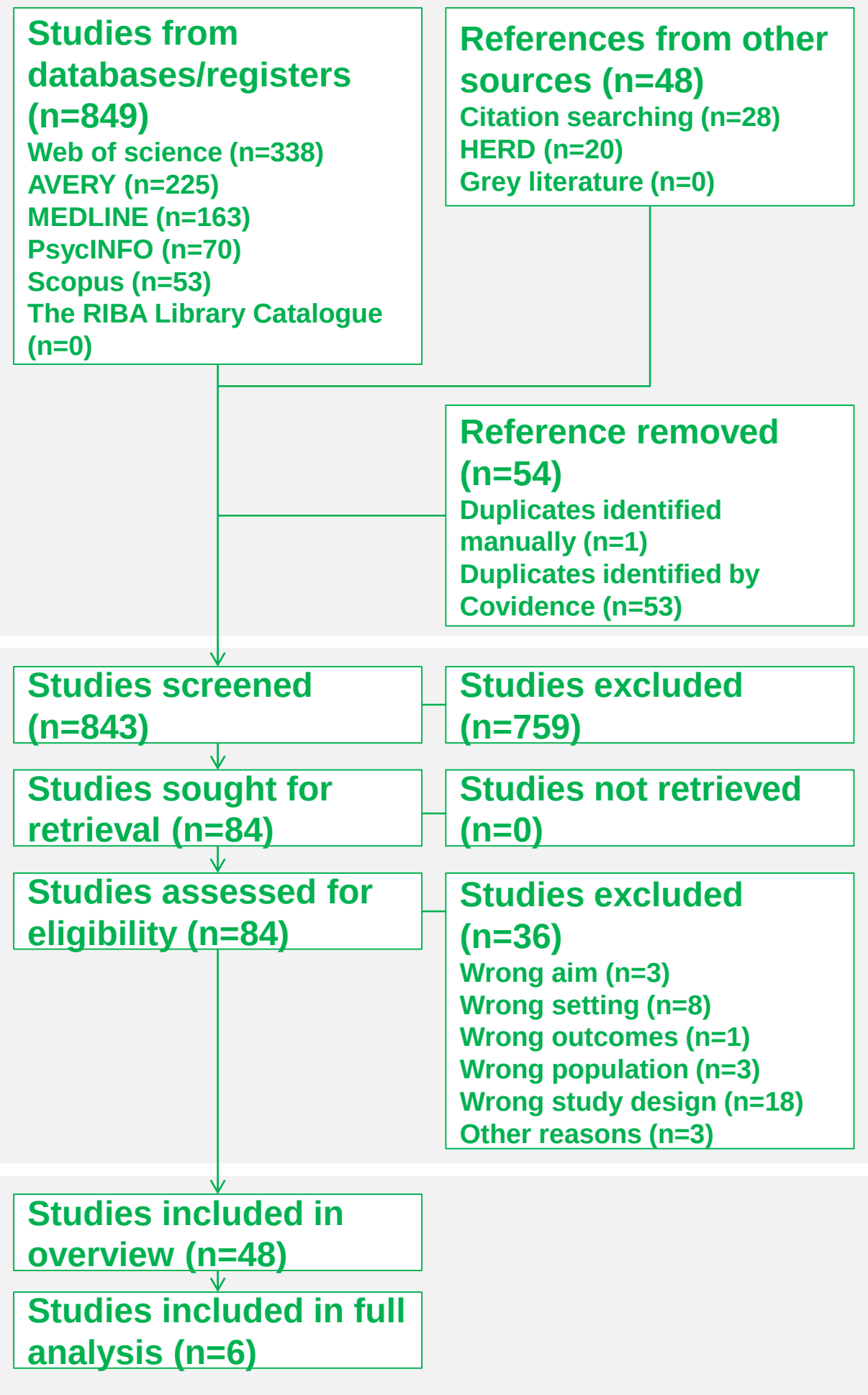


How do staff and patients experience the built environment of a contemporary outpatient department? A systematic review of qualitative evidence

Background

Evidence on experience of outpatient departments is limited. This review synthesises evidence about patient and staff experiences of the built environment of contemporary outpatient departments.

PRISMA



Methods

Avery Index, MEDLINE, PsycINFO, Scopus, Web of Science, and The RIBA Catalogue were searched for qualitative studies (published 2012–2023). No limits on language were applied.

Studies were not excluded through a quality threshold but limitations in study design were noted.

Two reviewers independently screened studies and extracted data; disagreements were resolved through team discussion/review of guidance.

A modified biopsychosocial model provided a scaffold for analysis and reflective thematic analysis connected text and synthesise findings¹⁻².

Scan QR code for references or go to <https://bit.ly/3Q4vqoH>



Findings: thematic analysis

In relation to **physical and emotional safety**, healthcare spaces can provoke:

- + • comfort around configuration and access to care
- + • comfort around privacy, communication, and agency
- • anxiety around configuration and access to care
- • anxiety around privacy, communication, and agency
- • anxiety related to presence of sickness

Healthcare spaces can be experienced as **enabling**:

- + • facilitating social interaction
- + • creating a positive distraction
- + • supporting positive memories

Healthcare spaces can **embody tensions between needs**:

- between differing needs and perceptions
- between healthcare as a process and individual need

In relation to **flexibility and autonomy**

- healthcare spaces can trigger frustration around configuration, flexibility and autonomy

Healthcare space can be understood as **symbolic**

Conclusion

Themes derived from the synthesis underscored the complex and multifaceted nature of healthcare environments

This review confirmed that experience of outpatient departments is underexplored; this is particularly pronounced for people with additional needs. While outpatient departments can provoke anxiety and reduce perceived safety, they have potential to provide positive experiences.