

A GLOBAL CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE: DEVELOPING AND PROMOTING CULTURAL AWARENESS AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



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INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda acts through 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address poverty, environmental sustainability and improve the quality of life across the globe. Global Grand Challenges are a separate family of initiatives with an aim to help combat world health and development problems. A capstone project is a 'culminating academic and intellectual experience for students' at the end of a degree in preparation for future work life. This Systematic Review assesses the educational opportunities for students to address the Global Grand Challenges or SDGs in their final year research or Capstone project and whether they can work collaboratively with students from different countries. After finalising a suitable methodology, a full comprehensive search of the literature was completed through 3 separate search strings to address 3 related research questions.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. Discover and evaluate educational opportunities globally for students to address the Global Grand Challenges and/or UN SDGs in their UG or PG research or capstone projects.
2. Discover and evaluate educational opportunities globally for students to work collaboratively with students in other countries on final year research or capstone projects.
3. Discover and evaluate educational opportunities globally for students to participate in team or project-based transnational educational activities outside of research or capstone projects which address Global Grand Challenges and/or UN SDGs. The aim of this systematic review was to assess the opportunities students must address these global sustainability problems in their final year projects and whether they can do this collaboratively.

RESULTS

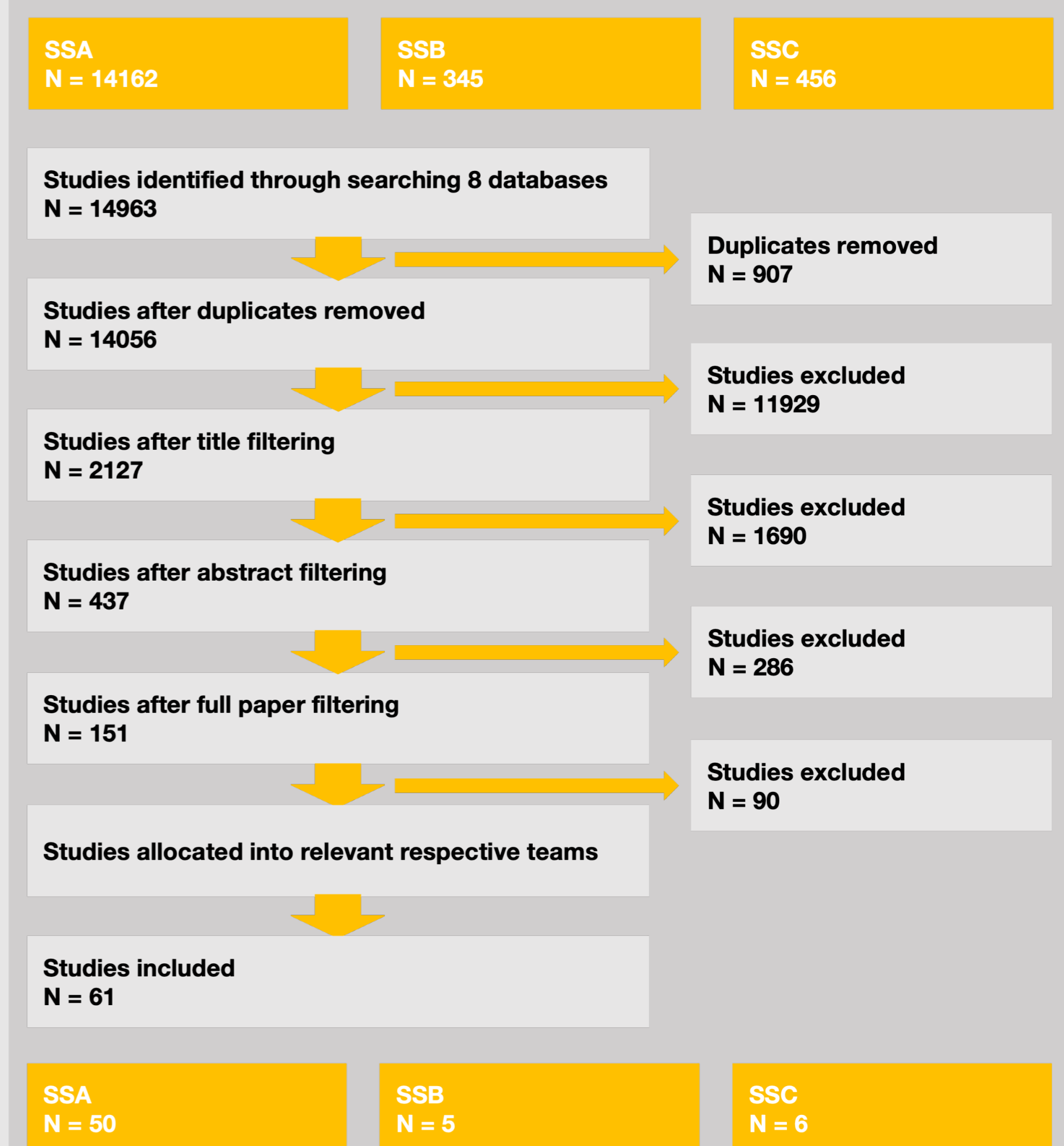
From our research we concluded there is a lack of papers regarding Global Grand Challenges, compared to SDGs. 86% of papers were found to be based purely on SDG's, highlighting that Capstones on Global Grand Challenges were limited. Thus, the data extracted for this study involving Grand challenges may not be valid. From the data collected, it is highlighted that in less developed countries there are fewer educational opportunities since the systems aren't as advanced as more developed countries with a more advanced economy. In our report it was highlighted that SDG 4 "Quality Education" was heavily weighted again displaying its significance. Overall, our findings determine that universities should offer more opportunities for students to collaborate with students transnationally and to provide students with the resources and funding to be able to complete capstone projects.. Papers addressing multiple SDGs instead of one specifically have been proven to be less effective overall, with a less valid conclusion present.

METHODOLOGY

A Systematic Review was undertaken in June and July 2021, to locate papers relating to Global Capstones, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), Grand Challenges and Transnational Education.

Collectively, eight databases were accessed: OVID, Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, ProQuest, Communication & Mass Media Complete, British Education Index and Global Health. Texts were located using Search String Terms, which were predetermined for the project. The Three Search Strings correlate directly with our three research questions.

To ensure the elimination of bias, pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criteria were used within the project. This allowed for papers to be efficiently sorted into folders. If a paper met any of the exclusion criteria, it was removed from the EndNote library. The inclusion criteria were strategic, and the papers were thoroughly screened, leaving behind those which fulfilled the inclusion criteria.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The SDGs and particularly the Global Grand Challenges are under researched, and students do not have the opportunity to address them in their final year/capstone project. Whilst our initial search string extracted many papers discussing global sustainability problems, many of these were excluded due to the inclusion/exclusion criteria and were not relevant to the research questions. Whilst there are papers reviewing the current systems in place to address SDGs, there are few studies addressing the goals themselves. There is a lack of clarity regarding Capstone Projects; this included whether the papers were discussing Capstone Projects as a Disciplinary Perspective, or the researchers were undertaking a Capstone Project themselves, this made Data Extraction and the Filtering Process more time consuming as the lack of clarity created a 'grey area'. It is clear in every paper studied that more work is needed to address each of the SDGs and Grand Challenges, both in developed and less developed countries.

The findings of the review outline that future projects should collaborate with universities in lower income countries to provide the students with the resources and funding to be able to complete capstone projects to a higher accreditation and value. Whilst there is evidence of research for SDG 4, there is still minimal research regarding the other SDGs and thus this could be a path for improvement. Additionally, many of the papers addressed more than one SDG, or attempted to address the SDGs. This has proven to be less effective in progressing the goals and addressing the targets as there is no clear methodology in how to move forward with creating a more sustainable future. There are limited papers relating directly to SDGs or Grand Challenges in the context of TNE. This therefore highlights a lack of research in this area as the systematic review is comprehensive and should extract all papers of this subject.