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## Search Strategy

### Identification of Studies

An initial scoping search was conducted using Google Scholar and the search results led to the identification of the key terms which were used in the systematic search. The scoping search also supported the generation of a targeted search question ('To what extent does the Social Stories intervention support the development of social skills and interactions in pre-school and Primary-aged autistic children?'). Search terms were generated as a result of the scoping search and question. These terms were applied to the PICOS framework (Higgins et al., 2019), seen in table 1.

The identified search terms were used to search the titles and abstracts of papers, including both published papers and grey literature. This was conducted on 4 March 2024 using the following databases: PsycInfo, MEDLINE, CINAHL, Web of Science and ProQuest Dissertation and Thesis Global Database. The decision was made to include grey literature as this can provide a more balanced overview of the evidence as part of systematic literature reviews (Paez, 2017).

**Table 1**

*Search Terms Applied to the PICOS Framework*

	Search terms
Population (P)	child* OR "young person" OR student* OR learner* OR pupil* OR school-age* OR primary-age* AND "autism" OR "autistic" OR "ASD" OR "ASC"
Intervention (I)	"social stories" OR "social story"
Comparison (C)	N/A
Outcome (O)	"social skill*" OR "social interaction*"
Setting (S)	school* OR "primary school" OR "pre-school" OR education OR classroom*

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria



The inclusion and exclusion criteria which were used in the search, for the purpose of filtering the identified literature, can be seen below in table 2. The search was limited to reports published during 2021 or later in an attempt to capture research which used the 2021 Social Stories guidelines (Gray et al., 2021).

**Table 2**

*Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Intervention specified as Social Stories. Social Stories used alone.	Intervention not specified as Social Stories. Social Stories used in combination with another intervention.
Participants aged 3 – 11 years old.	Participants aged below 3 or above 11 years old.
Participants described as autistic. Empirical study.	Participants not described as being autistic. Paper of another type (e.g., review, commentary).
School-based intervention. Outcome measure was associated with social skills or social interaction.	Intervention not carried out in a school. Outcome measure was not social skills or social interaction.
Paper published in 2021 or later.	Paper published before 2021.
Published in English.	Published in a language other than English.
Full text available	Full text not available

**PRISMA Diagram**

The PRISMA (Page et al., 2021) flow diagram has been included to show the flow of studies through this review. The initial search terms, detailed in table 1, identified 165 records, 44 of which were duplicates. The titles and abstracts of the remaining 121 records were screened for relevance and 31 of these were sought for retrieval. There were 28 reports which met the inclusion criteria and could be retrieved; these were read in full.

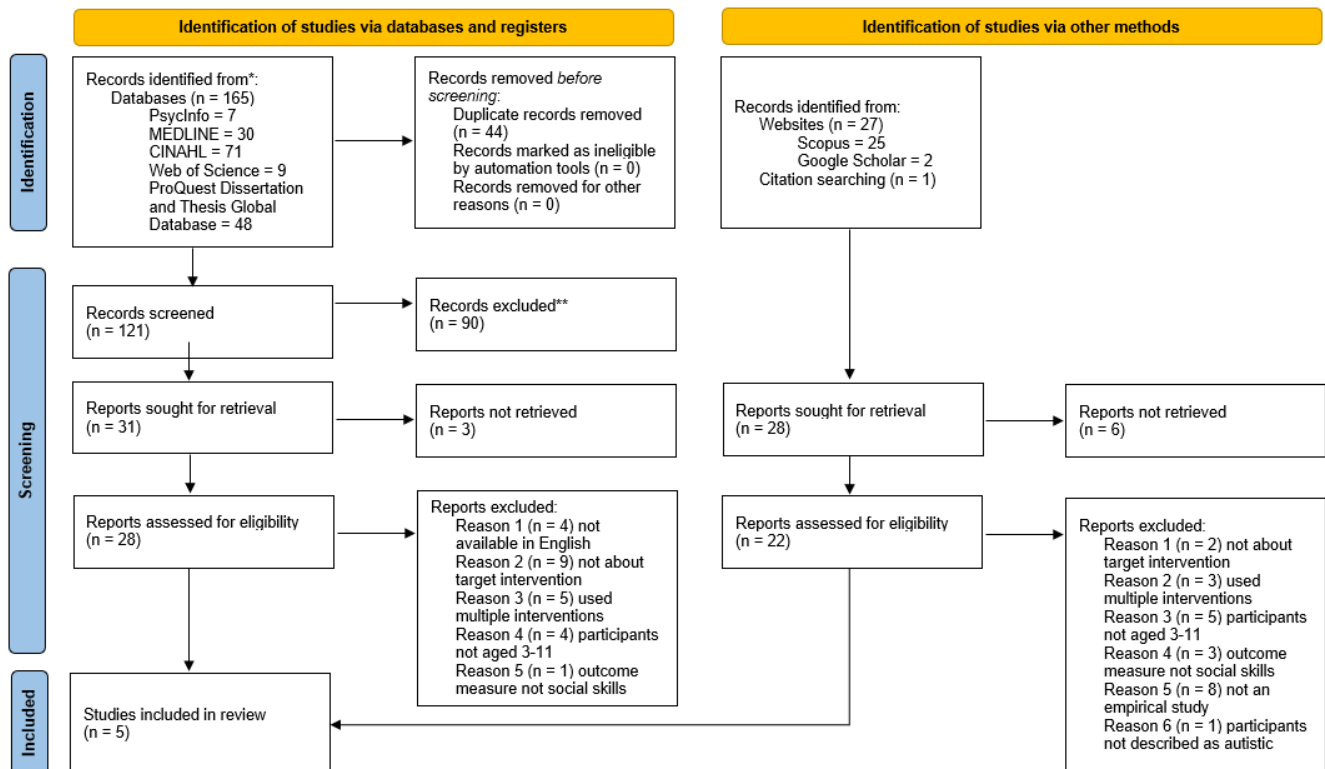
After reading the 28 reports, 23 of these were excluded. For four of these reports, the full texts were not available in English, despite the title and abstract being written in English. In nine of the reports, Social Stories was not used as the target intervention. Five of the reports were excluded because they used multiple interventions and it would have been

difficult to ascertain whether any changes in children's social skills or interactions were due to the Social Stories intervention or the other intervention/s which were implemented. For four of the reports, participants were not within the age range of 3 – 11 years, so these were excluded. One report was excluded as the outcome measure was not social skills or interactions. This left five reports for inclusion (Akgün-Giray & Ergenekon, 2022; Bălaş-Baconschi & Bărbulescu, 2022; Kwon et al., 2023; Safi et al., 2021; Tamerat, 2023).

An additional 28 articles were found through hand searching the reference lists of the identified studies and by applying the search terms from table A1 to two additional databases, Scopus and Google Scholar. Six of these reports could not be accessed and all others did not meet the inclusion criteria. Details of this can be seen in figure 1 below. In total, five studies were included in the final review.

**Figure 1**

*PRISMA Diagram (Page et al., 2021)*



\*Consider, if feasible to do so, reporting the number of records identified from each database or register searched (rather than the total number across all databases/registers).

\*\*If automation tools were used, indicate how many records were excluded by a human and how many were excluded by automation tools.