perspective of autistic PS students; Table 3 highlights key considerations emerging from this review

## Limitations

Articles published in languages other than English were excluded. The nine emergent themes were not part of a priori review methods and were generated iteratively by reviewers independently following ACP consultation.

## Conclusion

This review examined the international literature on a broad range and considered the integrated nature of PS supports and experiences of autistic PS students.

The results of mapping the literature is a call to action for areas that need to be addressed to optimize student success, career development and ensure successful outcomes in adult roles.

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