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Evaluation of career planning tools for use with individuals with autism spectrum disorder: A systematic review

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ABSTRACT

This systematic review aimed to identify tools published in peer reviewed journals that could be utilised in career planning for individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and to describe their clinical utility and psychometric properties. Due to limited results for ASD-specific tools, the search was broadened to career planning tools for individuals with a cognitive or developmental disability, which could be used by individuals with ASD. Six databases were electronically searched. Main search terms used were 'disability', 'young adult', 'assessment' and 'employment'. Boolean operators expanded the search strategy. Two independent reviewers undertook data extraction and quality assessment. Electronic searches located 2348 literature items; 14 articles met inclusion criteria covering 10 career planning tools. Identified tools were of a predictive nature; however, none of the studies assessed all the psychometric properties necessary for evaluating a sound predictive tool. Only one addressed all three components of clinical utility. None of the identified tools had strong reliability or validity and their clinical utility remains unexplored.

Contents

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1. Introduction

Many young adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) do not successfully transition into post-school activities, such as higher education, vocational training or employment (Hendricks & Wehman, 2009; Shattuck et al., 2012; Taylor & Seltzer, 2010). Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder ASD are less likely to be employed (34%) when compared with all individuals with disabilities (54%) and individuals without disabilities (83%) (Howlin, Goode, Hutton, & Rutter, 2004; Taylor & Seltzer, 2010). While the transition from school to the labour force is difficult, individuals with ASD who transition successfully to employment are often highly appreciated by their employers for their trustworthiness, reliability and low absenteeism (Hagner & Cooney, 2005; Hiilier et al., 2007). Some individuals with ASD also demonstrate exceptional strengths in their focus and meticulous attention to detail (Smith, Belcher, & Juhrs, 1995). Given the value employees with ASD add to the workplace, increasing employment rates of individuals with ASD is an aim of many governments' policies. For example, a priority of the Australian major Federal Government is to increase workforce participation for persons with disability, as outlined in the National Disability Strategy 2010–2020 (Council of Australian Governments, 2010).

Despite these initiatives, there is still a lack of effective career planning and adult support services for individuals with ASD, which has contributed to poor post-school outcomes (Attwood, 2007; Hendricks, 2010; Howlin, 2000). However, with optimal career planning, individuals with ASD can be successful in pursuing a range of careers which match strengths and interests (Hendricks, 2010). Career planning tools can enable this effective transition to employment in a number of ways. They can enhance the match between occupational roles and individual needs and strengths (Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Duffy &

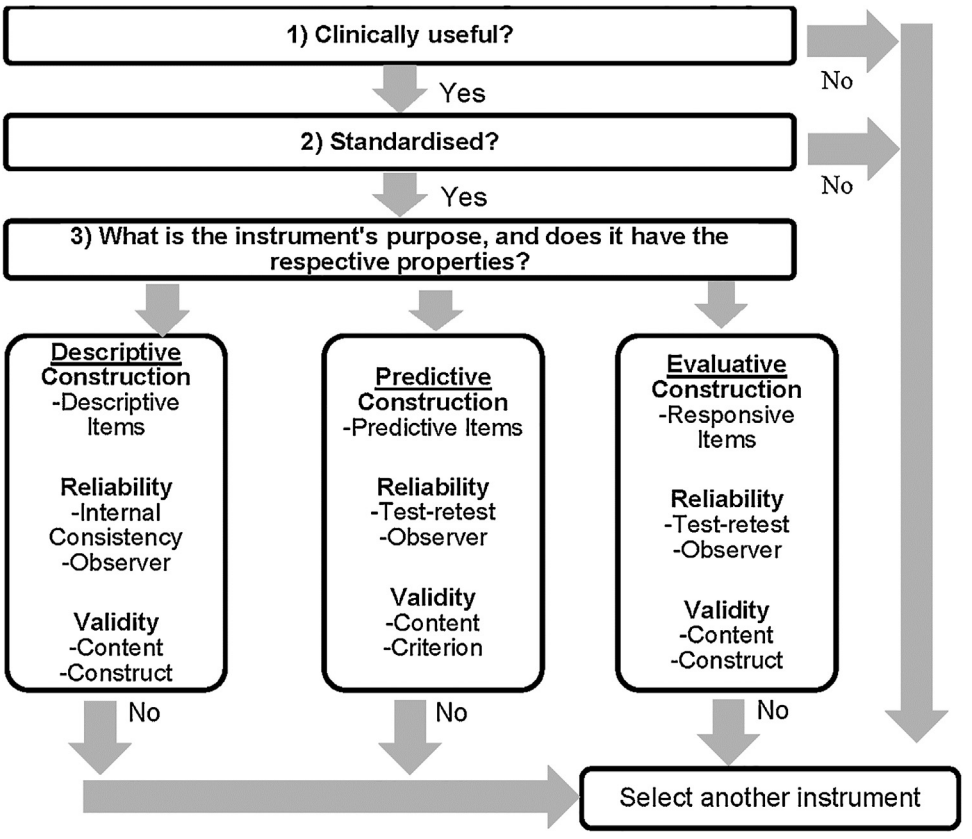

Fig. 1. Instrument evaluation process. A flow chart which directs the user to categorise the tool as descriptive, predictive or evaluative.