

Effects of Social Interventions on Vocational Outcomes of Adults with Autism: A Systematic Review



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PURPOSE

- To investigate and systematically review the existing literature concerning the outcomes of interventions containing a social component on post-secondary and vocational outcomes of adults with high functioning autism (HFA) as compared to the absence of such interventions.

BACKGROUND

- Combined statistics show the necessity for understanding the adult transition process for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and the development of interventions to facilitate that process.
 - About 1 in 68 children is identified with ASD according to estimates from CDC's Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network.
 - An estimated 50,000 youth with an ASD turn 18 years old each year in the United States (Shattuck et al., 2012).
- The complex social deficits seen in individuals with autism pose unique concerns for interactions with employers, post-secondary educators, and peers.

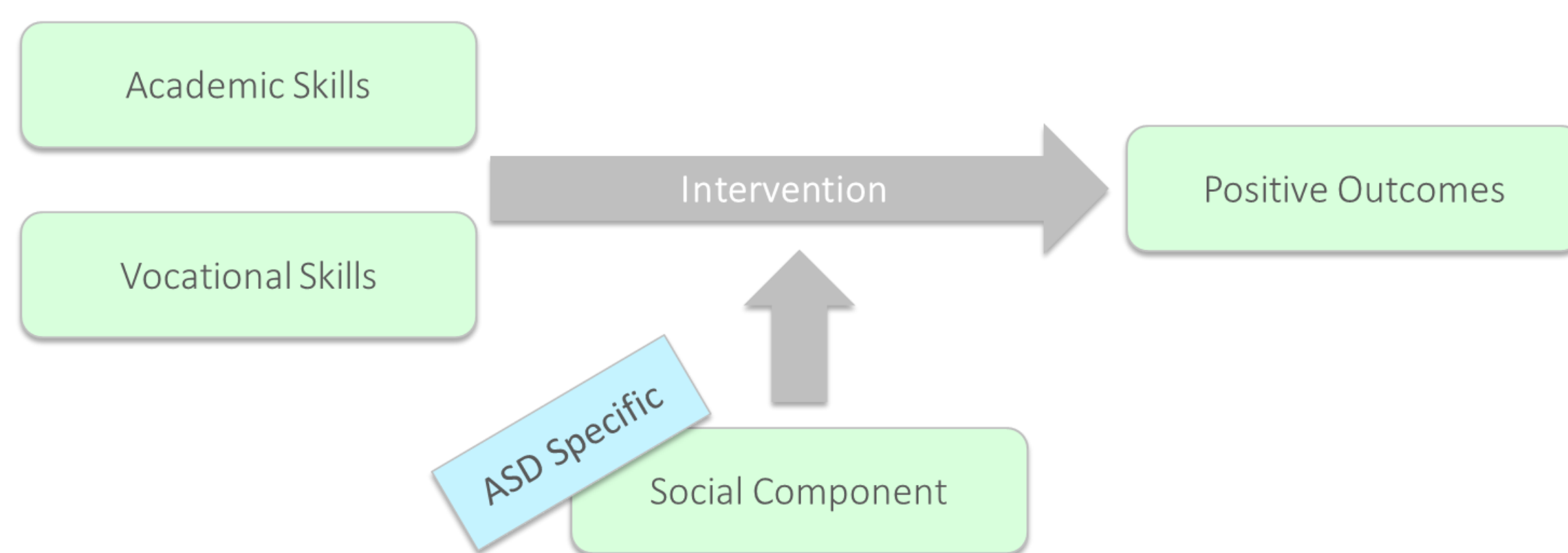


Figure 1. Illustrated need for social interventions for positive vocational and educational outcomes among adults with ASD.

METHODS

- Systematic review timeline: Feb. to Apr., 2016
- Databases:
 - Academic Search Premier
 - CINAHL
 - ERIC
 - PsycInfo
- Inclusion Criteria:
 - Search terms
 - Published between Jan. 2001 and Feb. 2016
 - Peer-reviewed
- All articles considered for inclusion were double-reviewed:
 - After independent title and abstract review for inclusion/exclusion, two articles were determined to be relevant to the vocational outcomes aspect of the clinical question.
 - Three hand-searched items, found through the reference lists of systematically identified articles, were also assessed.

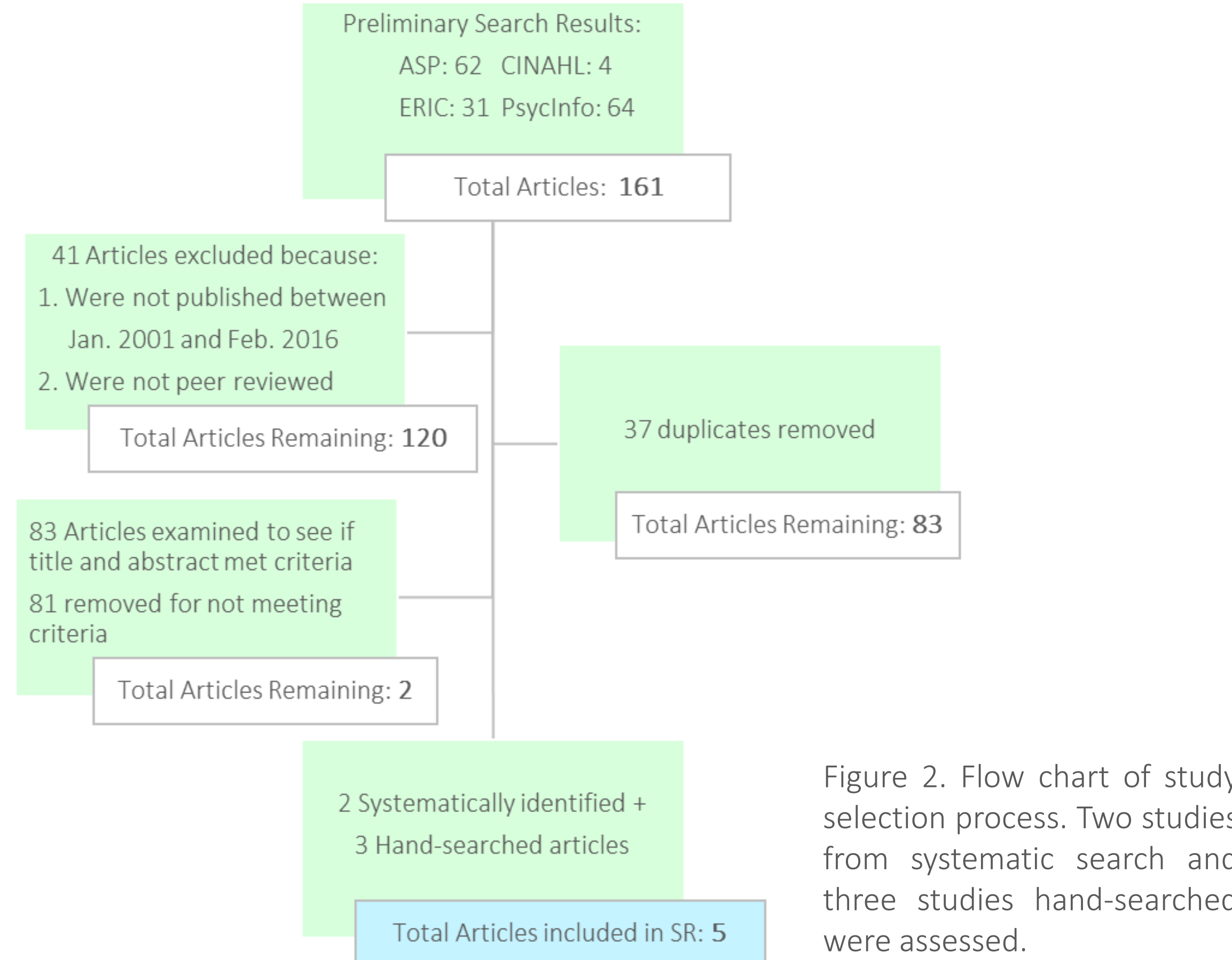


Figure 2. Flow chart of study selection process. Two studies from systematic search and three studies hand-searched were assessed.

RESULTS

- A total of 5 articles met the inclusion criteria:
 - 1 randomized control trial (RCT)
 - 1 systematic review (SR)
 - 2 cohort retrospective designs (Cohort retro.)
 - 1 single-case experimental design (SCED)
- All 5 articles were focused on vocational outcomes, with no articles found discussing the effects of interventions with a social component on post-secondary education outcomes.
- Each article was appraised for quality using standardized checklists by two out of three graduate students, through random assignment. Raters agreed that each study was of lesser quality.
- We found no high quality RCTs that fit our inclusion criteria and addressed the outcomes of interest.

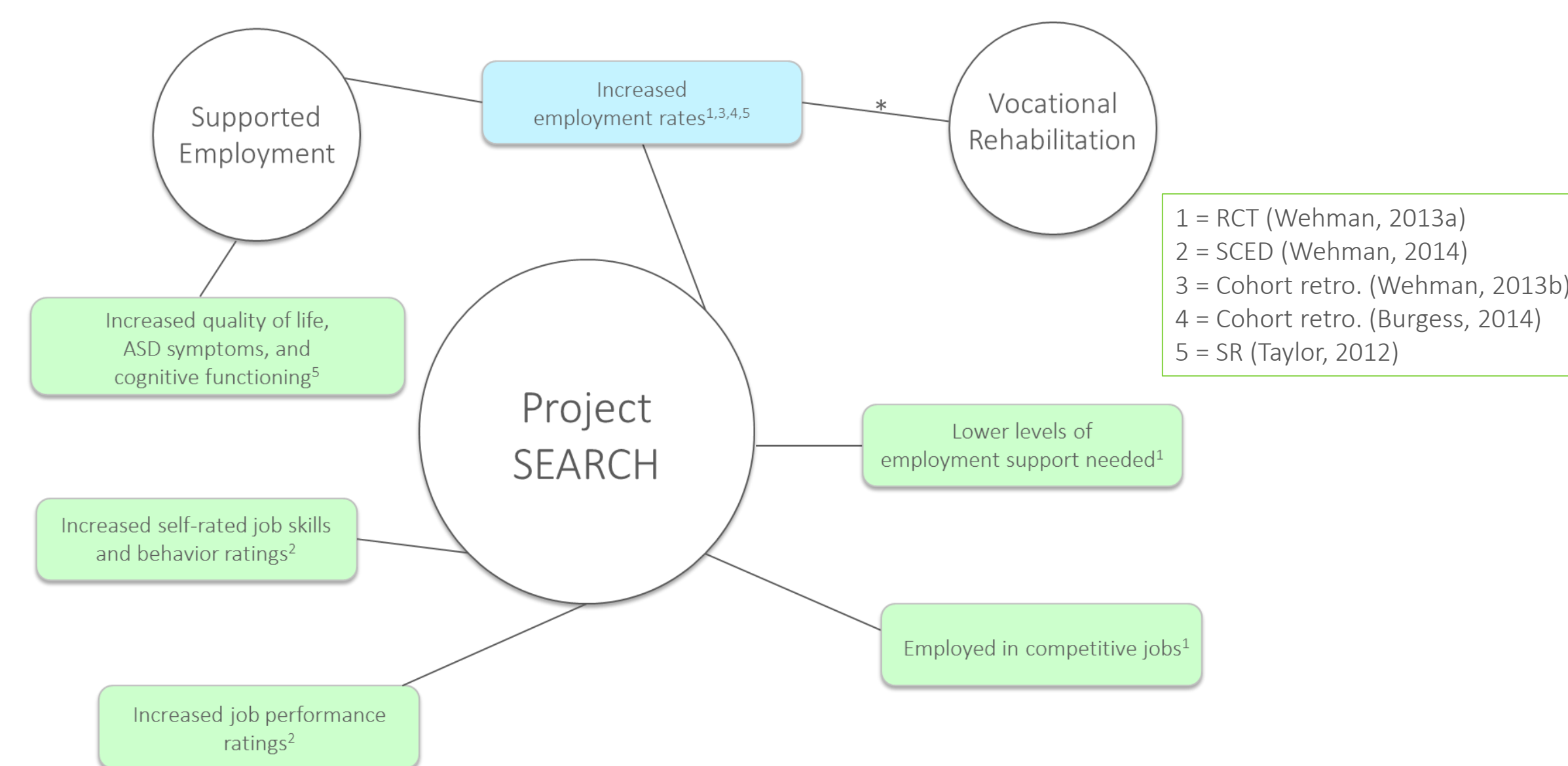


Figure 3. Effects of employment supports/interventions on vocational outcomes of adults with ASD: Comparison between those with ASD who received the service and those with ASD who did not receive the service (* denotes comparison between transition-aged adults with ASD and general population served by the VR).

DISCUSSION

- There is a lack of high-quality literature examining the effect of interventions with a social component on post-secondary education and vocational outcomes for transition-aged adults with ASD.
- Project SEARCH shows promising preliminary results regarding interventions leading to successful outcomes for young adults with HFA.
- Future directions:
 - RCT should be conducted to assess the outcomes of specific interventions.
 - More social intervention comparison research is needed to provide multiple options for young adults with ASD as they approach transition.
 - More research addressing post-secondary education outcomes is also needed; currently no studies were identified in this systematic review.

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DISCLOSURES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.