

Chapter 7

Assessing the Psychometric Properties of a Career Transition Inventory for Students With ASD (CTI–SASD)

ABSTRACT

In the present research, we designed and tested a self-developed Career Transition Inventory for students with autism spectrum disorders (SASD) (CTI-SASD) based on the bioecological systems theory developed by Bronfenbrenner, and incorporates four domains, including strategies, self, support, and situation. Based on a quantitative approach, confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling were employed to examine the instrument's factor structure, reliability, validity, and structural relationships. Results show that a four-factor model with high item loadings was observed and consistent across all domains. The indices of internal consistency, such as Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, were well above the recommended values. Convergent and discriminatory validities were also defined. Model fit indices revealed an acceptable measurement model. At the same time, path analysis showed meaningful interrelationships among the four constructs, highlighting the dynamic interplay of personal, behavioural, and contextual factors in career transition.

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BACKGROUND

The career transitioning of students in the bioecological systems perspective of Bronfenbrenner is the process by which students move from school to work due to the continuing interactions between the personal attributes of students and various nested systems within the environment. Career transition among students who have autism spectrum disorders (SASD) is a complex process that requires convergence of individual qualities, social expectations, organisational set-ups, and institutionalisation. Even though its importance has been acknowledged, a considerable number of SASD still face serious challenges. Some of these challenges include psychological and social demands, where students often struggle with anxiety, social relationships, and adapting to new environments (Van Hees et al., 2015; Nuske et al., 2019). The challenges are equally complicated by a lack of communication and social skills, which are essential for workplace success (Dipeolu et al., 2015; Laghi & Trimarco, 2020). Furthermore, the transition services offered by schools might not be adequately individualised to the needs of SASD, thus leading to poor employment placements and unproductive implementation of new skills (Sharpe et al., 2022). Understanding these challenges and developing effective strategies to address them begins with a thorough assessment using psychometric tools. Unfortunately, there is a significant dearth of assessment tools for assessing and understanding the career transition of SASD.

Assessing the career transition of SASD is important. This study aimed to do this by assessing the psychometric properties of a career transition inventory designed for SASD. The inventory captures four core domains that are conceptually grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory (BBST), which positions individual development as resulting from continuous interactions between a person and their surrounding environments; the four domains are strategies, self, support, and situation (Lee & Carter, 2012). The strategies domain is crucial for the career transition of SASD since it incorporates purposeful, flexible, and sustainable behaviour that assists SASD in progressing towards work-related goals (Lingo et al., 2024). Based on the BBST, the strategies domain constitutes the proximal process, which is the key driver of development. Good proximal processes require frequent, mutual interaction between the individual and their environment, and their effectiveness depends on the quality, consistency and flexibility of the involved behaviours (Henriques et al., 2025). Some of the measurement items in this domain include setting clear goals; reviewing, solving problems, modifying approaches, and seeking advice reflect the degree to which students actively engage in these developmental processes. Setting goals in classrooms effectively helps in acquiring and developing social and emotional learning (SEL) skills, especially for SASD (Sanders et al., 2023). Some SASD demonstrate skills in defining sequential tasks; nonetheless, a large percentage of

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