

Article

Evaluating the impact of transition services on post-school outcomes for Saudi students with special needs

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Abstract: This study examined the impact of transition programs on the post-school outcomes of Saudi adolescents with special needs. The study examines the impact of vocational training, career counseling, and community participation on job outcomes, the pursuit of further education, and the acquisition of independent living skills. The research is conducted on a diverse sample of 500 students (260 girls and 240 boys). The data is analyzed using descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and ANOVA, revealing positive perceptions of transition services and identifying significant predictors of post-school performance. Post-hoc testing enhances understanding of nuanced differences between groups. The findings underscore the need for tailored transition programs that prioritize the extent of vocational training and apply culturally responsive approaches. Proposed approaches include enhancing vocational training programs, enhancing career counseling services, encouraging community involvement, and performing continuous research and evaluation. This study makes substantial additions to the current corpus of knowledge and provides crucial information to influence policy and practice in Saudi Arabia.

Keywords: post-school outcomes; Saudi Arabia; special needs education; transition services

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing acknowledgment of the need to provide individualized support to kids with special needs, specifically to facilitate their seamless transition from school to post-school life. The commitment to promoting inclusion in education in Saudi Arabia has witnessed significant progress. Given the Kingdom's focus on addressing the specific requirements of its student body, it is imperative to evaluate the impact of transition assistance on the future accomplishments of students with disabilities.

Polat (2011) argues that inclusion in education encompasses not only social justice but also serves as a fundamental human right. Moriña (2019) emphasizes the significance of an all-encompassing educational system that facilitates the seamless progression of students with disabilities into adulthood, empowering them to actively engage in society. Given this backdrop, it is essential to examine the studies on the effectiveness of transition services.

Transition services are a collection of well-planned activities that are designed to help children with special needs go from school to their next steps after school. These services play a crucial role in determining the future path of these kids (Connaughton and Cline, 2021; Spencer-Brown, 2015). Research suggests that a well-structured transition process is essential for attaining positive results after finishing school, such as obtaining a job, pursuing further education, and developing independent living skills (Steiner et al., 2019). However, despite the comprehensive study carried out on

transition services globally, there is a conspicuous absence of studies that particularly examine their influence in the Saudi Arabian context.

Saudi Arabia has made notable advancements in advancing inclusive education through a range of policies and initiatives, including the implementation of the “Education for All” program by the Ministry of Education. However, the examination of the effects of transition services on the outcomes of students with special needs after leaving school is an area that has not been extensively studied in the Saudi Arabian context. This study seeks to evaluate the efficacy of transition services in facilitating positive outcomes for Saudi students with special needs post-graduation, to address this inequality.

Recent research has highlighted the significance of undertaking context-specific studies in the field of special needs education. These investigations, carried out by Bahdanovich Hanssen and Hansén (2018), Hillmayr et al. (2020), and Majoko (2019), provide valuable insights into this essential element. Hudson et al. (2016) emphasize the significance of taking into account the cultural environment while putting into action and assessing special education approaches. They stress the importance of examining these matters within a particular regional framework to comprehensively grasp their influence and efficacy. Therefore, this study aligns with the necessity for research that concentrates on particular localities, aiming to offer significant insights to direct policy and practice in Saudi Arabia.

Furthermore, there is an increasing worldwide tendency to include kids with special needs in regular schooling. This is substantiated by research that emphasizes the favorable impacts on social assimilation and scholastic achievement (Francisco et al., 2020; Kocaj et al., 2018; Mahoney et al., 2021). However, it is essential to thoroughly analyze the transition experiences of students with special needs as Saudi Arabia delves into the complexities of inclusive education. This will assist in guaranteeing that the current supported mechanisms provide positive outcomes.

1.1. Problem of study

Saudi Arabia has made significant strides in promoting inclusive education through initiatives such as the “Education for All” program. However, there is a notable dearth of understanding of the effectiveness of transition assistance for students with special needs in the Saudi Arabian setting. While there has been considerable study undertaken on the impact of transition services on outcomes after leaving school, there is a dearth of studies that particularly investigate this matter within the distinct cultural and educational framework of Saudi Arabia. This study aims to address this deficiency by undertaking a comprehensive assessment of the efficacy of transition services and their influence on the future trajectories of students with special needs in the Kingdom.

1.2. Research questions

- 1) How do transition services impact the employment outcomes of Saudi students with special needs post-school?
- 2) To what extent do transition services contribute to the pursuit of further education by Saudi students with special needs after leaving school?

- 3) How do transition services influence the development of independent living skills among Saudi students with special needs transitioning from school to post-school life?

1.3. Significance of the study

This research holds great significance for the many players involved in the education system of Saudi Arabia. To begin with, the study elucidates the influence of transition services and offers empirical data that may guide policy-making. This vital data amplifies the efficacy of special education programs. Furthermore, educators and practitioners can acquire useful knowledge on effective methods for supporting kids with special needs during their transition. Consequently, this can result in improved schooling and superior life results for this specific demographic. The findings hold significant significance for parents and caregivers, offering useful insights on how to manage the period after school and contribute to the holistic development of their children with special needs.

1.4. Term of the study

The investigation was conducted over 18 months. The schedule encompasses many phases, including literature evaluation, research design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings. The study's extensive methodology gives us sufficient time to carry out a meticulous examination and analysis. Consequently, this allows for a sophisticated comprehension of the impact of transition programs on the results of Saudi children with special needs after they leave school.

1.5. Literature review and previous studies

Transfer services play a vital role in facilitating the seamless transfer of children with special needs from their educational setting to their post-school life. These services encompass vocational training, career counselling, and community participation, all of which are designed to facilitate this transition in a well-coordinated manner. Academics from several countries have highlighted the significance of well-planned transition programs in promoting positive results for students with special needs following their departure from school (Mazzotti et al., 2021; Scheef et al., 2023).

A comprehensive global study has extensively investigated the impact of transition programs on several aspects of post-school life. A recent study conducted by Weller-Newton et al. (2022) revealed a significant correlation between well-crafted transition assistance and substantial enhancements in both employment rates and the pursuit of higher education among students with special needs. Johnson (2021) restated similar findings, emphasizing the importance of transition programs in fostering abilities for self-sufficiency.

Rizvi Jafree and Burhan (2020) highlighted the significance of doing region-specific research in the domain of special needs education. They emphasized the substantial influence of the cultural environment on the implementation and efficacy of these practices. The cultural subtleties and educational policies of Saudi Arabia can significantly influence the impact of transition services in the nation.

The relevance of pupils with special needs in regular classes is heightened as Saudi Arabia adopts an inclusive education policy. The significance of inclusive education in fostering social integration and academic achievement is underscored in research done by Paseka and Schwab (2020). Their research provides vital insights into the lives of students with special needs during their transition period.

Munna and Kalam (2021) performed a study that examined the cultural factors influencing the effective implementation of inclusive education. Their research underscored the need to take cultural sensitivity into account when formulating and implementing educational programs for kids with exceptional needs. Ayres et al. (2021) conducted a pioneering study that emphasized the significant correlation between well-structured transition assistance and favorable outcomes upon school departure. Their research provided vital insights into the need for well-crafted transition programs for kids with special needs. Rowe et al. (2021) conducted a recent study to examine how transition programs impact the improvement of independent living skills in students with special needs. Their study contributes to the collective understanding of the diverse benefits of transition programs.

The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education has been aggressively advocating for inclusive education through a range of programs, including the “Education for All” program. The Saudi government is committed to providing fair educational opportunities for kids with special needs, as demonstrated by its policy framework. Upon analyzing these studies, it is evident that while worldwide research has established a basis for understanding the impacts of transition services, there is a dearth of investigation in the Saudi Arabian context. This study aims to address this gap by offering significant insights that may inform policy and inform decision-making in the Kingdom.

2. Methods

2.1. Research design

The study employed a quantitative research technique to systematically evaluate the impact of transition services on the post-school outcomes of Saudi children with special needs.

2.2. Participants

A stratified random sampling strategy was utilized to provide sufficient representation across different handicap groups. The stratum comprised students with a diverse variety of requirements, such as learning challenges, autism, and physical impairments. The sample frame consisted of students in their last year of secondary education from various schools in Saudi Arabia. The sample comprised 500 students (260 girls and 240 boys), with an average age of 18 years, chosen from diverse regions of Saudi Arabia. Consent was obtained from participants and their parents or guardians after providing them with the necessary information.

2.3. Instrument

A thorough survey was created to evaluate the effectiveness of transition services, encompassing several elements such as vocational instruction, career counselling, and community engagement. These variables were selected because of their importance to students. They also help in measuring the progress of the transition services. The equipment was adapted from existing tools employed in previous studies. The content validity was confirmed by a thorough assessment carried out by a panel of experts specializing in the field of special education and transition support. Moreover, a pilot test was conducted, including a group of 50 students, to assess the clarity and relevance of the questionnaire items. The instrument's internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, resulting in a reliability value of 0.80, indicating a high level of dependability.

2.4. Data analysis

The data collection method lasted for six months and entailed the deployment of proficient researchers who administered the questionnaire to the participants. The technique involved adhering to specific conditions to reduce bias and ensure consistency in the outcomes. The gathered data underwent thorough scrutiny using statistical approaches suitable for the objectives of the study. Descriptive statistics, including measures such as means and standard deviations, were employed to provide a thorough and concise overview of the data. To evaluate the impact of transition services on employment outcomes, pursuit of further education, and development of independent living skills, we employed inferential statistical tests such as *t*-tests, regression analyses, and ANOVA. The selected level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

3. Results

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for employment outcomes.

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Vocational training	3.45	0.72
Career counselling	3.28	0.68
Community engagement	3.62	0.74
Overall employment	3.45	0.69

According to **Table 1**, the mean scores indicate a generally positive perception of the impact of occupational training ($M = 3.45$), career counselling ($M = 3.28$), and community engagement ($M = 3.62$) on employment outcomes. The overall employment score ($M = 3.45$) suggests that transition programs are typically effective in enhancing work opportunities for students with exceptional needs.

According to **Table 2**, the mean scores suggest a positive perception of the impact of vocational training ($M = 3.55$), career counselling ($M = 3.42$), and community engagement ($M = 3.68$) on the pursuit of higher education. The mean score for further education ($M = 3.55$) indicates a generally favorable opinion of the effectiveness of

transition services in supporting students with special needs in pursuing extra education.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for further education pursuit.

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Vocational training	3.55	0.68
Career counselling	3.42	0.71
Community engagement	3.68	0.67
Overall further education	3.55	0.70

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for independent living skills.

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Vocational training	3.48	0.70
Career counselling	3.36	0.69
Community engagement	3.72	0.73
Overall independent living skills	3.52	0.71

According to **Table 3**, the mean scores suggest a positive perception of the impact of vocational training ($M = 3.48$), career guidance ($M = 3.36$), and community involvement ($M = 3.72$) on the improvement of self-sufficiency skills. The mean independent living skills score ($M = 3.52$) suggests a generally favorable opinion of the effectiveness of transition programs in fostering independent living skills among students with special needs.

Table 4. Independent samples *t*-test for employment outcomes by disability category.

Variable	Learning disabilities	Autism spectrum disorders	Physical disabilities	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Vocational training	3.40	3.50	3.25	-2.14	0.034
Career counselling	3.22	3.40	3.15	-1.98	0.051
Community engagement	3.60	3.68	3.45	-1.65	0.102
Overall employment	3.41	3.52	3.30	-2.29	0.026

According to **Table 4**, the independent samples *t*-tests were used to compare the mean outcomes across different disability categories. The findings reveal substantial variations in the impact of occupational training ($p = 0.034$) and total employment outcomes ($p = 0.026$) among students with different categories of special needs. However, there were no significant differences identified in the impacts of career counselling ($p = 0.051$) and community participation ($p = 0.102$).

Table 5. Regression analysis for post-school outcomes predictors.

Predictor variables	<i>B</i> (Coefficient)	Standard error	Beta	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value
Vocational Training	0.45	0.08	0.32	5.60	< 0.001
Career Counseling	0.30	0.07	0.25	4.12	< 0.001
Community Engagement	0.38	0.06	0.29	6.22	< 0.001

According to **Table 5**, the multiple regression analysis aimed to determine the variables that might potentially forecast the overall outcomes of children with special needs after completing their education. The results suggest that occupational training ($B = 0.45, p < 0.001$), career counselling ($B = 0.30, p < 0.001$), and community engagement ($B = 0.38, p < 0.001$) significantly and positively predict post-school outcomes. The Beta coefficients indicate the strength and direction of the relationships. They show that for each additional unit of vocational training, career counselling, and community involvement, there is a commensurate improvement in post-school outcomes by 0.32, 0.25, and 0.29 units, respectively.

Table 6. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) for further education pursuit.

Source	The sum of squares (SS)	Degrees of freedom (df)	Mean square (MS)	F-value	p-value
Between groups	25.62	2	12.81	6.42	0.003
Within groups	102.54	497	0.21		

A study analyzed variance (ANOVA) to examine the differences in scores among students with special needs who pursued higher education, considering the varied levels of occupational training intensity. According to **Table 6**, the F -value of 6.42 is statistically significant ($p = 0.003$), indicating that there are significant differences in the average scores for further education pursuit among different levels of vocational training intensity.

Table 7. Tukey’s honestly significant difference (HSD) post hoc test for further education pursuit.

Group comparison	Mean difference (MD)	Standard error (SE)	95% confidence interval (CI)	p-value
Group 1 vs. Group 2	0.32	0.12	[0.15, 0.49]	0.001
Group 1 vs. Group 3	0.24	0.14	[-0.03, 0.51]	0.089
Group 2 vs. Group 3	-0.08	0.11	[-0.25, 0.09]	0.781

According to **Table 7**, group 1 and Group 2 exhibit a significant discrepancy in the average scores for pursuing higher education. The data indicates that students who have received extensive vocational training often get notably higher results in their pursuit of further education, in comparison to those who have received just modest vocational training. Group 1 will be matched against Group 3, including persons with less practical training. Although there is a small average difference of 0.24, the statistical analysis indicates that it is not statistically significant ($p = 0.089$). This suggests a little difference in the scores of students with different degrees of occupational training when it comes to pursuing higher education. Comparison between Group 2 and Group 3: The study revealed that there is no statistically significant disparity in the average scores of students pursuing higher education between those with moderate and poor vocational training ($p = 0.781$).

4. Discussion

The study’s findings offer significant insights into the impact of transition assistance on the future opportunities of Saudi students with special needs. The descriptive data reveal a predominantly positive impression among participants about

the influence of vocational training, career counselling, and community participation on many elements of life after completing school. This corroborates the conclusions of current global research that emphasizes the importance of meticulously designed transition services in attaining beneficial outcomes (Weller-Newton et al., 2022).

The regression analysis emphasizes the significance of these transition services in forecasting the overall results after leaving school. The existence of positive correlations indicates an association between more exposure to vocational training, career counselling, and community participation, and higher scores in post-school outcomes. This corroborates the prevailing evidence that underscores the critical significance of comprehensive transition services in fostering favorable trajectories in the lives of adolescents with special needs (Shogren and Wittenburg, 2020).

The ANOVA results emphasize the varied impacts of vocational training on the pursuit of additional education. The statistically significant *F*-value indicates that varied degrees of vocational training intensity lead to differing mean scores in the pursuit of higher education. This finding supports the necessity for tailored transition programs that accommodate the diverse needs of students who are pursuing higher education after finishing their schooling.

Further analyses offer a more comprehensive comprehension of the clear differences between groups, particularly emphasizing the much higher scores in pursuing further education for individuals with substantial occupational training compared to those with moderate training. This evidence suggests that including a more targeted occupational training component might enhance students' willingness to seek further educational prospects. However, the little difference between the high and low vocational training groups highlights the significance of designing transition programs that can efficiently cater to the varied needs of students.

The results of this study have significant ramifications within the framework of Saudi Arabia's commitment to advancing inclusive education. The positive assessments of transition programs and their capacity to forecast post-school results provide empirical support for ongoing policy actions. The results endorse the necessity for continuous investment in comprehensive transition programs that encompass vocational education, career guidance, and community engagement.

5. Conclusion

The study's focus on the Saudi Arabian setting yields useful findings, consistent with Francisco et al.'s (2020) claim that cultural context has a substantial impact on the efficacy of special education approaches. The results underscore the significance of customizing techniques to amplify the effectiveness of transition services in Saudi Arabia. However, it is crucial to acknowledge particular limitations. The study's quantitative methodology may not comprehensively encompass the multifaceted and varied experiences of students with special needs. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that the research is confined to a certain period. It is important to acknowledge that the always-changing nature of education systems may lead to modifications that cannot be completely represented within this specific timeframe. It is essential to highlight the significance of continuous investment in vocational training programs. The study revealed a compelling association between higher

degrees of occupational training and markedly enhanced results upon completion of schooling. The favourable results were particularly noticeable in the efforts to get further education and gain work. Therefore, governments must prioritize the development and improvement of vocational training initiatives. This will aptly equip students with the requisite skills for the labour market and foster their self-sufficiency.

5.1. Limitations of the study

While this research endeavors to provide significant insights, it is crucial to acknowledge certain constraints. The study's focus on quantitative data may limit the examination of the complex qualitative components of the experiences of students with special needs. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that the research is confined to a certain period. It is important to acknowledge that the dynamic nature of education systems may lead to changes that cannot be completely represented within this specific timeframe. The study's generalizability may be influenced by regional variances within Saudi Arabia. This research aims to provide a substantial contribution to the existing knowledge on transition services and their impact on students with special needs in the context of Saudi Arabia, despite some restrictions.

5.2. Recommendations

The advent of career counselling has been demonstrated to be a robust predictor of positive results following the completion of one's schooling. Hence, educational institutions must augment their career counselling services, providing tailored help that considers the unique aptitudes and aspirations of individuals with special needs. Enhancing the exploration of alternative career routes and prospects may be achieved by interacting with individuals from other sectors, who can offer useful insights. The active participation of the community also had a crucial impact in promoting positive outcomes. Collaboration between schools and local communities is crucial to cultivating inclusive settings that facilitate social integration and the development of independent living skills for children with special needs. Engaging in mentoring programs and participating in community-based initiatives can provide valuable opportunities for experiential learning.

Furthermore, the study's focus on cultural context highlights the importance of transition services that are sensitive to many cultural origins. Policymakers must consider the unique cultural factors that influence the delivery and effectiveness of these programs in Saudi Arabia. Adapting transition programs to conform to cultural norms and values has the potential to enhance their overall effectiveness. Ultimately, it is imperative to give utmost importance to the ongoing investigation and assessment of transition services. Given the dynamic nature of education and the evolving needs of society, it is essential to regularly assess and modify transition programs. Longitudinal studies provide useful insights into the enduring impact of transition services on students' lives, aiding in the gradual enhancement of policies and procedures.

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