

# Chapter 4

## Effects of Counselling Intervention on Career Transition Outcomes Among Students With ASD

### ABSTRACT

*This paper investigated the effects of a structured counselling intervention on the career transition process of students with autism spectrum disorders (SASD). The quantitative one-group pretest-posttest design was used, and eight adolescents with high-functioning autism were engaged to undergo a six-week counselling programme. Paired samples t-test results showed a statistically significant improvement between pretest and posttest, as well as a sustained improvement in the work readiness, vocational confidence, and independence in career planning among SASD.*

### BACKGROUND

The transition between education and employment is an important phase for students with autism spectrum disorders (SASD) (Schall et al., 2012; Wehman et al., 2014). Efficient career transition not only holds great importance in personal health and autonomy, but also enlivens society in terms of diversity in the workforce and economic roles (Tomlinson et al., 2018). However, SASD encounters poor outcomes in the areas of independence, occupation, and higher education (Wehman et al., 2014). These experiences require counselling interventions. Counselling intervention is a school-based professional practice designed to provide assistance

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and guidance to individuals facing various psychological, emotional, or situational challenges (Fabris et al., 2010). Counselling intervention encompasses a structured process where a counsellor utilises specific skills to communicate effectively and build a therapeutic relationship with clients (Fabris et al., 2009, 2010). Career counselling interventions could be of great importance in closing these gaps, as well as enabling SASD to improve their critical work-readiness skills, increase their job confidence, find placements, and be engaged in vocational life over the long term. Contextually, counselling interventions refer to purposeful, theory-informed and ethically guided professional actions used by counselling professionals to support individuals in comprehending themselves, dealing with socioemotional and psychological concerns, and developing the confidence, skills and strategies needed to cope with life transitions and decisions. In the context of career transition, counselling interventions include activities such as emotional support, career guidance, skills development, decision-making facilitation, goal setting, problem solving, and strengthening self-efficacy. These interventions are grounded in established counselling and career development theories and are tailored to the individual's developmental stage, abilities, cultural context, and support needs, particularly for people with disability (Eseadi, 2023a; Eseadi, 2023b).

Career transition outcomes are the measurable and experiential results that occur following engagement in career transition processes and supports, including counselling interventions. These outcomes reflect how successfully an individual adapts to, navigates, and settles into a new career-related role, pathway or identity. These outcomes may be reflected in improved career clarity, increased confidence and readiness for work or further training, enhanced employability skills, emotional adjustment, sustained participation in education or employment, and overall life satisfaction (Eseadi & Diale, 2024; Diale & Eseadi, 2024; Hanif et al., 2017; Otu & Sefotho, 2024; Schutz & Carter, 2022). Career transition outcomes include both objective indicators, such as employment or training placement, and subjective indicators, such as perceived competence, well-being, and sense of purpose (Alwell & Cobb, 2009; Ma et al., 2020; Murray & Doren, 2013; Schutz & Carter, 2022; Sheftel, Lindstrom & McWhirter, 2014). In the present study, the dimensions of career transition outcomes examined include work readiness skills, job and vocational confidence, engagement in work-based learning experiences, placement success, sustained vocational involvement, preparedness for career-related challenges, and increased independence in career planning and decision making.

Work readiness skills interventions are organised programmes that aim to provide individuals, especially those who have disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD), with the required skills to be successful in the work environment. Such interventions are usually targeting both technical and non-technical (soft) skills, in order to enhance employability and job performance. The work readiness

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