

AN INCLUSIVE SETTING FOR HIGH FUNCTIONING AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (HFASD) IN HOSPITALITY COURSE: A REVIEW

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Abstract: *Higher education institutions are enrolling more students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and these individuals' fresh experiences and available assistance have an influence on their performance there. For better understanding on supporting system available for students with autism spectrum disorder, scoping review were conducted based on guided research question. Few steps of systematic searching strategy in identifying reliable existing article, reviewing, identifying gaps and recommended future research. Three trusted academic databases been used in finding relevant literature (Scopus, Science direct, and Google Scholar). Out of 195 screened studies, only 8 were accepted which met the inclusion criteria of study. Autism support system are found to be classified into three theme which is 1) Emotional Support System 2) Academic Support System 3) Environmental Support System. This outcome particularly found to minimize level of stress and anxiety due to stigma and misconception of community.*

Keywords: *Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), higher education, supporting system, emotional support.*

Introduction

Over recent decades, the development of field in education has been centered around research area in emphasizing the educational and social advantages of inclusivity setting in classroom. Consequently, a large number of students with disability including those with neurological disorder or known as autism are receiving educational opportunities in inclusive setting particularly within the context of general educational programs.

As autism spectrum disorder (ASD) continues to rise at an astonishing rate, so does the inclusion of student with ASD entering into higher education. Neurodevelopmental disorders people are becoming more widely known among people all over the world. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a prevalent ailment, is classified as a complex neurodevelopmental disorder which involves persistent issues related to interactions with others, limited interest and certain behavioural problem. Individual with Disability Education Act (IDEA) was established in the United States (US) with the aim of ensuring those with special needs had greater accessibility and sufficient educational achievements in the capacity accommodating setting as well as other programmes that would enable them to thrive and survive with the difficulties, they may face that lies ahead (Al Jaffal, 2022).

Youth with Asperger syndrome are generally referred to as autistic children, and they may have psychological features, reasoning consistency, and appearances that are slightly distinct from those of other typical children. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is an intellectual disfunction characterized by social issues, behavioral disorder, and trouble in performing non-verbal communication as example tardiness in actions, minimum eye contact, intellectual disability, insensitive towards others and emotional disorder (Al Jaffal, 2022; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Given the number one out of every 166 children has been diagnosed with autism around the worlds and yet the precise cause of this disorder is still remain unclear. According to Ministry of Health (MOH) data, throughout the past decade, the total number of people in Malaysia who suffer from autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has been steadily on arise in number. In the year of 2010, there were only 99 number of children under age 18 have been diagnosed with ASD, however the number keep on rising to 562 by year 2020. Additionally, with on rise of 5% statistic result in overall number of ASD patients to 589 during 2021 (CodeBlue, 2022).

Besides the number of students with ASD that enrolled in higher education are progressively growing in numbers of intake. According to Ministry of Education, the registered number of special education needs (SEN) students in Malaysia is 87,574 and up until October 2021, the number of students grow to 97,220 (Kannan, 2019; Othman et al., 2022). Current research show that students with ASD received better focus and knowledge about the disorder at the beginning phases of adulthood besides improved support in meeting their needs which lead to the rising number of ASD student in pursuing high education level. Based on the statement by Jansen, Emmers, Petry et al. (2018), the largest categories of students with disability that enrolled in higher educational at university are those with psychiatric disorder particularly ASD students. According to the review by Revans-McMenimon (2019), neurodivergent student are much less likely to enrol in two- or four-years colleges especially in comparison to other disability group with only 31% of students with ASD are plausible to pursue study in college compared to student with learning disability 53% and speech and language disability with percentage of 57%.

In a broader context, diversity of autism in general is referred to a heterogeneity of characteristics that make each of human beings different with each other in terms of culture, nationality, knowledge, perspective, socioeconomic and lifestyle (Juvonen et al., 2019). In general, people with impairments are more likely than people without disabilities to face negative socioeconomic results. They frequently experienced different treatment, inadequate support, stigma, and prejudice throughout this stage of life, which had an impact on their mental health and sense of self. Many people are unaware of what happens to students with disability, such as Down syndrome, autism (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), after they complete special school education. The career of these children appears to find their end point as soon as they graduate from school or college as most of organizations have drawn a line and restrict them from work in certain industries according to their disability such as physical appearance, education problem, and cognitive problem. In order to empower autistic student support needs system, Ministry of Education has paved the way by offering vocational training services to encourage students with special needs in becoming more competent, as well as supporting the TVET ground as a proper profession for special needs students to engage in and take advantage of evolving job requires or explore the field of entrepreneurship (Ahmad, Jalil, & Rahman., 2020). One of courses provided for student with special needs is pastry making.

In Malaysia, special education provides access of higher enrolment of education to all students with special needs. The curriculum for special need students (SNS) with high functioning autism spectrum disorder (HFASD) in vocational education should be prepared in accordance with the needs and interests of the students in order to be effective and appealing. However, one of the most significant challenges for children or youth with HFASD is the amount of learning required to fully grasp a skill or course. Since students with HFASD create barriers with difficulties in communication and language development, socialization and behavior which make educators facing hardship in delivering information for this special group of students (Omar et al., 2013). In addition, due to new and few interventions program on ASD, most student facing complications to follow the program due to limited sources and service to support their needs. Moreover, although studies on autism has been emerging throughout the research study area, there are still limited resources of literature on identifying or describing other support system which could help student with ASD in inclusive classroom.

Parents, teachers, and educational institution supposed to perform a significant role in encouraging autistic children to get engaged regularly and become independent by being aware of and cooperate to overcome their weaknesses. Apart from parents, teachers are also responsible ensuring that autistic children are always given the right training and guidance to improve student's openness towards diversity, learning achievement and school attendance rates. In order to fulfil compliance requirement for students with special needs, all educators have to be expert in collaborative efforts either with school management or parents. Nevertheless, majority of special educators receive insufficient training on autism. Segall and Campbell (2012) identified that general educator teacher show less positive attitude to be compared with special education teacher in level of knowledge, awareness practice, and education strategy used among instructors. A cross-sectional study by R.Abdulkarem et al. (2019) involved 200 autism teachers from eight autism center reported that majority of respondents are qualified in communication training or aggressive behavior of autistic students while there is 5.7% of them said they lack of necessary academic preparation. Similarly, Al Jaffal (2022) recorded from one of their respondents through interview session state that general educator who does not have enough training in dealing with ASD students are not fully prepared

which led to frustration and caught off guard. As Finch et al. (2013) emphasized the importance of training in their paper that educator with adequate training is to be more confident and sensible in assisting students with special needs and not only for special educator but including general educator too. In addition, educator supposed to be aware and knowledgeable in working with ASD students therefore they can keep connected with parents or caregiver in delivering accurate information for better understanding about their kids' condition during the classroom session.

This scoping review are aimed to identify challenges experienced by students with ASD in higher education and how those identified support system involve overcoming those challenge in providing inclusive setting for students with autism in hospitality course.

Material and Method

Formulation of Research Questions

This scoping review was guided by research question presented in the study, which as follow: how important of support system in providing inclusive setting for high functioning autism spectrum disorder (HFASD) in hospitality education?

Systematic Searching Strategies

Strategies for systematic searching consists of three stages which is identification, screening, and eligibility. These actions were taken to make sure that an exhaustive examination was carried out.

Identification

To identify type of support systems for autistic students in higher education, three trusted academic databases are used which is ScienceDirect, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The primary keywords were used in the searching strings are: autism, ASD, high functioning autism spectrum, HFASD, followed by other related keywords which is; higher education students, university students, college students, supporting system, emotional support. Phrasal level searching and the fundamental Boolean operators OR and AND were applied.

Screening

Criteria of article are selected based on research questions. As autism is new emerging studies topic, the articles selected are started from 2016 to 2023 and only qualitative study were approved. Total first result obtained from the keywords is 195. However, after doing qualitative screening and article above 2016 only to be chosen, the final number of articles is 29.

Eligibility

This regards to eligibility, the 29 articles that chosen were reviewed to ensure compliance with the selection criteria. At this stage, abstract and result of study were examined. Full article will be skipped if it was not clearly reflected to the topic. Therefore only 8 related articles were finally selected for scoping review.

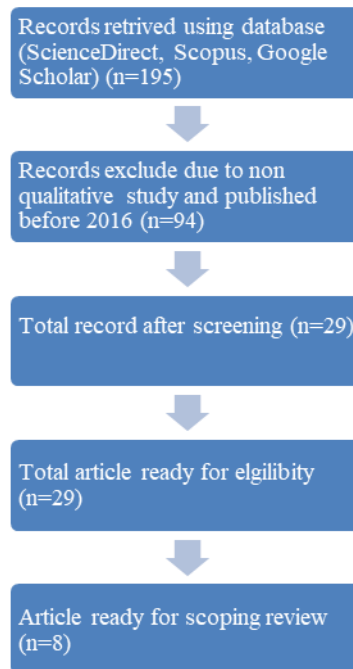


Figure 1: Scoping Review Systematic Searching Strategies

Result And Discussion

Challenges Experience by Autistic Students in Performing Activities During Inclusive Classroom.

Miscommunication, social deficits, and behaviour problem are most studied factors that giving challenges for ASD students to interact with society. Based on previous studies, people with ASD have impairments in three components which consist of communication skills, social skills and behaviour. People with ASD would demonstrate a typical or different behaviour compared to anybody else because he is experiencing a state which is called as sensory processing disorder which make the person perceive the stimulus from the environment differently and respond in abnormal behaviour. For example, like covering ears when hear sound of toilet flush, ceiling fan or typical noise from the crowd (Kojovic et al., 2019).

ASD patients do have wide spectrum of intellectual abilities, from below-average to gifted talents. People with ASD either having low or high threshold regarding sensory processing issue. Threshold is depicted as a wall. Stimulus is depicted as a person who is trying to cross the wall. Low threshold is like a situation which it is very easy to cross the wall because it only requires small step to cross the wall. Thus, a person with low threshold will find any stimulus is too much to handle for him. Meanwhile, high threshold is like a situation which it is very difficult to cross the wall because it requires lots of effort and energy in order to cross the wall. Thus, a person with high threshold will find any stimulus is not enough and he will keep on seeking for that stimulus. Three types of sensory modulation disorders have been identified: sensory over-responsiveness occurs when the child responds to sensory input more quickly or with increased intensity than typically observed; sensory under-responsiveness occurs when the child does not respond to or disregards sensory input; and sensory seeking behaviour occurs when the child actively engages in actions that provide intense sensory input (Hilton, 2011). Conversely, Segall and Campbell (2012) reported sensory dysfunction does not considered as

a fundamental gap of ASD by psychiatric diagnosis when determining qualification of special education. Half of respondent belief the majority of kids with ASD do not have developmental issues instead they have unique talents and skills.

For people with ASD, they will find it is difficult to perform or work in a new environment because they need to adapt with the environment and some environmental modifications are needed in order to facilitate the person to be able to function appropriately. This was often related to the child's inability to regulate their behaviour in light of the multiple stimuli and challenges that the environment presented (Schaaf et al., 2011). In addition, Johnson et al. (2020) considered youth with ASD are more likely to be laid off or underqualified due to difficulties with interview and recruitment process, difficulties with role that perfectly meets their abilities and knowledge, and due to challenge in adapting uncertain social environment. Autism is not just a variance of motivation and normal intelligence. It is recognised as a very diverse state of personality that express its spectrum of conditions in a unique way in each situation (Delafield-Butt et al., 2022).

Support System Involved in Providing Inclusive Setting for Autistic Students in Hospitality Course.

Support system can be presented in certain ways such as emotional and psychological support, academic and non-academic support, and environmental support. Minority group of students like autism often to encounter with discrimination and stereotype from others which makes it difficult for them to concentrate and survive for higher level of education. Due to the reason, it is crucial for many parties to provide strong support system in order to provide autistic student their needs and to achieve inclusive learning environment.

Emotional Support System.

The operation of inclusive learning entails developing a setting where children with special needs are able to communicate, received knowledge, and engage with other children their age. Each special needs students are provided a customized educational schedule that enables them to reach their full ability in accordance with their specialties. The setting created are supposedly to be supportive and motivating for students with disability. They will therefore be able to learn from their classmates' spontaneous interactions, particularly through aspect of interpersonal and emotionally. On the other hand, normal children get a chance to react nicely, learn how to assist others, as well as being responsible towards themselves (Mutini & Abu Bakar, 2023). Students with ASD often need to deal with feelings of loneliness, anxiety, depression, difficulty interacting with classmates, harassment, and abandonment during shifting to higher education (Davis et al., 2021). Therefore, these group of students need strong support by those who they felt close and trust to convince and take a good care of their emotional condition.

According to research, non-academic assistance supplied might include parental, counsellor, teacher, and peer-mediated help. In order for autistic pupils to feel more secure and at ease participating in school activities, parents and families must also give them a solid foundation. Davis et al. (2021) noted that the importance of parental and family relationships for success during the transition to college and during enrolment based on students' responses. Packer et al., (2022) also found similar result on parental participation has a critical role in assisting kids' growth throughout their transition to new environment. Likewise, (Sefotho & Onyishi, 2020) noted that students' respond to sign of stress and anxiety level due to lack of family member or close friend shown that those group of people could provide great support system to student with ASD. In addition to assisting with the implementation of inclusive schooling, the

emotional and financial support by parents of students with special needs becomes a factor in the extent to which students achieve (Minsih & Mujahid, 2020).

Besides parents, teacher also play crucial role in giving physical and emotional support to students in absence of parents. Inclusion education relied fully on teacher attitude in providing support resource available for students with special needs. When enhancing students' social and behavioural functioning, instructor observable behaviour may encourage more productive collaboration with colleagues. Teacher attitude can be presented by providing positive feedback, engaging in compliment circle and focusing students' special talents would result to positive behaviour of autistic students as they feel positive respond and openness from educators (Bolourian et al., 2022).

Specialists are aware of learners' concerns about connecting with new social groups and recognize the significance of "developing a close friendship link". Packer et al. (2022) sees that by maintaining motivation and engagement during a period of academic transition requires the development of valuable connections between peers in terms of offering emotional assistance, boosting student trust, and helping with practical issues. In recent study by Crompton et al. (2023), students with autism who attended a regular school often had supportive peers. Peer support may offer a great chance for autistic individuals to engage in a normal, comfortable way, exchange practical tips, and develop their identity.

Academic Support System.

Shifting into mature student phase might be challenging for autistic students because they required to advocate themselves to access support or accommodation. Besides autistic people follow strictly to the routine and predictability of their usual daily task. When they enrol to the higher education, they need to shift into new surroundings and be familiar with new physical and social environment. Moreover, support system such as Individual educational Program (IEPs) and parental advocacy that available during secondary school are no more available. Academic support provided by Office of Disability Service may help students to overcome the challenges.

Anderson et al. (2019) identified support systems are available in many types in terms of formal services or through self-initiated network support such as parents, peers or educators. While it is necessary for students to declare their diagnosis of ASD in order to obtain official help, many choose to find informal network support from family and friends because they were concern of discrimination and prejudice they would receive after, thus preferred to keep their disability condition a secret. As result, colleges and universities received little role in developing and identifying a sufficient support system for students with disability. Therefore, researchers further focused their findings on institutional-affiliated support system. Students with ASD report constantly searching for assistance and occasionally being unaware that such support is officially given by the institution's department of disability services. Some students admitted to struggling even without a formal diagnosis but still exhibiting behavioural disorders; as a result, they choose to ask for assistance from an academic adviser or counsellor. Higher education administrators were advised to be more practical in their approach to ensuring that all educators have enough training and education, as some students may turn to them for assistance. Additionally, students seem more at ease engaging with peers online than they do in person with administrators of higher education. Their inability to speak and make eye contact during face-to-face encounters may be related to this issue.

The result of present study also aligns with Davis et al. (2021) in their systematic review of literature listed most important type of academic support were from professional support, class accommodations, and coursework modification. However, examined previous literature did not describe any further on support that related to academic instead more on accommodation only. The probability students did not know the support provided by academic administrator are reasons to unawareness of students and being silent on their diagnosis. Interview study conducted by Sefotho and Onyishi (2021) evaluated lack of academic assistance is one of the barriers that individuals with ASD must overcome while transitioning from high school to higher education. To minimize the workload and the rise in social anxiety among students with ASD, teachers and university administrators are advised to pay more focus to educational design, versatility, and lecturer approach. They recommend that students be given learning assistance in the way of study guidelines for exams, written material from the educator, a device for taking notes to record essential data, an extended time limit for verbal responses from the student, and the option to conduct crucial information exchanges in writing. These suggestions can help students succeed academically and reduce the stress associated with attending college.

Environmental Support.

Since autism people are heterogenous group as they come with diverse type of disorder that cause deficits in pattern of cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social functioning. Accommodations can be vary depending on individual disorder such as extended time for exams, receiving schedule for next activity in advance, exam deferral and taking exam in smaller group ((Anderson et al., 2019; Jansen et al., 2017). Nevertheless, in some college those accommodation can only be access if the students acknowledge their diagnosis and provide sufficient documentation. Davis et al. (2021) mentioned that for academic and non-academic programs to have equitable access, students with disabilities must receive appropriate accommodations. Besides environmental support is very crucial in providing inclusive settings for disability students. Minsih and Mujahid (2020)) assert that the infrastructure and educational policies provide the incorporation of inclusive education practices, such as coaching, special learning supplies, resource areas, locations for special programs, and inclusive classrooms. Autistic students may experience anxiety and increased distraction to be adjusted in greater class numbers and few structured classroom settings.

Limitation and Recommendation

According to recent study, there are some potential limitations that should be focused on. Regardless of organized searching database and screening procedure, some relevant literature might be missed out by researcher. Only qualitative published article and open access journal are included in this review which contribute to scarce in review discussion besides related paper published before selected years have been cut off. Future research is needed to conduct a review on quantitative approach in term of identifying the reliability of each support system or identifying the relationship between support system and students' academic achievement, or to measure level of awareness amongst community (educators, disability service officers, manager, hospitality staff). In addition, due to time constraint, there are insufficient material of study and only semi analysis of systematic literature review (SLR) has been done. Future study supposed to use SLR in order to give strong support for discussion of literature.

The findings of present review suggested more study to be conducted on autism students in higher education in terms of support systems. There was limited previous papers on environmental support system as there were little mentioned about accommodation. Many studies focused on teachers and parenting subject. Future study may be suggested to find any

other types of accommodation and classroom setting that suit with certain group of autistic learners. Hospitality management supposed to provide reasonable accommodation to staff member with disability such as modified job responsibility, flexible schedule, or assistance device. Through this can help people with disability to actively engage in the industry and efficiently contribute their abilities and expertise.

Besides there would be more program promoting the availability of multiple support system provided by Offices of Disability Services in each university of colleges since most disability student does not aware with the service provided to support their needs. Such as launching public awareness campaign which promotes the inclusivity, eliminating discrimination and focusing on the rights and capability of disability people. This might encourage more autism friendly setting in the hotel sector and improve social perceptions. In addition, employment training program for youth with autism such as Autism Café project and Café Rimau can provide a training and helping youth development skills into society and preserving their future through job given.

Previous study mentioned a lot of student's concern on stigma and misconception which can impact how students are perceived and treated by faculty and staff. Therefore, more study is needed in identifying factors in creating autism friendly environment and plant more awareness and education towards every individual in every scope not only restricted for teachers and school community.

Conclusion

The percentage of college and university students with ASD is on rise as awareness towards autistic people has been acknowledged throughout the world. This suggests that the importance of paying attention to people with ASD and the related dimension of successful achievement is increasing. This result of scoping review indicates there are still loops in satisfying the needs of disability students in terms of emotional support, educational support, and environmental support. Even in numerous countries, learners who have ASD face certain similar challenges and difficulties when shifting to higher education contexts. Although widely used (e.g., social skills training), social support networks do not appear to be in line with the self-reported mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression) of students with ASD. Besides students prefer to seek for another alternative ways in overcoming their challenges instead go for official disability service at school or collages because they do not want to disclose their disability to public. Hence future research is necessary in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of existing support system and conduct new approach that can be applied in a high educational context. Besides a collaborative approach in problem solving between parents, organization and university administrator is needed to provide a better direction of practices in improving mobility and promote inclusion in the hospitality industry. Here can conclude that parents, teachers, school administrator and peer, each of them plays important role in becoming support system for autistic students in furthering their study for higher level.

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