

Student Veterans' Experiences in Post-Secondary Education from an Occupational-Based Perspective

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Abstract

- **Purpose:** To gather evidence on the unique occupational barriers that impact student veterans' transition to higher education.
- **Design:** Systematic review.
- **Method:** Peer-reviewed articles were reviewed using electronic databases (EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, and AJOT). The search focused on articles published in 2011 or later.
- **Results:** 29 studies met inclusion criteria. Analysis of articles found 4 similar themes. Results indicate a positive correlation between occupational therapy interventions and postsecondary education success. Faculty education provides support and helps ease transition for student veterans.

PIO Questions

1. What occupational barriers impact performance in higher education according to student veteran's perceptions?
2. How can occupational therapists and faculty reduce barriers student veterans face during transitioning that impact their educational journey?

Introduction

- Veterans enrolling in higher education is at an increased rate due to the Post-9/11 GI Bill.
- Student veterans make up a unique population on college campuses and the barriers they face when transitioning to higher education differ from those of traditional students.
- These occupational barriers often impact their success at post-secondary institutions.
- Occupational therapists have skills to provide treatment to address occupational barriers that individuals encounter.
- Faculty members often lack training regarding the student veteran population.
- There exists limited research on the occupational barriers that impact student veterans and how occupational therapists, and faculty can play a vital role in reducing these barriers.

(Tomar & Stoffel, 2014; Williston & Roemer, 2017)

Methods

- Electronic databases were searched and included: EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, and AJOT.
- Inclusion criteria:
 - Published 2011 or later
 - Peer-reviewed
 - Written in the English language
 - Mentioned any of the following terms: veteran, college, occupational therapy, faculty
- Exclusion criteria:
 - Published before 2011
 - Not peer-reviewed
 - Not written in the English language
 - Did not mention any of the terms from the inclusion criteria
- Full-text articles were read and analyzed by one researcher.
- Articles were synthesized and themes regarding occupational barriers were selected.
- Of the 831 articles found from the search terms, 29 articles matched the inclusion criteria. (Figure 1)

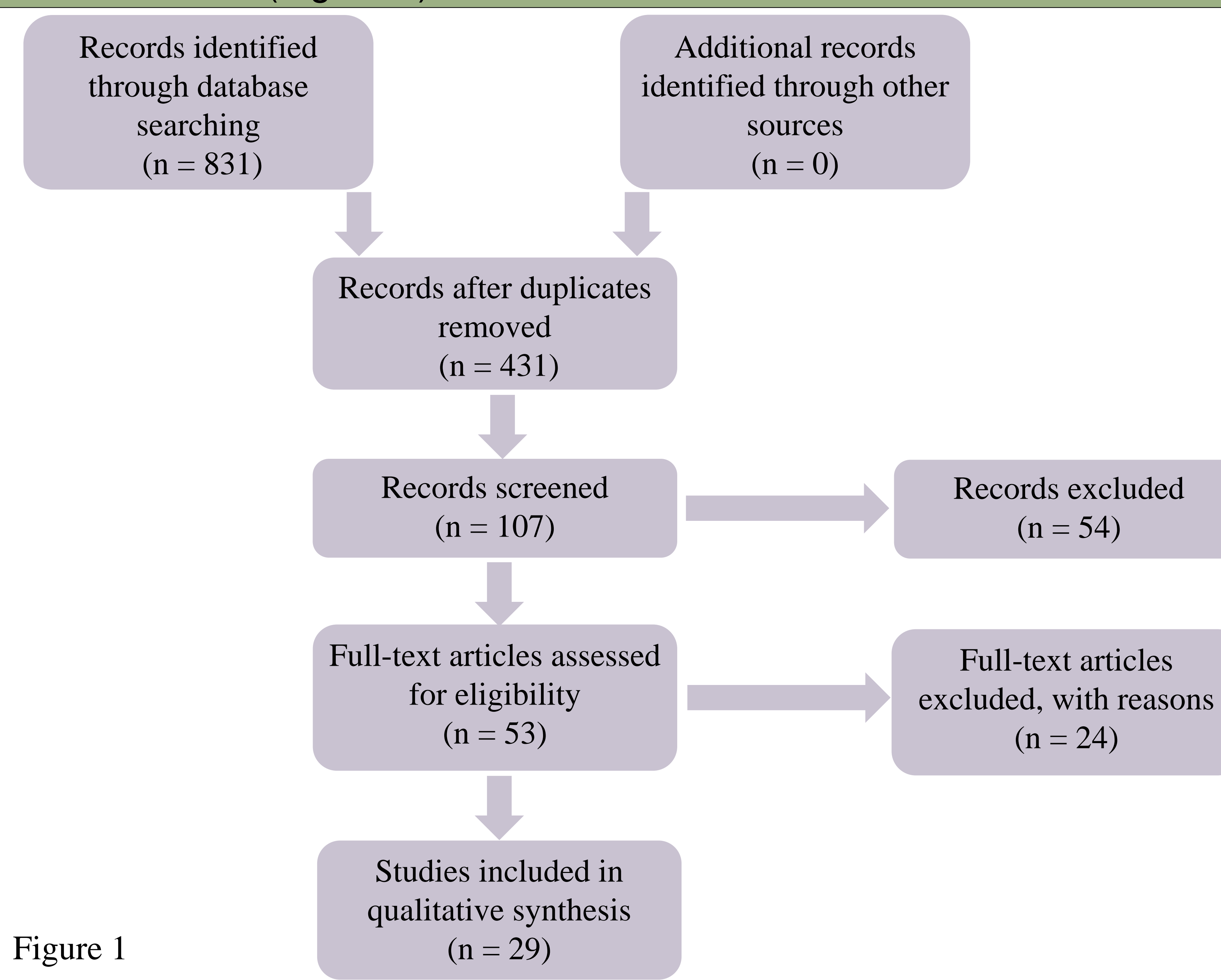


Figure 1

Results

- Barriers to occupational engagement
 - Mental health
 - Loss of identity
 - Social connection
 - Military culture vs. campus culture
- How faculty can help ease student veterans transition:
 - Attending training and educational programs related to student veterans
 - Being aware of resources available to student veterans
 - Providing a welcoming classroom climate
- Skilled occupational therapy services to support student veterans' transition to higher education. Including:
 - Holistic approach
 - Use of standardized assessments
 - Mental health treatment
 - Occupation centered interventions
 - Multidisciplinary approach

(Borsair et al., 2017; Eakman et al., 2016; Fernandez et al., 2019; Gregg et al., 2016; Kato et al., 2016; Kinney et al., 2020; Morris et al., 2019; Naphan & Elliot, 2015; Norman et al., 2015; Olsen et al., 2014; Plach & Sells, 2013;)

Conclusion

- Student veterans face many unique occupational barriers when transitioning to higher education settings.
- Occupational therapists have the skills necessary to assist student veterans' and help them overcome many occupational barriers.
- Occupational therapists should be integrated onto college campuses because of the benefits they can offer to student veterans.
- Faculty members contribute to the university environment and they play an important role in creating a campus that is veteran friendly.

