

Research on the Inclusion of Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Educational Strategies, Attitudes, and Resources from an Integrative Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines the inclusion of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in educational settings, aiming to identify effective strategies, understand key attitudes, and assess the availability of resources to foster equitable and inclusive education. **Methodology:** An integrative systematic review was conducted, analyzing studies published between 2000 and 2023 in databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, Dialnet, and PubMed. The studies were selected through a rigorous inclusion and exclusion process. **Results:** Strategies such as cooperative learning and assistive technologies proved to be effective, although their success depends on contextual factors such as teacher training and resource availability. Positive attitudes from educators, families, and peers are essential, while stigma and negative perceptions perpetuate barriers. Disparities in resource distribution, especially in underserved regions, hinder equitable inclusion. **Conclusion and practical implications:** The inclusion of students with ASD requires evidence-based strategies, positive attitudes, and equitable resources. Continuous teacher training, policy reforms, and personalized interventions are crucial. Future research should address multicultural contexts and evaluate the long-term sustainability of inclusive practices.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, inclusive education, equitable resources, attitudes toward inclusion

INTRODUCTION

Educational inclusion is a cornerstone of contemporary school systems, particularly in the case of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This neurodevelopmental condition, characterized by difficulties in social communication and restrictive, repetitive patterns of behavior, poses specific challenges that affect both social integration and academic performance. Ensuring effective inclusion for this group of students is not only an ethical and legal commitment but also a key requirement for advancing toward equitable and high-quality educational systems (Tárraga et al., 2022).

At the international level, regulatory frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) emphasize the importance of providing quality education in inclusive environments, regardless of students' individual characteristics. However, the practical implementation of these principles faces significant barriers. These include limitations in teacher training, insufficient resources, and negative attitudes toward diversity, which hinder the creation of genuinely inclusive environments. This challenge is particularly acute in the case of students with ASD, given their specific needs and the stigma often associated with the diagnosis (Martínez y Andrés, 2016).

Educational strategies play a crucial role in promoting inclusion, as they enable schools to adapt to students' individual needs (González et al., 2022). These strategies include approaches such as the use of visual supports,

assistive technologies, behavioral interventions, and programs focused on developing social skills. Nevertheless, their effectiveness is not uniform and varies depending on factors such as teachers' level of training, the availability of resources, and the characteristics of the school environment. This underscores the importance of systematically analyzing their impact in order to identify practices that yield the best outcomes across different contexts (García and Hernández, 2016).

Furthermore, attitudes toward inclusion on the part of teachers, families, and peers are decisive for the success of inclusive efforts (Solís, 2023). Recent studies suggest that positive attitudes are associated with a greater willingness to implement inclusive practices and to create more favorable learning environments. Conversely, negative attitudes perpetuate stigmas that limit the educational and social opportunities of students with ASD. This analysis is particularly relevant in contexts where cultural prejudices or lack of knowledge about the disorder persist (González et al., 2022).

In addition to strategies and attitudes, educational resources constitute another essential pillar of effective inclusion (Muñoz et al., 2023). These range from specialized teacher training to the provision of adapted materials and technologies that support communication and learning. However, the unequal distribution of such resources generates significant disparities in inclusion opportunities between regions and socioeconomic contexts. It is therefore essential to examine how the presence or absence of these resources affects both the academic performance and social integration of students with ASD.

Within this framework, ensuring the educational inclusion of students with ASD requires a comprehensive approach that considers pedagogical strategies, the attitudes of educational stakeholders, and the availability of resources. Accordingly, this study aims to deepen the analysis of the factors that contribute to creating more inclusive and equitable school environments by reviewing previous research. To this end, it analyzes educational strategies proven to be effective, the attitudes of teachers, families, and students toward inclusion, and the essential role of educational resources in the overall well-being and development of students with ASD. The ultimate goal is to provide insights that foster the implementation of more effective and sustainable inclusive practices.

METHOD

Procedure

A systematic search of the scientific literature was conducted to identify studies addressing educational strategies, attitudes, and resources used in the inclusion and socialization of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The process began with a consultation of international databases including Web of Science, Scopus, WoS, and PubMed, selecting studies published between 2000 and 2023. These databases were chosen for their wide coverage in the educational and psychological fields, ensuring a broad and updated scope.

Search terms included "ASD," "inclusive strategies," "educational inclusion," "socialization in education," and "attitudes toward students with ASD," combined with Boolean operators ("AND" and "OR") to obtain more specific results. From this initial search, 950 potentially relevant articles were identified.

After an initial screening to remove duplicates, the titles and abstracts of the remaining studies were reviewed, which allowed the exclusion of those not directly related to the purpose of this integrative systematic review. The preselected studies were then subjected to a full-text review, applying specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that only relevant and high-quality research was considered.

Objectives

Ensuring the educational inclusion of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) represents a key challenge for contemporary school systems. Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the factors that contribute to the creation of more inclusive and equitable environments by reviewing previous research. Within this framework, the following objectives are established:

To analyze educational strategies implemented in diverse school contexts, identifying those practices that have proven effective in promoting learning, social interaction, and active participation of students with ASD.

To explore the attitudes of key educational stakeholders, including teachers, students, and families, toward the inclusion of students with ASD, highlighting how these perceptions influence the creation of more inclusive educational environments.

To evaluate the role of available educational resources, such as teacher training, assistive technologies, and adapted materials, in enhancing educational opportunities and the overall well-being of students with ASD.

Review Design

This study adopts an integrative systematic review approach, combining qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method evidence to provide a comprehensive analysis of educational strategies, attitudes, and resources associated with the inclusion of students with ASD. This approach is particularly relevant because it allows the integration of diverse methodological perspectives, offering a more complete and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Through this review, the objective is not only to identify effective practices but also to examine how these practices relate to the attitudes of educational stakeholders and the resources available. Additionally, the integrative systematic review facilitates the identification of patterns and gaps in the literature, which is key to guiding future research and designing interventions that address the diversity and complexity of educational contexts. This holistic perspective offers a valuable framework for understanding the multiple factors influencing the inclusion of students with ASD, providing a solid foundation for promoting more inclusive and equitable educational policies and practices.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure methodological rigor, a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria was established and consistently applied throughout the review process. Only empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals and written in either Spanish or English were considered eligible. These studies had to evaluate educational strategies aimed specifically at students with Autism Spectrum Disorder within school contexts, and they were required to include measures directly related to educational inclusion, socialization, or attitudes toward students with ASD. Preference was given to research employing experimental or quasi-experimental designs, as well as longitudinal studies that provided comparative analyses between control and experimental groups. Furthermore, only those investigations that presented sufficient statistical data, such as means, standard deviations, or effect sizes, were retained, since these elements were considered essential for ensuring the robustness of the analysis.

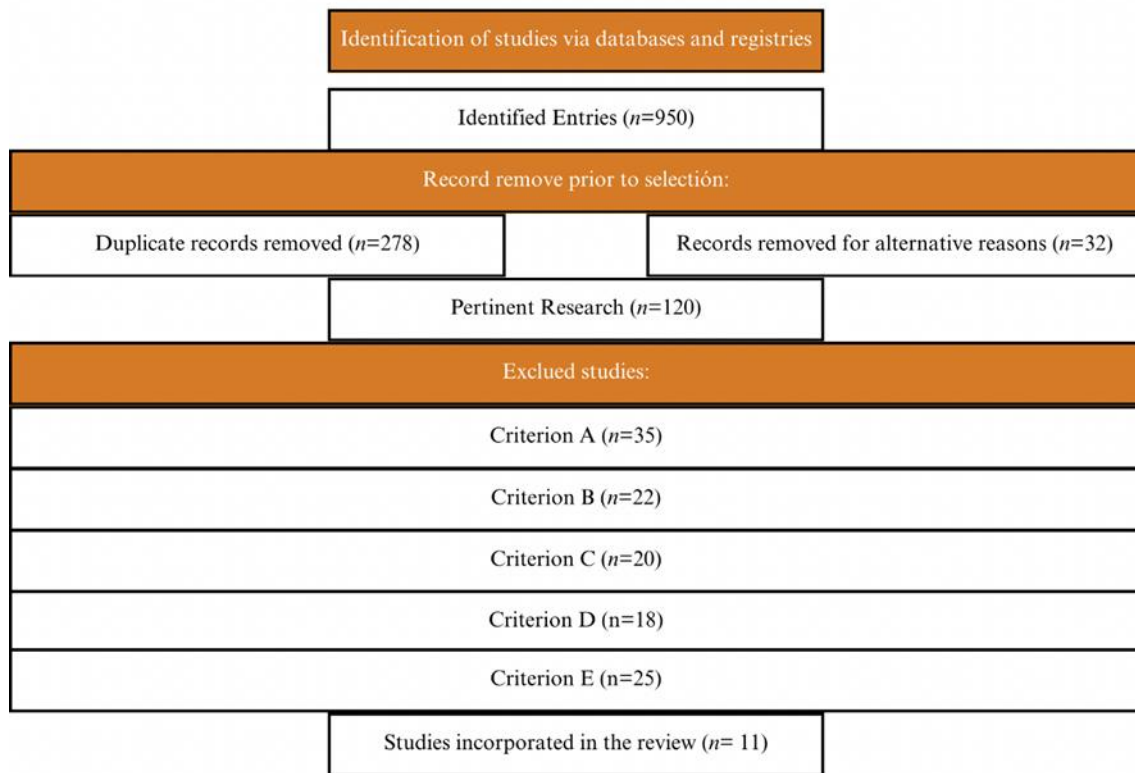
In contrast, several types of publications were excluded from the review. Studies conducted in non-educational contexts, such as clinical interventions or family-centered environments, were not incorporated, as they fell outside the educational focus of this work. Similarly, publications written in languages other than Spanish or English were excluded in order to guarantee accessibility and comparability. The review also excluded literature reviews, theoretical essays, editorials, or other documents that did not present empirical evidence. In addition, studies that lacked sufficient statistical detail or did not specify the population under analysis were disregarded. This criterion was especially relevant in cases where participants did not belong to the educational setting or where the population was described too broadly to ensure the focus on students with ASD.

By establishing these boundaries, the review sought to guarantee that the final selection of studies was both methodologically sound and directly relevant to the objectives of the investigation. The application of these criteria enabled the refinement of the sample, ensuring that the body of evidence analyzed was coherent, reliable, and representative of the most significant contributions in the field of educational inclusion of students with ASD.

Study Search and Selection

The selection process began with the identification of 950 articles after the initial database search (Web of Science, Scopus, WoS, and PubMed). Following the removal of 278 duplicates, the titles and abstracts of the remaining 672 articles were reviewed to determine relevance. Of these, 552 were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria, leaving a total of 120 studies for further evaluation.

The full texts of these 120 studies were thoroughly examined to apply the inclusion and exclusion criteria described above. This process resulted in the final selection of 11 articles, which constituted the core of this integrative systematic review. During this stage, thematic relevance, methodological quality, and clarity in the presentation of results were prioritized.

**Figure 1.** Flowchart Diagram

RESULTS

The results section is based on a thorough analysis of the selected studies, which were organized around the main thematic dimensions identified: educational strategies, attitudes toward inclusion, and educational resources. This process involved a systematic classification of the extracted data, prioritizing the relevance and methodological quality of each investigation. In addition, an evidence map was incorporated to synthesize the key contributions of each study, providing a comprehensive overview of practices, perceptions, and resources related to the educational inclusion of students with ASD across different geographical and methodological contexts.

Each subsection in this part of the analysis delves into a key dimension: the geographical distribution of the studies reveals patterns of concentration in developed countries compared to underrepresented regions; the proportion of methodologies used highlights the predominance of quantitative approaches, followed by qualitative and mixed methods; and the main categories addressed in the studies explore aspects such as specific pedagogical strategies, the attitudes of educational stakeholders, and the availability of resources. This approach provides a solid foundation for understanding the current landscape of educational inclusion of students with ASD and for identifying areas that require greater research attention.

Table 2. Evidence Map of the Studies

Category	Authors	Year	Methodology	Country	Main Findings
Educational Strategies	Bansal	2018	Quantitative	India	Teachers face multiple barriers in applying inclusive education, highlighting the urgent need for specialized training and institutional support.
	Bolourian et al.	2022	Mixed (Quantitative and Qualitative)	USA	Teachers identified key practices such as assigning specific roles and supporting the interests of students with ASD to foster inclusion in mainstream classrooms.
	Sepúlveda et al.	2010	Mixed (Quantitative and Qualitative)	Spain	Teachers' attitudes play an essential role in the effective inclusion of students with autism, underscoring the importance of awareness and continuous professional development.
	Pérez	2020	Quantitative	Perú	The relationship between parents' knowledge and attitudes toward autism has a direct impact on the educational adaptation of students.

Attitudes toward Inclusion	Moro et al.	2015	Qualitative	Spain	It is necessary to empower families and improve communication about the diagnosis to provide comprehensive support, thereby promoting the social acceptance of ASD.
	Martínez y Roqueta	2016	Mixed (Quantitative and Qualitative)	Spain	Interventions aimed at developing linguistic and emotional skills are essential to improving socialization in educational settings.
	Muñoz y Rueda	2023	Qualitative	Spain	The educational inclusion of students with ASD depends on teacher collaboration, positive attitudes toward diversity, and the implementation of strategies based on cooperation and mutual support. These factors contribute to promoting inclusive school environments that enhance learning and social participation.
	Jury et al.	2021	Quantitative	Francia	Attitudes toward inclusion are less positive for students with ASD compared to those with other disabilities, particularly among general education teachers. Specialized training improves these attitudes, although differences related to stereotypes about ASD persist..
	Martínez y Ferrando	2022	Quantitative	Spain	The lack of adequate resources and trained personnel are critical obstacles to family satisfaction and the success of students with ASD.
Resources and School Support	Larcombe et al.	2019	Mixed (Quantitative and Qualitative)	Australia	A well-prepared inclusive school environment with specific resources is key to supporting the school transition of students with ASD.
	Li et al.	2022	Qualitative	China	The implementation of inclusive strategies for students with ASD faces barriers due to limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and cultural stigmas. However, teachers actively work to support inclusion through adaptations and collaboration with families, highlighting the importance of adequate educational resources.

Data Extraction and Coding

The process of data extraction and coding was structured to address the key dimensions identified in the data analysis, allowing the examination of aspects related to the geographical distribution of the studies, the proportion of methodologies employed, and the main categories discussed in the literature. This approach ensured a systematic and consistent organization of the information, with the aim of building a solid foundation for the integrative systematic review.

Geographical distribution of the studies: The countries and regions of each investigation were recorded in order to identify patterns of concentration in developed contexts as well as gaps in underrepresented regions. This information makes it possible to analyze how educational policies and resources vary according to context.

Proportion of methodologies employed: The studies were classified as quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods. This facilitated the identification of how each approach contributes to the analysis, ranging from the collection of statistical data to the exploration of subjective experiences.

Main categories addressed: The predominant thematic categories in the studies focused on educational strategies, attitudes toward inclusion, and educational resources. Educational strategies included interventions such as the use of assistive technologies, visual supports, and cooperative learning methods, all designed to facilitate the integration of students with ASD into school environments. Attitudes toward inclusion were assessed through the perceptions and experiences of teachers, families, and classmates, underscoring their influence on the effectiveness of strategies and the creation of inclusive environments. Finally, educational resources were analyzed in terms of their availability and quality, including specialized staff, teacher training, and adapted materials as critical factors for the success of inclusive initiatives.

The coding process was supervised by the authors to ensure reliability, with a Cohen's Kappa index of 0.87 calculated, indicating a high level of agreement. Discrepancies were resolved through joint discussion until consensus was reached (Figure 1).

In addition, this coding approach not only ensured the systematization of information but also made it possible to align the data obtained with the general objectives of the integrative systematic review. The process was carefully designed to ensure that the findings extracted directly addressed the aims of the study, focusing on identifying

effective educational strategies, attitudes, and resources for the inclusion of students with ASD. The systematic classification of key dimensions, such as the geographical distribution of studies, the methodologies employed, and the predominant thematic categories, contributed to building a coherent analytical framework. In this way, the coding transformed disaggregated data into meaningful evidence, capable of supporting practical recommendations and guiding future research.

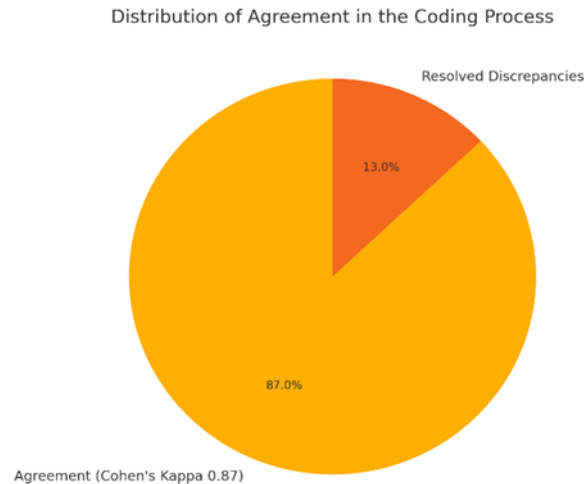


Figure 2. Distribution of agreement in the coding process

Data Analysis

The richness of the information obtained allowed for an analysis structured around three fundamental axes: the geographical distribution of the studies, the methodologies employed, and the main categories addressed. These aspects not only contribute to understanding the current state of research in this field but also point to gaps and opportunities for future exploration.

Geographical distribution of the studies

One of the first analyses carried out involved examining the geographical distribution of the included studies. This aspect is crucial for understanding how academic production on the inclusion and socialization of students with ASD is distributed at a global level. The findings reveal a greater concentration of studies in developed countries, particularly in those with consolidated inclusive education systems, such as the United States, Canada, and several Western European nations. These results are consistent with the fact that these countries typically allocate greater resources to research and to the development of inclusive educational policies.

By contrast, low- and middle-income countries are underrepresented in the reviewed literature, despite the fact that the needs for inclusion in these contexts may be even more pressing. This geographical imbalance raises significant questions about equity in educational research and about the applicability of strategies developed in resource-rich contexts to regions facing economic and social constraints.

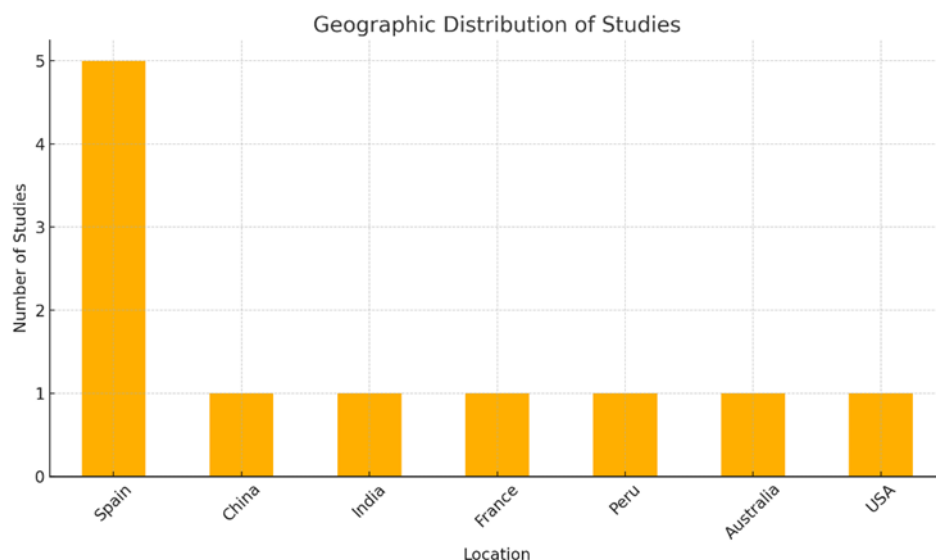


Figure 3. Geographical distribution of the studies

Proportion of Methodologies Used

From a methodological perspective, the studies analyzed present an interesting combination of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches. However, a predominance of quantitative methods is evident in the evaluation of educational strategies, particularly in studies focused on specific interventions such as the use of assistive technologies or evidence-based programs designed to foster social skills in students with ASD.

Qualitative studies, in turn, have played a fundamental role in exploring the perceptions and attitudes of teachers, families, and the students themselves toward inclusion. These works provide a deeper and more nuanced perspective on the barriers and facilitators of socialization and participation within school settings. Finally, although less common, mixed-method approaches offer a valuable integration of quantitative and qualitative data, contributing a more holistic perspective to the analysis.

This methodological balance reflects an increasing diversification in the ways inclusive strategies are studied, while also pointing to the need to strengthen the combination of approaches in order to produce more comprehensive and meaningful results.

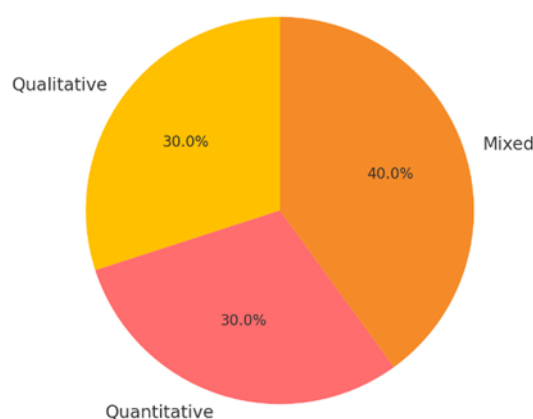


Figure 4. Proportion of methodologies used

Main Categories Addressed in the Studies

Finally, a thematic analysis was carried out on the main categories addressed in the reviewed studies. Three major areas emerged as predominant:

a) Educational strategies: This dimension focuses on specific practices implemented by teachers in the classroom to facilitate the inclusion and learning of students with ASD. It encompasses approaches such as cooperative learning, the use of adapted technological resources, and curricular differentiation.

b) Attitudes toward inclusion: Many studies examined the attitudes of teachers, families, and peers toward the inclusion of students with ASD. Positive attitudes were identified as a crucial factor for the success of educational strategies, whereas negative attitudes or a lack of knowledge constituted common barriers.

c) Resources and school support: The importance of having adequate resources was highlighted, including specialized staff, continuous teacher training, and adapted materials. This category also encompasses the influence of educational policies and access to funding in the implementation of inclusive strategies.

The analysis of these categories makes it possible to shed light on the aspects most frequently studied in the literature, as well as to identify emerging topics or areas requiring further research, such as the impact of inclusion in multicultural contexts and the experiences of students with ASD in countries with less developed educational systems.

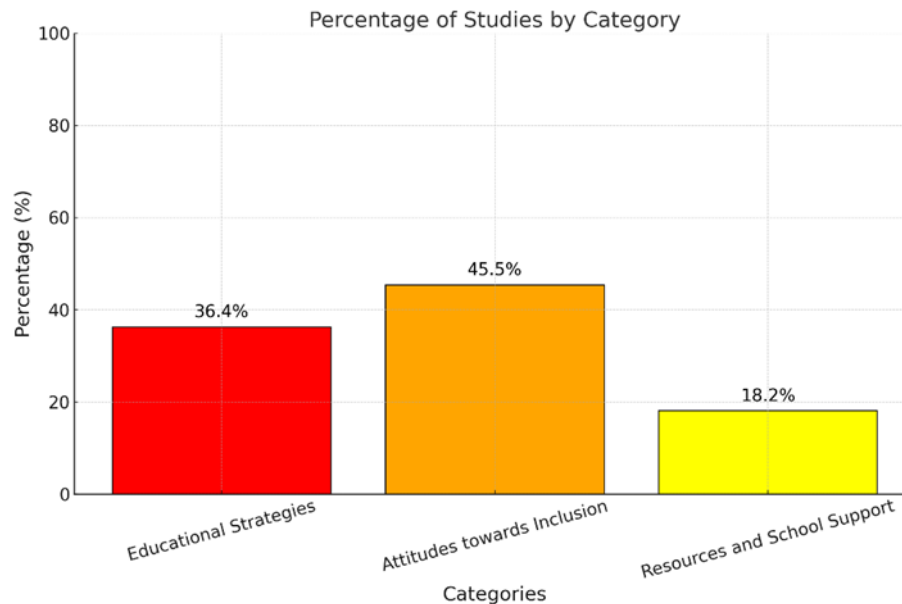


Figure 5. Main categories addressed in the studies

DISCUSSION

The results obtained provide a comprehensive and in-depth overview of the educational strategies, attitudes toward inclusion, and educational resources that have been implemented in different contexts to foster the inclusion and socialization of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Educational strategies emerge as an essential component, with particular emphasis on those that adapt the school environment to the specific needs of students. Among the most effective are cooperative learning methods, which promote interaction between students with ASD and their neurotypical peers, facilitating both academic development and social integration. In addition to improving academic outcomes, these practices contribute to building a culture of inclusion within the classroom (Bansal, 2018; Bolourian et al., 2022; Sepúlveda et al., 2010; Pérez, 2020). Likewise, the use of assistive technologies and visual support systems has proven fundamental for the communication and learning of students with ASD. These tools not only provide more equitable access to educational content but also enable students to develop greater autonomy in their school activities (Bolourian et al., 2022).

Despite their potential, the effectiveness of these strategies is not uniform. The studies analyzed highlight that the success of such interventions depends on multiple contextual factors, such as teachers' prior training, the availability of resources within the school, and the attitudes of the actors involved. This underscores the need for an adaptive approach that considers the individual characteristics of each student and the specific conditions of the educational environment. Bansal (2018) stresses that continuous teacher training is essential for the effective application of inclusive strategies, particularly in resource-limited settings. Furthermore, the findings of Sepúlveda et al. (2010) point out that contextual factors such as institutional support are decisive in the success of strategies, since a lack of adequate resources may hinder the implementation of inclusive practices.

With respect to attitudes toward inclusion, their influence on the success of the strategies implemented is decisive. The reviewed studies emphasize that positive attitudes among teachers, families, and classmates foster more inclusive educational environments, while negative or indifferent attitudes perpetuate barriers that limit the educational and social opportunities of students with ASD. Positive attitudes are often associated with awareness and diversity training programs, which help reduce prejudice and improve understanding of students' needs. Moro et al. (2015) underscore the importance of empowering families to provide the necessary support to their children with ASD, as well as improving communication about the diagnosis. Martínez and Roqueta (2016) emphasize that

the development of linguistic and emotional skills is crucial for improving the social integration of students with ASD. Similarly, Muñoz and Rueda (2023) explain that teacher collaboration, positive attitudes toward diversity, and the implementation of cooperation-based strategies are factors that contribute to the creation of inclusive school environments. However, Jury et al. (2021) observe that attitudes toward inclusion tend to be less positive for students with ASD compared to those with other disabilities, particularly among general education teachers. Despite this, specialized training has been shown to improve attitudes, although stereotypes related to ASD persist (Jury et al., 2021). Martínez and Ferrando (2022) also point out that the lack of adequate resources and qualified personnel remains a significant obstacle to family satisfaction and to the success of students with ASD.

On the other hand, the availability of educational resources stands out as another critical pillar. The analyzed studies reflect a direct relationship between the quality and quantity of available resources and the effectiveness of inclusive practices. The presence of specialized staff, such as occupational therapists and psychologists, continuous teacher training, and the provision of adapted materials are key factors that determine the success of inclusive initiatives. Larcombe et al. (2019) emphasize that a well-prepared school environment with adequate resources is essential for the school transition of students with ASD. Li et al. (2022) also highlight that adequate educational resources, including family collaboration and the implementation of specific adaptations, are fundamental to overcoming barriers to inclusion. However, the review reveals significant inequality in the distribution of these resources, creating substantial disparities between regions with different levels of economic development. This situation underscores the need for educational policies that ensure a fairer distribution of resources, particularly in vulnerable contexts (Larcombe et al., 2019; Li et al., 2022).

Additionally, important gaps in the literature were identified, such as the scarcity of research addressing inclusion experiences in multicultural contexts or in countries with less developed educational systems. This finding highlights the need to broaden the scope of future research to include populations that have traditionally been underrepresented. Furthermore, the lack of longitudinal studies analyzing the long-term impact of inclusive strategies limits understanding of their sustainability and effectiveness over time.

In conclusion, the results obtained demonstrate a complex interaction between strategies, attitudes, and resources in the process of educational inclusion for students with ASD. Although educational strategies are essential, their impact largely depends on the attitudes of the actors involved and the availability of adequate resources. The findings reflect that inclusion cannot be understood as an isolated effort but rather as a multifaceted process that requires coordinated planning, awareness among educational stakeholders, and policies that guarantee equitable resources. These dynamics highlight the importance of continuing to investigate and implement innovative practices that respond to the specific needs of this population, thereby advancing toward a stronger and more sustainable model of inclusive education.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this integrative systematic review provide valuable insights into the educational inclusion of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), identifying key elements that can guide both educational practice and future research. This study has synthesized evidence on educational strategies, attitudes toward inclusion, and the necessary resources, highlighting the dynamic interaction between these factors and their impact on the social and academic integration of students with ASD.

In terms of the main lessons learned, the most effective educational strategies are those that adapt to the individual needs of students and promote their active participation in the school environment. Interventions such as cooperative learning, the use of assistive technologies, and visual support systems have proven to be valuable tools for improving both academic performance and socialization. However, these findings also emphasize the importance of considering contextual factors, such as teachers' level of training and the availability of infrastructure, which ultimately determine the implementation and effectiveness of these strategies. The positive attitudes of educational stakeholders, particularly teachers and peers, emerge as a crucial factor, as they facilitate the use of inclusive practices and contribute to reducing the stigmas that affect students with ASD. Finally, the availability of adequate resources—such as specialized staff, adapted materials, and continuous training—is confirmed as an indispensable pillar for achieving sustainable and effective inclusion.

The implications for educational practice are clear. To promote effective inclusion, it is essential to design and implement teacher training programs that not only address the use of specific pedagogical tools but also foster a deeper understanding of the needs of students with ASD. Furthermore, educational institutions must establish policies that promote an inclusive culture, implementing awareness programs to reduce the stigmas associated with ASD and encouraging positive changes in the attitudes of all stakeholders. An additional priority is the equitable allocation of educational resources, particularly in economically disadvantaged contexts, to ensure that all students have access to the supports they need.

With regard to future research, this review has identified several significant gaps in the literature. It is crucial to conduct studies in multicultural contexts and in countries with lower levels of economic development to expand knowledge of how inclusion is manifested and addressed in diverse settings. Moreover, longitudinal research is needed to evaluate the sustainability and long-term impact of educational strategies on the inclusion of students with ASD. It would also be valuable to explore how educational policies influence equity, the availability of resources, and the attitudes of educational stakeholders toward inclusion. This approach would not only strengthen existing inclusive practices but also support the design of more innovative and effective interventions that respond to the evolving needs of students with ASD.

Ultimately, the lessons derived from this study underscore the importance of combining evidence-based practices, inclusive policies, and awareness-raising strategies to guarantee quality education for all students. This effort not only benefits students with ASD but also contributes to the construction of more equitable and cohesive educational systems.

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