Educational and Psychosocial Challenges Among Individuals with High-Functioning Autism: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract. The rising global prevalence of autism spectrum disorder, including in Malaysia, has increased attention on the challenges faced by individuals with high-functioning autism, especially within educational settings. This systematic literature review explores psychosocial and academic difficulties that affect emotional well-being, social interaction, and participation in learning. Following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, seven peer-reviewed articles published between 2021 and 2024, sourced from the Scopus and Web of Science databases, were screened and analyzed. Findings reveal ongoing struggles with emotional regulation, social stigma, and peer exclusion, which often lead to psychological distress, reduced school connectedness, and academic disengagement. These challenges are compounded by limited access to specialized educational resources, insufficient teacher training, and a lack of inclusive support structures. As a results, students with high-functioning autism encounter challenges in mainstream education, necessitating inclusive pedagogical approaches, targeted teacher professional development, social-emotional interventions, and collaborative engagement among educators, families, and mental health professionals to foster optimal educational outcomes. By prioritizing psychosocial well-being within educational frameworks, schools can foster a more inclusive environment that supports both academic success and emotional development. Addressing these needs is critical to improving the overall quality of life and long-term opportunities for students with high-functioning autism.

Keywords: Psychosocial; Educational Challenges; High-functioning Autism; Systematic Literature Review

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1. Introduction
Autism spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental condition characterised by differences in social communication, behaviour, and sensory processing. While the abilities and challenges of autistic individuals vary widely, those with high-functioning autism —often aligned with Autism Spectrum Disorder Level 1— commonly face distinct psychosocial difficulties that influence their emotional, social, and academic experiences (David et al., 2018).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006) upholds the principles of non-discrimination, inclusion, and accessibility for persons with disabilities, including autism, with emphasis on equal opportunities in education, employment, and social participation (Gwarega et al., 2021). In Malaysia, these principles are reinforced through the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 and further strengthened by the country's ratification of the UNCRPD in 2010 (Ikmal & Khairil, 2016). Despite these policy commitments, individuals with HFA continue to encounter barriers that hinder full societal participation.

Psychosocial challenges among individuals with high-functioning autism extend beyond academic and social contexts to interpersonal relationships and self-identity. Difficulties in interpreting implicit social norms often result in challenges in forming and maintaining friendships, leading to loneliness and social exclusion, which in turn affect self-esteem and mental health (Ivan et al., 2021). Many also engage in "masking," suppressing autistic traits to meet neurotypical expectations (Julia et al., 2021). While masking may facilitate short-term social navigation, prolonged use is linked to emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and reduced self-identity, with potential risks including burnout and suicidal ideation (Hull et al., 2021). Societal misconceptions and stereotypes further compound these difficulties, limiting opportunities for meaningful inclusion.

In educational environments, systemic barriers often undermine the psychosocial well-being of students with high-functioning autism. Although inclusive education policies exist, implementation challenges persist, particularly in adapting teaching methods to individual learning needs. Standardised instructional approaches often fail to accommodate sensory sensitivities, and overstimulating classroom environments—characterised by bright lighting, loud noises, and unpredictable routines—can trigger sensory overload, reducing concentration and emotional regulation. Social integration within schools also remains problematic, with bullying, peer rejection, and misinterpretation of social cues contributing to disengagement and, in severe cases, school refusal.

The link between high-functioning autism and mental health vulnerabilities is increasingly evident. Autistic adolescents face heightened risks of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress due to social isolation, bullying, and the pressure to mask traits (Bradley et al., 2021). Academic demands, coupled with sensory processing differences, exacerbate stress and emotional exhaustion (Botha & Frost, 2020). Greater awareness of neurodiversity has spurred

discussion on these disparities, but gaps remain in understanding how psychosocial challenges manifest across contexts (Sici et al., 2023).

A recurring difficulty for individuals with high-functioning autism lies in interpreting non-verbal communication—such as facial expressions, gestures, and body language—which can impede effective interaction and relationship-building (Rao et al., 2020). These challenges stem from differences in social cognition, including interpreting sarcasm, tone, and unspoken rules (Jacquelyn et al., 2017). Such barriers may lead to misunderstandings, conflict, and diminished confidence, further restricting independent navigation of social environments (Hayward et al., 2018). In turn, these social communication difficulties intersect with emotional regulation challenges, resulting in heightened responses such as frustration, anxiety, or sadness during interactions (Christine & Elizabeth, 2020). This interplay forms a cycle that reinforces psychosocial struggles and limits skill development.

Globally, the movement towards neurodiversity acceptance is expanding. However, the psychosocial experiences of individuals with high autistic traits remain insufficiently documented, particularly in non-Western settings. Although studies have addressed specific issues—such as anxiety, academic stress, and social functioning—comprehensive understanding of the broader psychosocial context is lacking (Liu et al., 2021). This systematic literature review synthesises both international and Malaysian research to capture global patterns in the psychosocial challenges of individuals with high-functioning autism while contextualising them within Malaysia's sociocultural and educational landscape.

By integrating global and Malaysian perspectives, this review seeks to fill critical knowledge gaps and guide culturally responsive interventions that promote inclusion for neurodiverse populations. It underscores the need for policymakers and professionals to address the psychosocial challenges experienced by individuals with high-functioning autism—particularly difficulties with emotional regulation, heightened anxiety, and social exclusion.

Understanding these lived experiences is essential for designing effective support systems in both educational and community contexts. This paper synthesises existing research to identify common barriers and highlight strategies that foster resilience, social integration, and meaningful participation. By emphasising the emotional and social dimensions of daily life for this group, the review offers evidence-based insights to shape inclusive practices and inform policy development aimed at enhancing psychosocial well-being and academic achievement.

2. Methodology
This paper followed to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) model, as depicted in Figure 1. PRISMA is a standardized framework that enhances the transparency, quality and accuracy of systematic literature reviews (Hayrol et al., 2019). By following this model, author can ensure a structured approach to data synthesis, allowing readers to

assess the reliability and relevance of findings (BMJ, 2021). PRISMA consists of four key phases: identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion (Hayrol et al., 2019). The identification phase involves gathering relevant studies from multiple sources, followed by screening, where duplicate or irrelevant records are removed. Next, the eligibility phase evaluates studies based on predefined criteria, ensuring only high-quality research is considered. Finally, the inclusion phase selects the final set of studies for review. This structured approach strengthens the credibility of the systematic literature review and enhances its replicability. (Hayrol et al., 2019).
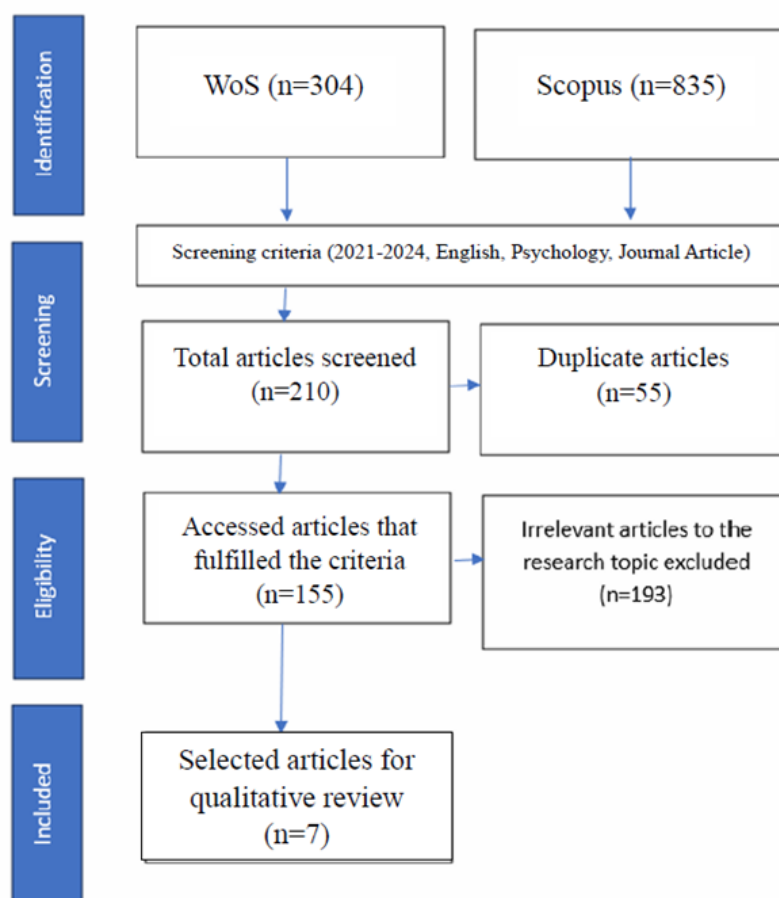

Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Chart

The final selection of seven articles resulted from a rigorous screening process guided by predefined inclusion criteria emphasising methodological quality, thematic relevance, and contextual appropriateness within the study's scope. While the initial search identified a larger pool of studies, only these seven met all criteria, directly addressing the psychosocial challenges and support needs of individuals with high-functioning autism. Limiting the review to this set ensured a concentrated synthesis of high-quality evidence, enabling deeper analysis and thematic saturation without diluting the focus.

A thematic analysis was then conducted to integrate findings across studies. Using an inductive approach, each article was read in full, and relevant data were extracted into a structured matrix. Recurring concepts—such as emotional regulation difficulties, social exclusion, and adaptive coping strategies—were coded, compared, and refined iteratively. Codes were then grouped into broader themes that reflected consistent patterns across studies. This process allowed the synthesis to remain grounded in the data while ensuring the themes were closely aligned with the research objectives.

2.1 Identification

The identification process entails selecting key keywords, a crucial step to ensure that only articles relevant to high traits and psychosocial are included. Comprehensive keyword strings were constructed using Boolean Operators to streamline the search for studies across two databases: Scopus and Web of Science (Table 1). Three keywords were selected, challenges, high traits, psychosocial. To expand the scope while staying relevant to this study, the Boolean Operator "OR" was added to include alternate keywords and synonyms for each keyword.

Scopus and Web of Science are highly conducted databases for systematic literature reviews, offering comprehensive access to high-quality, peer-reviewed research spanning various disciplines. Moreover, Manman Zhu et al. (2024), both databases also provide robust search functionalities, including advanced filtering and citation analysis tools, which are essential for identifying and assessing relevant studies efficiently. The searching process on these two databases was conducted on November 10, 2024, resulting in 1,139 articles (Table 1).

Table 1: The Search String and Findings

Search String	Database	Search Limitations	Findings
TITLE-ABS-KEY ("challenges" OR "barriers" OR "difficulties" OR "issues") AND ("high traits" OR "high-functioning autism" OR "HFA") AND ("psychosocial" OR "social-emotional" OR "mental health"))	Scopus	Journal articles 2021-2024	835
TS= (("challenges" OR "barriers" OR "difficulties" OR "issues") AND ("high traits" OR "high-functioning autism" OR "HFA") AND ("psychosocial" OR "social-emotional" OR "mental health"))	Web of Scince	Journal articles 2021-2024	304

2.2 Screening

This paper initially reviewed 1,139 articles based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria required studies to be journal articles, published in English, within the field of psychology, between 2021 and 2024, and containing empirical data. The time frame was set to ensure that only the most recent research was considered. Additionally, no restrictions were placed

on the country of publication, allowing for a diverse and global perspective. During the screening phase, 929 articles were automatically excluded for not meeting the criteria and 55 duplicate articles were removed. This resulted in 155 articles advancing to the eligibility phase, where further evaluation was conducted. The rigorous selection process ensured that only high-quality, relevant studies were included in the final systematic review, strengthening the credibility and reliability of the findings.

Table 2: Criteria Set in The Filtering Phase

Criteria	Qualifications
Type of literature	Journal (Study article)
Language	English
Year of publication	2021-2024
Index	Scopus & WoS
Country	All

2.3 Eligibility

In the third phase, the authors manually assessed the screened articles to ensure that all 155 articles met the study criteria. After reviewing the titles and abstracts, 148 articles were excluded as they did not focus on the challenges of high traits in psychosocial aspects. Ultimately, only seven articles were selected. All the selected articles use qualitative methodologies to ensure a rigorous and consistent review process.

2.4 Included

From the databases, 155 articles were initially identified and assessed based on the specified inclusion criteria. After a rigorous evaluation process, only seven articles met the criteria and were deemed suitable for analysis (Figure 1). This selection allowed the review to concentrate on substantiated and relevant research, ensuring a thorough and dependable synthesis of findings within the study's scope.

2.5 Data Analysis

The current study used a qualitative approach, specifically thematic analysis. As highlighted by Kiger and Varpio (2020), thematic analysis is an effective method for examining abstracted data sets, providing insights into experiences. The analysis process followed five key steps, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Kiger and Varpio (2020). First, all 7 articles were carefully and repeatedly read, with a particular focus on the abstract, results and discussion sections to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data.

In the second step, initial codes were identified and applied across the data set. Third, themes were actively constructed by analyzing and connecting the codes, identifying patterns, similarities, and relationships. Through this process, sub-themes were also identified. In the fourth step, the themes underwent a thorough review to ensure that the placement of each code accurately represented the findings. Finally, the themes and sub-themes were clearly named, resulting in three main themes and seven sub-themes.

2.6 Location of Studies

The data analysis showed that among the seven selected articles, three studies were conducted in the United Kingdom, two in the United States and one each in Canada and Switzerland (Table 4). This distribution highlights the geographical scope of the reviewed research.

Table 3: Country by Study Location

Country	Number	Author
United Kingdom	3	Oakley et al. (2022), Cameron et al. (2022), Uribe-Bahamonde et al. (2023)
United States	2	Parchomiuk (2021), Pecora et al. (2021)
Canada	1	Park et al. (2023)
Switzerland	1	Cherewick (2023)

2.7 Year of Publication

The distribution of studies by year of publication (Table 5), indicates that three articles were published in 2023, with two articles published in 2022 and two in 2021, reflecting a progressive focus on the topic in recent years.

Table 4: Number of Articles by Publication Year

Year of Publication	Number	Author
2023	3	Park et al. (2023), Cherewick (2023), Uribe-Bahamonde et al. (2023)
2022	2	Oakley et al. (2022), Cameron et al. (2022)
2021	2	Parchomiuk (2021), Pecora et al. (2021)

3. Findings

Thematic analysis identified three key challenges: (1) Emotional and Psychological Well-Being, (2) Adjustment and Resilience, and (3) Intervention and Support Systems. These themes highlight critical areas affecting individuals within the study's scope. A more in-depth exploration of these challenges led to the identification of seven sub-themes, offering a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved. These sub-themes provide deeper insights into the challenges and factors influencing well-being, adaptation and available support mechanisms. The detailed categorization of themes and sub-themes is outlined in Table 6, contributing to a comprehensive analysis of the psychosocial aspects examined in this study.

Table 5: Articles by Themes Studied

Year		2023	2023	2023	2022	2022	2021	2021
Author		Park et al.	Cherewick	Uribe-Bahamond et al.	Oakley et al.	Cameron et al.	Parchomiuk	Pecora et al.
Emotional And Psychological Well-Being	Emotional Regulation		/		/			/
	Anxiety And Mental Health Challenges			/	/			
	Stigma And Exclusion.			/	/	/		/
Adjustment And Resilience	Social Integration And Exclusion	/	/					
	Challenges, Academic Adaptation	/					/	
	Coping Mechanism	/	/				/	
Support Systems	Support	/	/			/		/

3.1 Emotional and Psychological Well-Being

Out of seven articles, five articles reported themes on Emotional and Psychological Well-Being. These themes were divided into three sub-themes: emotional regulation, anxiety and mental health challenges, and stigma and exclusion. Emotional regulation difficulties emerge as a core challenge for individuals with high traits, including struggles like recognizing and expressing emotions, which can strain relationships (Oakley et al., 2022). Additionally, heightened sensitivity to everyday situations can lead to strong emotional reactions, disrupting social and academic life (Oakley et al., 2022; Cherewick et al., 2023; Pecora et al., 2021).

Anxiety is a significant factor affecting psychosocial functioning. It often manifests through social withdrawal, academic struggles, and heightened emotional distress, as individuals with high traits find it challenging to navigate

overwhelming or unpredictable situations (Uribe-Bahamonde et al., 2023). The unpredictability of social interactions and environmental demands can heighten anxiety, leading to avoidance behaviors that restrict participation in meaningful social and educational experiences. This avoidance not only diminishes opportunities for skill development but also reinforces a pattern of isolation, exacerbating psychological distress. Over time, the persistent fear of unfamiliar or challenging situations may weaken self-efficacy, making it difficult to develop confidence in one's abilities. This fear also hinders adaptive coping mechanisms, further complicating social integration and academic progress.

The theme of stigma and exclusion focuses on the challenges faced by individuals with high traits that prevent them from fully participating in social and community activities. A lack of resources and societal stigma creates environments that are not supportive of their needs, making it difficult for them to engage (Cameron et al., 2022; Pecora et al., 2021). In addition, the fear of being judged or misunderstood, known as perceived stigma, often stops them from trying to participate (Cameron et al., 2022; Uribe-Bahamonde et al., 2023).

3.2 Adjustment and Resilience

Three articles reported findings on this theme, focusing on social integration challenges, academic adaptation, and coping mechanisms. Park et al. (2023) highlighted that high-traits adolescents often struggle to form and maintain friendships, leading to social rejection and isolation. These difficulties are made worse by bullying and a lack of understanding from peers, which increase feelings of loneliness and stress. Similarly, Cherewick et al. (2023) noted that social interactions are particularly challenging in environments that lack tailored interventions or supportive structures, making it harder for individuals to navigate social norms and build meaningful connections.

Academic challenges and stress are significant issues for individuals with high traits, as discussed in several studies. Park et al. (2023) pointed out that adolescents often struggle with academic demands, such as heavy workloads, tight deadlines, and pressure to perform well, which can cause increased stress and anxiety. Parchomiuk (2020) added that academic struggles often continue into adulthood, especially during the transition to higher education or vocational training when proper support is lacking.

Three articles pointed out the importance of coping mechanisms in helping high-traits individual structured routines as a key strategy for reducing stress and providing stability in both academic and social settings (Park et al., 2023). Cherewick et al. (2023) emphasized that programs like social skills training and therapeutic interventions equip individuals with tools to manage emotional and social difficulties effectively. Additionally, an article by Parchomiuk (2020) found that strong support systems, such as family involvement and community networks, play a key role in building resilience and adaptability. These studies show that coping mechanisms are important for improving emotional well-being and managing daily challenges for individuals with high traits.

3.3 Intervention and Support Systems

Many autistic individuals struggle with social interactions, emotional regulation, and adapting to dynamic environments. This struggle leads to increased isolation and reduced opportunities for meaningful participation. Cherewick et al. (2023) emphasized that tailored programs, such as social skills training and emotional regulation strategies, are effective in equipping individuals with the necessary tools to manage these challenges and build confidence. However, despite the availability of such interventions, challenges remain in accessibility and implementation, limiting their impact. Furthermore, the absence of strong support networks exacerbates these difficulties, highlighting the need for inclusive environments that foster adaptability and social integration (Cherewick et al., 2023; Pecora et al., 2021; Cameron et al., 2022).

4. Discussion

The present study systematically reviewed recent evidence on the psychosocial challenges faced by individuals with high-functioning autism, with a focus on educational contexts. Autism Spectrum Disorder is a complex neurodevelopmental condition, and those with high-functioning autism—typically without intellectual impairments—often present with average or above-average cognitive abilities but still experience profound emotional, social, and adaptive challenges. These difficulties are often overlooked, particularly in mainstream school environments, where academic capability may mask underlying vulnerabilities. The growing body of literature from 2021 to 2023 reflects increasing recognition of these challenges in both research and educational practice.

Across the reviewed literature, three interconnected themes emerged: (1) emotional and psychological well-being, (2) adjustment and resilience, and (3) intervention and support systems. These themes capture the multi-layered nature of the experiences of high-functioning autistic individuals, especially in school environments where social and academic demands are intense. Notably, many studies addressed overlapping issues—such as anxiety influencing social avoidance, or bullying affecting both emotional well-being and academic engagement, highlighting the need for integrated approaches in both research and practice.

A key and consistent finding was the elevated prevalence of emotional distress, particularly anxiety, depression, and difficulties with emotional regulation—among individuals with high autistic traits. These emotional challenges often manifest in the classroom as reduced participation, avoidance of group activities, and heightened stress responses (Shivani et al., 2021). Interventions such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based programs have shown promise in reducing anxiety and improving coping skills (Schweizer et al., 2024).

However, closer inspection of these studies reveals methodological weaknesses. Some interventions were trialed on very small samples, sometimes fewer than 20 participants—which restricts statistical power and limits generalizability. Others

relied solely on self-report measures, raising concerns about reporting bias, particularly in populations that may struggle with self-awareness or emotional articulation. Furthermore, longitudinal evidence is sparse, meaning that the sustainability of reported benefits remains uncertain. These gaps highlight the need for larger, multi-site studies with robust, mixed-method designs.

Stigma and discrimination also emerged as significant contributors to psychosocial difficulties. Misunderstandings about autism often result in exclusion from peer groups, reduced participation in school events, and even implicit bias from educators (Uribe-Bahamonde et al., 2023). While several studies acknowledged the negative impact of stigma, few examined the systemic roots of such prejudice or provided in-depth analysis of institutional responses. This represents an important oversight, as inclusive school culture—developed through awareness programs, anti-bullying policies, and teacher training—has been shown to mitigate stigma and improve school belonging (Oakley et al., 2022; Pecora et al., 2021). The absence of large-scale evaluations of school-wide inclusion initiatives is a notable research gap.

Social avoidance, often driven by anxiety and fear of negative judgment, was another recurring challenge (Uribe-Bahamonde et al., 2023; Emily et al., 2021). Avoidance behaviors may provide temporary relief from stress but also limit opportunities for skill development and peer relationship building. Several studies documented the link between avoidance and reduced peer connections, yet only a small number explored peer-mediated interventions as a possible solution. Given evidence from other populations that structured peer-support programs can foster social competence and reduce isolation, this represents a promising but under-researched area.

Peer rejection and bullying featured prominently in the reviewed literature as both causes and consequences of psychosocial difficulties (Gkatsa & Antoniou, 2024). Bullying, whether verbal, physical, or relational, was associated with low self-esteem, helplessness, and chronic stress (Park et al., 2023; Cherewick et al., 2023). Although the prevalence of bullying was high in the reviewed studies, intervention research was surprisingly limited. Much of the literature focused on describing the problem rather than empirically testing targeted anti-bullying strategies for autistic students. This is a significant limitation, especially given that peer relationships are central to the development of social competence and resilience (Bitsika et al., 2021). Future work could investigate proactive, school-wide programs that embed empathy training and restorative practices within the curriculum.

Academic challenges, though less visible than social ones, were also significant. Students with high-functioning autism often face executive functioning difficulties, including problems with time management, organization, and task prioritization (Aubineau & Blicharska, 2020). These challenges can lead to missed deadlines, incomplete assignments, and heightened stress, even when the student has strong subject knowledge. Sensory sensitivities—such as difficulty focusing in noisy classrooms—and high personal or parental

expectations can further exacerbate academic pressures (Maximus & Charity, 2021; Park et al., 2023). Despite these realities, a number of studies in the review relied exclusively on self-reported academic difficulties, potentially underestimating the extent of executive functioning impairments. Observational studies or teacher-report measures would add valuable objectivity to the evidence base.

When it comes to interventions, several strategies emerged as effective, at least in preliminary trials. Structured routines, individualized learning plans, and targeted social skills programs were all associated with improved outcomes (Cherewick et al., 2023). Emotional literacy interventions—teaching students to identify, label, and regulate emotions—were particularly beneficial when integrated into everyday classroom activities rather than delivered as isolated workshops. However, a recurring weakness across many studies was the lack of multi-tiered support systems that integrated these strategies into a coherent, school-wide framework. Without systemic coordination, even the most well-designed interventions risk being inconsistently applied or dependent on individual teacher enthusiasm.

Family involvement was repeatedly identified as a critical success factor. Studies show that when parents are active participants in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and when schools maintain open, collaborative communication with families, students experience more consistent support (Gross et al., 2020; Parchomiuk, 2020). This alignment between home and school not only reinforces coping strategies but also ensures that interventions are culturally and contextually relevant. However, some studies highlighted barriers to family-school collaboration, including time constraints, language differences, and parental experiences of stigma, which warrant further investigation.

A notable limitation across literature is the lack of cultural diversity in research samples. Most studies were conducted in Western contexts, limiting applicability to settings with different educational structures, cultural attitudes toward disability, and resource availability. This is particularly relevant for countries where autism awareness is still emerging, and where stigma may be more deeply entrenched. The absence of published Malaysian research on this topic highlights a clear gap in regional evidence, underscoring the need for localized studies that account for cultural norms, policy environments, and available support services. Methodological weaknesses were also common.

Besides small sample sizes and homogenous demographics, short follow-up periods prevented assessment of whether observed benefits persisted beyond the immediate post-intervention phase. Many studies relied heavily on quantitative surveys, with limited use of qualitative approaches that could capture the lived experiences of autistic students in more depth. Mixed-method designs, combining statistical rigor with rich narrative accounts, could provide a more holistic understanding of needs and outcomes.

In summary, the reviewed literature paints a consistent picture of high-functioning autism as a condition marked by significant psychosocial challenges that extend well beyond the academic domain. Emotional distress, stigma, social avoidance, bullying, and executive functioning difficulties intersect to create complex barriers to both learning and well-being. While existing interventions show promise—particularly those that integrate emotional literacy, structured routines, and family engagement—the evidence base is constrained by methodological limitations and a lack of culturally diverse research. To advance the field, future research should prioritize larger and more diverse samples to enhance generalizability, adopt longitudinal designs to assess the long-term sustainability of intervention outcomes, and integrate qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into lived experiences.

Additionally, system-level intervention studies are needed to evaluate coordinated, multi-tiered approaches that engage teachers, peers, families, and policymakers. Addressing these gaps will enable researchers and practitioners to develop interventions that are both evidence-based and culturally relevant. Ultimately, fostering inclusive, empathetic, and responsive educational environments will require not only targeted support at the student level but also systemic reforms that challenge stigma, strengthen teacher training, and embed neurodiversity-affirming practices into the core of educational systems.

5. Conclusion
In conclusion, this systematic literature review highlights how psychosocial challenges—if unaddressed—can lead to emotional distress, social isolation, and academic difficulties among individuals with high-functioning autism, ultimately affecting long-term mental health and self-esteem. Theoretically, these findings extend existing models of social and emotional development by emphasizing the role of contextual and cultural factors in shaping adaptive outcomes for neurodiverse individuals. Practically, the review underscores the need for coordinated support networks involving families, educators, and community stakeholders to foster resilience and promote meaningful participation.

Educational institutions, in particular, can leverage these insights to design inclusive interventions that integrate social skills training, peer support, and culturally responsive practices. Implementing such measures can enhance both academic and psychosocial outcomes. Future research should evaluate the efficacy of targeted interventions in diverse educational settings to refine theory and guide evidence-based practice.

6. Acknowledgment

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