

# Chapter 9

## Recognising Barriers in the Career Transition Process of Students With ASD

### ABSTRACT

*This research explored the obstacles to career transition of students with autism spectrum disorders (SASD), focusing on both teachers' and parents' responses. The study used a quantitative design to investigate the perceived personal, social, institutional, awareness-related, and resource-related barriers within Nigerian school contexts. Results show that parents recognised significantly higher levels of perceived career transition barriers than teachers, reflecting more exposure to systemic barriers beyond the school environment. The study underscores the need for coordinated transition planning, enhancing professional awareness, and reinforcing resource provision to enhance equitable career transitions for SASD.*

### BACKGROUND

A barrier refers to a circumstance that hinders, constrains, or limits an individual's potential to reach a transition. Practically, a barrier acts as an obstacle to action, access, or adjustment. Barriers encountered during career transition encompass personal, social, institutional, and structural challenges that hinder an individual's capacity to transition smoothly from one phase of education, training, or employment to another (Luwei & Huimin, 2024; Scott, 2014; Söner & Yılmaz, 2025). Specifically, barriers in career transition denote factors that limit access, preparedness, decision-making, adaptability, or ongoing engagement towards desired career goals, consequently

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postponing, distorting, or obstructing career advancement. The transition from education to employment for students with autism spectrum disorders (SASD) is characterised by several challenges and systemic barriers. These challenges continually lead to less favourable employment and postsecondary results when compared to neurotypical counterparts.

Traditional transition services usually fall behind in meeting the required standards as a result of a lack of personalisation, a lack of support structure, a deficit in SASD-specific training for professionals, and systemic obstacles like disconnected service delivery and restricted collaboration among stakeholders (Alfawzan & Almulhim, 2024; Chun et al., 2023; Eseadi & Diale, 2024; Ookeditse et al., 2024). Studies have shown that the interaction between individual features, social contexts, and institutional systems plays a significant role in affecting career transition for SASD (Eilenberg et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2023; Milen & Nicholas, 2017). In this evolving viewpoint, barriers are perceived as dynamic processes, the impact of which is contingent upon recognition, interpretation, and response. Barriers impact outcomes through failures in detection, acknowledgement, and coordinated action. Barrier recognition framework is particularly useful for examining the career transition of SASD, as it highlights the importance of recognising and addressing these barriers effectively (Bross et al., 2021). Barrier recognition focuses on the processes through which obstacles are identified and addressed, instead of the presence of the obstacles. Concerning SASD, some barriers are invisible, contextual, or misattributed. For instance, administrative functioning difficulties may be analysed as a lack of motivation, while communication differences could be framed as mindset problems (Frazier et al., 2022). Some of these misrepresentations prevent suitable support and push the burden onto SASD, who have limited capacity to restructure its environments. Exploring career transition through teachers' and parents' lenses on the barriers that SASD face during the career transition process can provide a more explanatory account and persistent inequalities.

This chapter explored barriers such as personal barriers, social barriers, institutional barriers, awareness and knowledge constraints, and resource constraints. Personal barriers refer to individual-level characteristics and functional challenges that directly interfere with a student's ability to prepare for, enter, and adapt to employment or further education. SASD encounter several personal barriers during their career transition process, which significantly impact their potential to successfully incorporate into the labour force or higher education. For SASD, these barriers commonly include sensory sensitivities that make typical work environments overwhelming; communication difficulties, particularly in interviews, networking, and workplace interactions; anxiety associated with change and unfamiliar settings; and limited self-advocacy skills, which restrict the student's ability to request reasonable accommodations (Arimoro, 2019; Bross et al., 2021; McKnight-Lizotte, 2018).

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