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## Employment Challenges among Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder from Their Parents' Perspective in Saudi Arabia

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### Abstract

The study aimed at identifying employment challenges among youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) from their parents' perspective in Saudi Arabia. ASD Youth Employment Challenges Scale was applied to 85 parents of youth with ASD. Results concluded that employment challenges in Saudi Arabia are ASD-based challenges, ASD youth's family challenges, work environment challenges, and social challenges. There were no statistically significant differences between the mean score of the responses of parents of youth with ASD to employment challenges scale due to parent's gender, children's gender, and children's age. There were statistically significant differences between the mean score of the responses of parents of youth with ASD to employment challenges scale due to the variable of receiving financial support, in favor of those who do not receive support.

**Keywords:** Employment, employment challenges, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), youth with ASD, parents of youth with ASD.

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Recently, individuals with special abilities receive great international, regional and local attention to provide them with the proper care and education and to improve their living conditions. Mohammad (2001) reports that taking care of these individuals represents an urgent social and humane necessity. This does not only suggest their right to have the appropriate care and attention but to integrate into society, as well.

Such interest given to the people enables this category not to be an obstacle to the development of the country. Rather, some youth with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) play a productive and integral role in development based on their abilities and the qualification programs offered to them along with the community needs. Autism affects the community socially, psychologically, and economically. Recently, there has been an increasing interest in this category not only from a human perspective, but from educational, cultural, and economic perspectives, as well (Ahmed, 2018).

ASD is a common neurodevelopmental disorder among children. People with ASD exhibit challenging behaviors not only during childhood, but also during adolescence and adulthood. According to Almoqabala (2016) and Seltzer and Krauss (2002), a child suffers from this disorder before the age of three and continues to adolescence in the form of severe self-interest, deep thinking, poor concentration and attention, motor hyperactivity, slow language development, and poor response to external sensory stimuli, making him/ her more dependent on others. Moreover, youth with autism tend to withdraw and lack interest in others and their existence, that s/ he avoids any communication with them, especially visual communication. It is a complex order that takes place within a spectrum. In other words, its symptoms and characteristics take the form of many overlapping patterns from light to severe, and those with this disorder show many behaviors according to severity (Emara, 2005; Saudi Autistic Society, 2009).

Autism is a common disorder that has been reported in a high percent. Baio et al. (2018) reports that the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that ASD prevalence among the children aged 8 years is 1 out of 59 children. This is an increase in the rates of children with ASD because 1 out of 68 children were reported to have ASD in the USA in 2012; i.e., about 1.5% (CDC, 2014). Later, it has been incredibly increasing that 1 out of 36 children is diagnosed with ASD in the USA and 1 out of 160 children across the world (Thombson, Bölte, Falkmer, & Girdler, 2018). According to the Saudi Autistic Society (2009), there are more than 120,000 youth with ASD as shown in a survey applied to the different regions of Saudi Arabia (Qutb, 2012). Additionally, the governmental statistics on autism conclude that its ratios have increased from 10% to 17% annually (Human Resources Development Fund, 2017).

The individuals with ASD differ mentally because 75% of them suffer from an intellectual disability. The others, i.e. 25% of individuals with ASD, who are known to be high functioning suffer from social and emotional disability but not the cognitive one. They can also speak to others. Therefore, they may join some jobs that require attention to details or a limited social interaction, e.g., a library, running a key machine (Howlin, Alcock, & Burkin, 2005).

Because employment holds a central position in the life of the adult, it is a source of interest, self-expression, satisfaction, belonging, and success. Integrating those with disability in the employment field suggests that they are an integral part of the community that helps promote their independence and improve the quality of life. Moreover, many individuals with ASD desire to work and they are a major source of unexploited talents. There is a misconception that individuals with ASD are unable to adapt to labor needs or cannot perform routine works. However, they can develop their work abilities like any others if they receive adequate training, facilitating services, and support (Human Resources Development Fund, 2017; Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services, 2017).

Although individuals with ASD may be intellectually qualified for a certain job, their career opportunities are poor because of social disability. Most of them are unable to join public jobs and they need jobs that commensurate with their abilities. While it is difficult to build special units for the individuals with

ASD, training centers and special care units administered by community service centers or public health organizations do not recruit them (Barnhill, Pollock, & Sumutka, 2011; Majid, 2010).

In terms of employing individuals with ASD to achieve equal opportunities, the USA was the first country to pass a law regulating the affairs of individuals with disability, as in 1990 it passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, as well as state and local government services (Wieren, Armstrong, & McMahon, 2012). It prohibits any discrimination against those with disabilities by a private or a public employer if proved qualified regarding the procedures of employment, promotion, dismissal, wages and training, and other relevant terms and conditions. For example, ADA enforces the employers to provide reasonable accommodations, including adjusting working hours, restricting the job, recruiting in a reasonable job, or providing the appropriate means. Moreover, it prohibits discrimination against employees with disabilities in activities, health insurance, transportation, or other job privileges (Herdo Center to Support the Digital Expression, 2014).

In 2010, Britain passed the Equality Act (Hepple, 2010) that states on providing equal opportunities to the citizens and prohibits the private or public employers to perform any discrimination act because of disability. It obliges them to make adequate arrangements of equality among the healthy and those with disabilities in job applications, interviews, aptitude tests, proposals, job requirements, wages, promotion, training, dismissal, and complaints (Herdo Center to Support the Digital Expression, 2014). Additionally, Lebanon passed law no. 220/2000 on the rights of individuals with disabilities, including work rights, i.e. employment and social applications (article 68 and subsequent). The state has to help individuals with disability to join the labor market in the light of equal opportunities. Furthermore, Egypt passed the Child Law 126 of 2008, stating (in article 80) that the workforce offices shall help the registered individuals with disability to join appropriate jobs for their age, competence, and residence (Herdo Center to Support the Digital Expression, 2014).

Saudi Arabia has sought to afford sufficient training centers and programs for individuals with ASD and has enacted laws and regulations to serve them. However, these laws and regulations do not achieve the aspirations of families of individuals with disability because they encounter many employment challenges. Despite such Arab and international laws and regulations stating the right of the individuals with special needs to employment and the international interest in recruiting individuals with ASD, the unemployment rates are high 50%-70% in the industrialized countries and 80%-90% in the developing countries. In other words, employment individuals with ASD have not yet received sufficient attention like others with special needs (Garcia-Villamizar & Hughes, 2007; Vogeley, Kirchner, Gawronski, Tebartz, & Dziobek, 2013).

Because the family is closer and pay further attention to individuals with ASD, investigating its perspective is necessary to identify such obstacles. However, to the author's knowledge, no study has investigated employment challenges among the youth with ASD from parents' perspective in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the present study investigates the challenges to the employment of youth with ASD by surveying their parents' perspective to provide information and data that help decision-makers find solutions and overcome these challenges.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Saudi Arabia is concerned with employing individuals with ASD because it helps them integrate into society and get a regular income to meet their different needs. The individuals with ASD can benefit from their jobs to gain self-esteem, improve the emotional state, gain more money, mitigate stress and anxiety, and feel autonomous. However, they encounter some obstacles to their employment and most of them do not work or are assigned jobs that do not show their abilities (Kurtz & Jordan, 2008).

The author argues that to succeed, the individual with ASD should be employed in a work that matches the abilities, tendencies, characteristics, interests, learning style, communication needs, and physical and social

needs. They can work if they are qualified and they can succeed as they master the necessary skills. They may be offered training programs to promote their skills, learn the main work tasks, and illustrate working hours and holidays. Additionally, these programs introduce safety procedures and facilities, emergency procedures, as well as attending and leaving work. These individuals should also join appropriate jobs that consider their strengths and weaknesses and they should be supervised and monitored continuously (Burt, Fuller, & Lewis, 1991; Hendricks, 2010).

However, there are many challenges to employment. They are classified under four headings. These headings are ASD adult-based challenges, ASD youth's family challenges, work environment challenges and social challenges. These challenges describe in turn in the following sections.

**ASD adult-based challenges.** Behavioral deficits among adults with ASD that hinder their employment include tantrums, aggressive behavior, self-harm, obsessive behavior, high level of anxiety, tension from loud voice and from workplace noise due to their sensory disturbances. In addition, they encounter crowded places' tension which leads to their annoyance and unwilling to do work or perform properly, which in turn make employers unwilling to employ them (Billstedt & Gillberg, 2005; Hillier et al., 2007; Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004).

Hurlbutt and Chalmers (2004) investigated employment challenges among six workers with ASD. The authors conducted interviews with them at work. Then, they followed them up through interviews, on the phone, or via e-mail. Results revealed that the participants expressed high levels of anxiety regarding finding work that match their ability levels. They also had difficulty maintaining jobs and start over finding job.

Communication deficit is one of the challenges that hinder individuals with ASD from getting or pertaining work. In interviews, they exhibit weak communication and marketing skills, making employers not willing to employ them (Vogeley et al., 2013). Due to communication deficits, individuals with ASD are unable to communicate with supervisors and coworkers properly, understand job instructions, interpret facial expressions and read voice tones. In addition, they ask too many questions answered at the same time and communicate with co-workers improperly, such as holding their co-workers' hand to show them something. Employers believe that these behaviors have a negative impact on workflow and refuse to employ them (Krieger, Kinebanian, Prodingler, & Heigl, 2012).

Many issues and general strategies fit the characteristics of individuals with ASD and help employers achieve better employment including giving hints, written instructions, or verbal and visual instructions. An individual with ASD may stimulate the tasks performed by a co-worker. S/he may be given a model of the product and notified in advance with the topic to be discussed to facilitate communication and help her/him give a written answer (Human Resources Development Fund, 2017; Kurtz and Jordan, 2008). The individuals with ASD can work and succeed if they are given an appropriate job, trained on it, and received psychological, vocational, or social support (Scott, Falkmer, Girdler, & Falkmer, 2015).

Camarena and Sarigiani (2009) investigated the challenges that hinder high-functioning adults with ASD from being employed. To achieve this objective, interviews were conducted with two adolescents with ASD and their parents. Results indicated that communication challenges, anxiety, and stress are among the most important challenges that affect their employment.

**ASD youth's family challenges.** Family excessive protection represents one of the employment challenges that face individuals with ASD. The family does not allow them to go out alone because it assumes that those individuals cannot assume responsibility or work. While some families are afraid of mistreating their children in the workplace, others have negative attitudes towards their efficiency and ability to work, and others are afraid of cutting-off social security benefits received by the individuals with ASD in case of being employed (Al-Ajami & Al-Batal, 2016).

Some families are cautious about certain works offered by rehabilitation and employment institutions. They are afraid that their children are mistreated or exploited. Others refuse simple handmade works as unsuitable for their social position, and others refuse to employ females for fear that they may be sexually abused. Furthermore, they do not cooperate sufficiently with specialists in training and vocational rehabilitation stage. Accordingly, their children are deprived of acquiring the required job skills (Albeblawi & Ahmed, 2008; Obeidat, 2009).

**Work environment challenges.** Workers with ASD encounter workplace difficulties because the employers and coworkers lack information about ASD (Nesbitt, 2000). In addition, they may be employed in a work incommensurate with their abilities and have difficulty maintaining work. Thus, they feel anxious and dissatisfied and cannot maintain work (Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004).

Other workplace challenges include intensive noise and powerful light which lead to their anxiety and functional inability (Hagner & Cooney, 2005; Hurlbutt & Chalmers, 2004). Hagner and Cooney (2005) investigated the nature of supervision practices among the supervisors of those with ASD. This study was applied to 14 supervisors. Results revealed that supervising the individuals with ASD, making modifications in the workplace; e.g., reducing light and noise in a way that does not hinder work, employing them in an uncrowded place, educating them on the task, developing work-related skills, and continuous guidance help achieve success.

Some researchers indicate that employers do not employ individuals with ASD for several reasons (Kaye, Jans, & Jones, 2011; Nesbitt, 2000; Peek & Kirkbride, 2001). For example, employers believe that adults with ASD need a longer period of training, mentoring, coaching than normal workers. They are worried about the cost of providing reasonable accommodations. The employers are also afraid that individuals with ASD won't be able to discipline for poor performance. These employers ignore their abilities and potentials, they only focus on the negative aspects, and they suspect the importance of support when employing those with ASD. Furthermore, they are unaware of how to deal with individuals with ASD and they cannot discipline wrongdoers. The individuals with ASD may file cases if they had accidents or being fired for poor performance. Additionally, the employers find it difficult to evaluate the skills of the individuals with ASD before employment and they are afraid that those persons may not work adequately, affecting the quality and causing financial loss.

Morgan and Alexander (2005) examined the employers' perceptions regarding employing individuals with ASD. In this study, employers with and without experience in hiring individuals with ASD were surveyed. Results showed that employers identified many advantages of hiring those persons such as consistent attendance, workforce diversity, long-term employment, and co-worker partnerships. Howlin et al. (2005) monitored 192 workers with ASD over eight years. The authors offered them professional support and training in-service. Results illustrated that 68% of the participants maintained jobs and received permanent contracts and salary increase. Additionally, the participants' performance and quality of production improved. Thus, the perception of the employers improved and some of them expressed desire to recruit new workers with ASD. Moreover, Lattimore, Parsons and Reid (2006) investigated the effectiveness of a program of work skills' development for those with ASD in the real work environment. The study was applied to four participants aged from 29 to 40 years working in a small publishing company. Two participants were trained on job duties in the work environment, while the other two were trained outside the workplace in a simulation environment similar to the work environment. Later, they received job-site training. Results revealed that those who received a simulation training performed better because they acquired the work skills better and in a more skillful way than the others who received job-site training only. Hillier et al. (2007) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of vocational support to those with ASD in developing their professional skills. The study was applied to nine participants through two years of vocational training and support. Their training included workplace rules, beginning and end times, access options, emergency procedures, and accessing the different areas of the workplace. Results illustrated that seven participants retained their initial job placements through the two year period. That is, the training improved their vocational skills and helped them retain job and address the workplace challenges.

Lawer, Brusilovskiy, Salzer, and Mandell (2009) examined the experiences of individuals with ASD in the US Vocational Rehabilitation System (VRS). The study sample comprised 1,707 individuals with ASD aged from 18 to 65 years. Results revealed that the on-job support they received helped them understand work nature, adapt to the work environment, overcome the challenges they encounter, and maintain job.

Barnhill et al. (2011) e-mailed survey forms to participants at 184 institutions of higher education (IHEs) interacting with individuals with ASD in 43 states. Later, responses were received from faculty members at 87 IHEs in 34 states. The authors argued that the successful employees with ASD report the modifications made by the employers to help them work, including explaining the social hints, reducing social claims, identifying routine in the workplace, and being more defined in giving instructions. Moreover, Scott et al. (2015) explored the key factors for successful employment from the viewpoints of adults with ASD and employers. Two groups of individuals participated in this study; 40 adults with ASD and 35 employers. Results showed that the factors for successful employment include commitment to employment requirements, understanding the due role, and providing the required support. In addition, the employers' expectations of the performance shall match the capabilities of the individual with ASD. In turn, this helped them achieve success and maintain work.

**Social challenges.** Social challenges that hinder the employment of adults with ASD include the absence of efficient legislation and policies that guarantee their right of active participation in social life as well as lack of sufficient workshops for training and preparing them for the labor market (Abu Ghoneimah, 2011). Some society members form negative views on the capabilities and potentials of individuals with ASD. Therefore, they do not expect much from them. They adopt negative attitudes towards them and deprive them of practicing self-reliance activities because of the lack of information on ASD that are limited to disability (Ahmed, 2006).

Siperstein, Romano, Mohler, and Parker (2006) explored consumers' attitudes towards companies and workplaces that employ individuals with ASD. This study covered 803 consumers. Most of the participants (75%) had direct experience with people with ASD in a work environment. Results indicated that consumers' attitudes towards the employment of individuals with ASD were positive. Moreover, 92% of the consumers felt more favorable toward those that hire individuals with disabilities, including those with ASD. The participants also had strong positive beliefs about the value and benefits of hiring people with disabilities, with 87% specifically agreeing that they would prefer to give their business to companies that hire individuals with disabilities. In other words, the negative attitudes of the employers towards hiring people with disabilities because of the lack of the consumers' accepting them in the businesses is unjustified. Moreover, Albeblawi and Ahmed (2006) argues that in spite of the positive role of the social solidarity system in most Arab countries, especially in the Gulf region, in helping individuals with ASD, it is considered one of the challenges to employ them. The financial support provided by this system meet their basic needs, so they are not eager to work even if they can.

It can be concluded that getting individuals with ASD employed is not an easy matter because it requires an adequate and efficient education, rehabilitation, and modification of workplace conditions. Each one of them has the right to get the work that suits the vocational capabilities and individual characteristics. Institutions play an important role in employing individuals with ASD because of their initiative spirit. A family should support individuals with ASD. When they are adapted to the work environment, individuals with ASD exhibit capabilities, productivity, and potentials similar to their normal peers who perform the same tasks. They have no problem integrating into society, but society has a problem accepting them as efficient and productive individuals.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Most of the youth with ASD suffer from unemployment for several reasons. In the Saudi labor market, youth with ASD are underemployed. Depending on weak pretexts, employers refuse to employ them. Therefore, it is necessary to raise community awareness of individuals with ASD and to focus on abilities. It is also

important to overcome negative attitudes towards them to adjust the work environment to suit them. Ensuring work safety procedures and developing vocational training programs for individuals with ASD are critical issues. Hence, the study problem can be formulated through the following main question:

What are the employment challenges among youth with ASD from their parents' perspective in Saudi Arabia?

The following sub-questions are derived:

1. What are the most common employment challenges among youth with ASD from their parents' perspective in Saudi Arabia?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in the employment challenges among youth with ASD due to parent's gender?
3. Are there statistically significant differences in the employment challenges among youth with ASD due to children's gender?
4. Are there statistically significant differences in the employment challenges among youth with ASD due to children's age?
5. Are there statistically significant differences in the employment challenges among youth with ASD due to financial support?

### **Significance**

The present study is significant because it is an objective response to the educators' call for caring for and employing individuals with ASD that positively affect them. It is also significant because of the widespread of ASD worldwide as it causes family and social problems. The study provides a scale for measuring employment challenges among youth with ASD in Saudi Arabia, using survey-monkey software. It also introduces a visualization of employment challenges among youth with ASD. Thus, it helps the parents, employers, and decision-makers overcome such challenges and take necessary actions towards the problem. The study paves the way for further relevant studies. In practice, the study's results and recommendations positively help the competent bodies and stakeholders take appropriate decisions that benefit the individuals with ASD and make the society more interactive with this disorder.

### **Method**

The descriptive analytic approach is utilized that describes and discusses the phenomenon in reality. It also expresses the phenomenon qualitatively to show its features and quantitatively to show its size and the relationships among its variables using statistical methods and the results are concluded (Ellian, 2001). This approach is adopted because it is more appropriate to the nature of the study. It investigates the reality of employing the individuals with ASD to define their employment challenges from their parents' perspectives and if these challenges differ according to parent's gender, children's gender, children's age, and support variables.

### **Population**

Because of the lack of accurate lists or statistics that define the number of families of children with ASD in Riyadh, it has been difficult to define the population. Therefore, the author limits the study to the families of individuals with ASD enrolled in Charitable Society of Autism Families in Riyadh to achieve a kind of focus and organization while distributing the scale.

### **Sample**

The pilot study covered 50 parents of the individuals with ASD enrolled in Charitable Society of Autism Families in Riyadh (19 fathers and 31 mothers) aged from 35 to 55 years with a means of (46.02) and a

standard deviation of (4.86). The youth with ASD were 37 males and 31 females with chronological ages from 14 to 26 years with a means of (17.66), and a standard deviation of (3.47). This Society was selected because it has more than 3500 families of individuals with ASD from different regions in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, it prepared a program to develop the skills of adults and youth with ASD and entertainment, sports, and educational program for them in collaboration with the Saudi General Sports Authority.

The author prepared the ASD youth employment challenges scale via survey-monkey. The link was sent to the Society that distributed it online to 200 registered families to whom the response criteria apply. The author asked that a parent of an individual with ASD should respond. In addition, the individual with ASD should not have been younger than 15 years and should not have had a intellectual disability.

After 3 weeks, the responses were collected. They were 122 responses of which 37 were excluded for incompleteness. Consequently, the sample covered 85 parents enrolled in Charitable Society of Autism Families in Riyadh (31 fathers and 54 mothers), aged from 36 to 55 years with a mean age of (44.20) and a standard deviation of (4.85). The individuals with ASD were 66 males and 19 females, aged from 15 to 28 years with a mean age of 18.29 and a standard deviation of (3.76). Table 1 shows the sample distribution according to the parent's gender, children's gender, children's age, and support variables.

Table 1

*Sample Distribution*

Variable	Parent's gender		Children's gender		Children age		Financial support	
	Fathers	Mothers	Male	Female	15-25	22-28	Receiving financial support	Not receiving any support
Total	31	54	66	19	58	27	28	57

### Instrument

ASD Youth Employment Challenges Scale was prepared to identify employment challenges among youth with ASD from their parents' perspective. After reviewing literature that covered employment of youth with ASD, its challenges and solutions, the objectives of the scale were defined. The domains of the scale were set, including ASD-based challenges, ASD youth's family challenges, work environment challenges, and social challenges. The final scale consisted of 40 items distributed to 4 domains; i.e., 10 items to each domain. Four-point Likert scale was utilized to estimate responses frequencies: disagree (0), undecided (1), agree (2), and totally agree (3). The scale score ranged from 0 to 120, where the high score refers to the high level of employment challenges among the youth with ASD and the low score refers to the low level of challenges.

### Scale validity

To verify the scale validity, the author conducted reviewer validity, construct validity, and domain validity, as follows.

**Reviewer validity.** The scale was submitted to three reviewers of the faculty members of Special Education at the College of Education, King Saud University. They were asked to evaluate the validity of the scale to measure employment challenges among youth with ASD, the appropriateness of its items to its domains, and its scientific and linguistic accuracy. They verified the scale items, but two reviewers recommended rewriting three items. They were "I raise my child with ASD based on excessive care; the legislation on the rights of those with ASD are unclear; the community members do not interact with the workers with ASD". The required modifications were made.

**Construct validity.** The correlation coefficient between the score of each item and the total score of the domain were calculated, according to the pilot sample responses. It consisted of 50 parents registered in the Charitable Society of Autism Families in Riyadh, (19 fathers and 31 mothers) of individuals with ASD, aged



from 14 to 26 years (37 males and 13 females). This form of validity is the most appropriate to calculate validity coefficients in such cases. Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*The Correlation Coefficient of the Items of ASD Youth Employment Challenges Scale*

Domains	No of Item	Item	Correlation coefficient
ASD-based challenges	1	My child with ASD has an intellectual disability.	.69**
	2	My child with ASD has behavioral problems.	.68**
	3	My child with ASD has weak social skills	.69**
	4	My child with ASD has week communication skills.	.69**
	5	My child with ASD has epilepsy.	.87**
	6	My child with ASD has weak job skills.	.54**
	7	My child with ASD feels nervous by noise and loud voices.	.90**
	8	My child with ASD feels annoyed by intensive light.	.84**
	9	My child with ASD feels annoyed in crowded places.	.89**
	10	My child with ASD exposes himself/ herself to risks.	.89**
ASD youth's family challenges	11	Our family customs and traditions do not allow our children with special needs to leave their homes.	.70**
	12	In raising my son with autism I followed the over-protective method	.72**
	13	My child with ASD cannot take responsibility outside the home	.72**
	14	I am afraid of other people's abuse of my child with ASD.	.72**
	15	I have little faith in the ability of my child with ASD	.89**
	16	In case of my child being employed, I am afraid of cutting off the financial support.	.58**
	17	My child with ASD does not need support from me	.92**
	18	I am afraid that my child with ASD will be exploited in the workplace.	.87**
	19	The handicrafts available to my child with ASD do not fit the social status of our family	.92**
	20	I am afraid that my daughter with ASD will be sexually harassed in the workplace.	.90**
Work environment challenges	21	Legislations of the rights of people with ASD are insufficient.	.68**
	22	Vocational training programs for people with ASD do not consider individual differences.	.70**
	23	Vocational training places for people with ASD are inadequate	.90**
	24	Professional staff that will provide vocational training to people with ASD are inadequate	.69**
	25	Professional staff that will supervise people with ASD in the workplace are inadequate	.80**
	26	Community members have a negative attitude towards the abilities and potential of people with ASD	.86**
	27	Community members do not trust the quality of the product produced by people with ASD	.70**
	28	Community members are afraid to deal with people with ASD	.87**
	29	The law of suing employers who refuse to employ people with ASD is weak.	.65**
	30	The financial support received by people with ASD makes them not eager to work	.88**

Table 2 (continuing)

Domains	No of Item	Item	Correlation coefficient
Social challenges	31	Ordinary people in the workplace do not have sufficient information about the abilities and potential of people with ASD.	.69**
	32	Employers see that people with ASD need a long period of supervision	.70**
	33	Employers do not have sufficient information about the abilities and potential of people with ASD.	.91**
	34	The work available to people with ASD does not fit their abilities and potentials.	.69**
	35	Machines and workers in the workplace make noise.	.78**
	36	The workplace requires intense lighting that people with ASD cannot withstand.	.92**
	37	The level of professional support provided to people with ASD in the workplace is poor.	.70**
	38	The workplace is unprepared for people with ASD	.91**
	39	Support for people with ASD does not fit their individual needs.	.68**
	40	Safety measures in the workplace for people with ASD are poor	.89**

\*\*Correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.01.

Table 2 indicates that correlation coefficients between the item and its domain are statistically significant at 0.01 which confirms that the scale items have an acceptable degree of validity (Abu Hashim, 2004). Furthermore, Cronbach alpha coefficients were estimated. Each coefficient shows the reliability value of the scale after deleting its items. At the same time, it is the criterion validity, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

*Corrected Correlation Coefficient and Cronbach Alpha of the Items of ASD Youth Employment Challenges Scale After Deleting The Item's Score (N = 50)*

Domain	Item	Correlation Coefficient	Cronbach alpha	Domain	Item	Correlation Coefficient	Cronbach alpha
ASD-based challenges	1	.69	.94	Work environment challenges	21	.68	.76
	2	.68	.94		22	.70	.76
	3	.69	.94		23	.90	.75
	4	.69	.94		24	.69	.76
	5	.87	.93		25	.80	.75
	6	.54	.94		26	.86	.76
	7	.90	.93		27	.70	.75
	8	.84	.93		28	.87	.75
	9	.89	.93		29	.65	.76
	10	.89	.93		30	.88	.76
ASD youth's family challenges	11	.70	.76	31	.69	.76	
	12	.72	.76	32	.70	.76	
	13	.72	.76	33	.91	.75	
	14	.72	.76	34	.69	.76	
	15	.89	.75	35	.78	.76	
	16	.58	.77	36	.92	.75	
	17	.92	.75	37	.70	.76	
	18	.87	.76	38	.91	.75	
	19	.92	.75	39	.68	.76	
	20	.90	.76	40	.89	.75	
Overall alpha correlation					.83		

Table 3 shows that all the values of correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the level of (.01,  $p < .01$ ). That is, the scale's items have an acceptable degree of validity on the basis that the other items are criterion (Abu Hashim, 2004).

**Domains validity.** The correlation coefficient of the scale domains calculated between the scores of each domain and the total score of the scale. Results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

*The Correlation Coefficient of the Domains of ASD Youth Employment Challenges Scale*

Domain	Correlation coefficient
ASD-based challenges	.59**
ASD youth's family challenges	.52**
Work environment challenges	.72**
Social challenges	.73**

\*\*Correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the .01.

Table 4 shows that correlation coefficients between the domain score and the total score of the scale are statistically significant at the level of .01. This confirms that all scale domains have an acceptable degree of validity.

**Reliability**

To check the scale reliability, it was applied to the pilot sample and Cronbach's Alpha calculated. Cronbach's Alpha is a statistically reliable test, where the specialists of measurement and statistics agree that its reliability levels are accepted if they reach (.60) and more Sabah (2013). The scale achieved (.91). It indicates that the scale has a high degree of reliability in the range (.93 - .94).

**Item reliability.** The reliability of the items was calculated by estimating the correlation coefficients between the items and their domains. Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

*The Correlation Coefficient of the Items and Their Domains (N = 50)*

ASD-based challenges		ASD youth's family challenges		Work environment challenges		Social challenges	
Item	Correlation coefficient	Item	Correlation coefficient	Item	Correlation coefficient	Item	Correlation coefficient
1	.73**	11	.73**	21	.71**	31	.72**
2	.63**	12	.75**	22	.73**	32	.73**
3	.73**	13	.75**	23	.91**	33	.92**
4	.64**	14	.75**	24	.73**	34	.72**
5	.77**	15	.91**	25	.82**	35	.81**
6	.57**	16	.62**	26	.88**	36	.93**
7	.76**	17	.92**	27	.73**	37	.73**
8	.68**	18	.88**	28	.88**	38	.92**
9	.75**	19	.93**	29	.69**	39	.71**
10	.74**	20	.91**	30	.89**	40	.91**

\*\*Statistically significant at the level of .01

The results of Table 5 show that the correlation coefficients of ASD-based challenges were (.57 - .76), while they were (.62 - .93) for ASD youth's family challenges. The work environment challenges were (.69 - .91) and the social challenges were (.71 - .93). All the correlations were statistically significant at the level of .01, suggesting that all the items are highly reliable. After applying the scale and verifying its validity and reliability, the responses were corrected and the data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25.

### Statistical Processing

After collecting and coding data, they were analyzed and results were concluded using SPSS based on the following statistical treatments:

1. Measures of central tendency (mean and median).
2. Measure of dispersion (standard deviation).
3. Pearson-Brown correlation coefficient.
4. Cronbach's alpha.
5. The independent groups t-test.

### Results

To answer the first research question "what are the most common employment challenges among youth with ASD from their parents' perspective in Saudi Arabia?", ASD adult employment challenges scale scores means and standard deviations were calculated. Results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Means of Parents' Responses to the Scale of Employment Challenges Among Youth with ASD*

Domain	$\bar{X}$	<i>sd</i>	Ranking
ASD-Based Challenges	22.54	3.74	1
ASD Youth's Family Challenges	20.95	3.70	2
Work Environment Challenges	19.71	3.85	3
Social Challenges	17.72	3.79	4

Table 6 indicates that ASD-based challenges were ranked first as the most common challenge of employing adults with ASD in Saudi Arabia. This result matches the results of Barnhill et al. (2011), Hendricks (2010), Majid (2010), Nambiar (2013), Seltzer and Krauss (2002) and Vogeley et al. (2013). Additionally, ASD youth's family was ranked second. Table 6 also illustrates that the other ASD employment challenges are related to the work environment were ranked third. There are also social challenges hindering ASD adult employment and were ranked fourth.

To answer the second, third, and fourth questions that aimed at identifying differences in employment challenges among youth with ASD due to parent's gender, children's gender, children's age, and financial support, T-test for independent groups is applied. Results are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

*Significant Differences Between the Mean Scores of the Responses of the Parents of ASD Youth to Employment Challenges Due to Parent's Gender, Children's Gender, Children's Age, and Financial Support*

Variables	Group	<i>N</i>	$\bar{X}$	<i>sd</i>	<i>t</i>
Parent's Gender	Fathers	31	80.22	13.90	.50
	Mothers	54	81.50	8.70	20.00
Gender of Child with ASD	Parents of Male ASD Adult	66	82.06	10.29	1.60
	Parents of Female ASD Adult	19	74.47	12.12	43.00
Age of Child with ASD	Parents of Younger Children With ASD	58	81.77	9.51	1.20
	Parents of Older Children With ASD	27	79.44	13.28	10.00
Financial Support	Parents with ASD Youth who Receive Financial Support	28	70.07	7.90	9.28*
	Parents with ASD Youth who do not Receive Any Support	57	86.421	7.495	

\* $p < .01$

Table 7 shows that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the responses of the parents of ASD youth to employment challenges due to parent's gender, children's gender, and

children's age. Table 7 also shows that there are statistically significant differences at the level of .01 between the mean scores of the parents of youth with ASD due to financial support, favoring those who do not receive any support. The parents of youth with ASD who do not receive any support show greater employment challenges than the parents of the youth with ASD who receive financial support. Financial support provided for youth with ASD, within their families and in the workplace, reduces the level of employment challenges. They feel less stress and try to adapt to the work environment and attain the job they have.

### **Discussion**

The author argues that ASD-based challenges were ranked the first because the employment of adults with ASD is the ultimate goal of the rehabilitation process by achieving proper psychological and social development. It provides a financial income which ensures a certain living condition for him/ her, and contribute to the process of social development. The employment process begins with evaluating adults with ASD's capabilities to identify the strengths and weaknesses and invest the available potentials, and choosing the appropriate profession for his/ her abilities, qualifications and attitudes. The training stage of the employment process is based on individualized training through which training objectives defined according to the youth with ASD's capabilities and personal characteristics. After receiving the required training programs, the process of searching a job opportunity for the youth with ASD begins, since employment is the ultimate goal of any vocational rehabilitation program, in addition to the inclusion of the adults with ASD in economic life in accordance with his/ her abilities and skills.

The family of youth with ASD was ranked the second because of the parent's refusal of the work provided by the rehabilitation and employment institutions for the fear of exploitation and abuse. This result is consistent with the findings of Al-Ajami and Al-Batal (2016), Albeblawi and Ahmed (2008), and Obeidat (2009) in terms of some family matters that impede the process of employing the youth with ASD.

On one hand, the minor work that is not suitable for a social position is also refused. Consequently, the parents' attitudes towards employing the youth with ASD should be readjusted through getting rid of overprotection and contacting employers and work environment to ensure occupational and environmental safety for them. On the other hand and according to Hastings and Johnson (2001), Johnston et al. (2003), Orsmond, Lin and Seltzer (2007), Smith, Seltzer, Tager-Flusberg, and Carter (2008), Smith et al. (2010), and Smith, Seltzer and Greenberg (2012), parents of unemployed ASD adults have high levels of anxiety, stress and depression symptoms compared to parents of peer normal adults. The social support they receive is much lower than what they need, which makes them in a state of permanent tension and they are nervous with their families, friends, or coworkers.

Moreover, work environment challenges were ranked the third because it is necessary to communicate with employers and encourage them to employ adults with ASD and to give them a chance. Negative attitudes towards employing individuals with ASD should be addressed. The work environment should be prepared and equipped for adults with ASD. Occupational safety should be ensured and vocational training programs for adults with ASD should be developed in accordance with the requirements of the labor market. Furthermore, the employment programs that provide support for adults with ASD in the work environment should be afforded. These results are consistent with the findings of Morgan and Alexander (2005), Nesbitt (2000), and Peek and Kirkbride (2001) because employers refuse to employ individuals with ASD.

The social challenges were ranked the fourth. This result is consistent with the results of Abu Ghoneimah (2011), Albeblawi and Ahmed (2008) and Ahmed (2006) in terms of a set of social employment challenges facing the individuals with ASD. According to Al-Fayez (2016), Saudi Arabia is concerned with people with special needs, in general, and with individuals with ASD, in particular. Since its inception, the Ministry of Education has established a department for special Education in 1962. Saudi Arabia has great achievements in all areas concerning people with special needs, including those with ASD. The Ministry of

Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labor and Social Development Ministry are concerned with providing services to them.

It can be explained that there are a few Arabic studies on the employment of the youth with ASD indicating limited awareness about them. In addition, most employers still have negative attitudes towards the employment of individuals with ASD. Accordingly, attention should be paid to the pre-service training programs, summer training, and volunteer training for adults with ASD in the institutions because of their significant role in helping them join the professional training environment and the actual work environment, and giving them the opportunity to prove oneself. In addition, the individuals with ASD should be followed up during work to ascertain the extent of their adaptation to the work environment and to help solve the problems that hinder their professional growth and work attainment. It is also important to work on changing community members' negative attitude towards individuals with ASD, concerning their abilities and potential. It can be achieved by raising social awareness about them through audio and visual media.

Although Saudi Arabia has enacted many laws and legislation that oblige employers to employ the individuals with special needs, in general, including ASD adults, to give them equal rights to those of the normal and to protect them from exploitation, these laws are not activated. The state should intervene to activate them and to punish employers who refuse to employ the individuals with ASD, who provide them inappropriate jobs, or who give them a wage less than that of the normal ones with the same skill and experience.

There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the responses of the parents of ASD youth to employment challenges due to parent's gender, children's gender, and children's age. This result can be explained that the family pattern and living conditions are almost typical in Saudi society. In addition, the participant families are members of the Charitable Society of Autism Families in Riyadh. Accordingly, they are influenced by the same factors.

Furthermore, after high school graduation, the youth with ASD live completely and permanently with their families and the caring and training role played by institutions is over. Parents, in general, and those of youth with ASD in particular whether males or females, want to reassure the future of those individuals. The parents seek ways to get them employed with fixed income. They hope that those individuals become independent in the future and capable of affording themselves with the basic needs. However, their aspirations faced by various challenges. The fathers and mothers are dissatisfied with the challenges that deprive their child of his/her right to have a job opportunity. There are no statistically significant differences between fathers and mothers in the understanding and estimation of these challenges.

There are statistically significant differences at the level of .01 between the mean scores of the parents of youth with ASD due to financial support, favoring those who do not receive any support. These results are consistent with the literature, including Al-Ajami and Al-Batal (2016), Burt et al. (1991), Camarena and Sarigiani (2009), Hagner and Cooney (2005), Howlin et al. (2005), Lattimore et al. (2006), and Nesbitt (2000). Families of youth with ASD bear huge financial burdens due to the increasing needs of their child in this stage; i.e., adolescence and youth. He/she needs to be married and achieve independence by establishing his/her own family. Accordingly, the family strives to help him/ her find a job, to be capable of ensuring his/her basic needs. However, it faces the previously mentioned challenges of employing adults with ASD. Due to unemployment, the family faces financial issues caused by this disorder's burden and inability to meet his/her needs. Financial support received by some of these families mitigates stress caused by the unemployment of their son/daughter. While families whose ASD adult do not receive any support have an increased level of stress due to challenges of employing the adults with ASD (Ahmed, 2006).

The current study aims to investigate the employment challenges of youth with ASD from their parents' perspective in Saudi Arabia. It concluded that individuals with ASD have some behavioral characteristics associated with ASD, repetitive behavioral patterns and deficits in social communication and social interaction which hinder their employment. Though Saudi Arabia has sought to afford sufficient training centers and

programs for individuals with ASD and has enacted laws and regulations to serve them, a lot more has to be done to meet the aspirations of families of individuals with disability because they encounter many employment challenges.

To the author's knowledge, there are no Arab studies, in general, or Saudi ones, in particular on the topic. Moreover, the present study can be utilized in the field of special education because of the significance of the tool. It can motivate authors to conduct further studies on ASD. It also adds to literature and can be used as a database for special education specialists.

### **Limitations**

The study is limited to spatial and human, temporal, and subject limitations. In terms of the spatial and human limitations, the study was limited to the parents of youth with ASD enrolled in Charitable Society of Autism Families in Riyadh. Regarding the temporal limitations, the study was applied in the second semester of the academic year 2017/2018. Additionally, the subject limitations included the employment challenges among youth with ASD from their parents' perspective in Saudi Arabia.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of the results of the current study, it is recommended:

1. Paying attention to the employment of youth with ASD through creating jobs that fit their abilities and potentials.
2. Preparing training programs for the development of professional skills among adults with ASD.
3. Educating employers about the abilities and potentials of individuals with ASD and urging them to employ those individuals in jobs that commensurate with their abilities.
4. Raising social awareness about the abilities and potentials of individuals with ASD and encourage society members to assign work to them.
5. Enacting strict regulations to deal with employers who refuse to employ individuals with ASD who are able to work.

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# Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Özel Eğitim Dergisi

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## Otizm Spektrum Bozukluğu Olan Gençlerin İstihdam Güçlükleri: Suudi Arabistan Örneği

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Öz

Bu çalışmada, ebeveyn görüşlerine göre Suudi Arabistan'daki Otizm Spektrum Bozukluğu (OSB) olan gençlerin istihdam güçlüklerinin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bu amaçla 85 OSB olan gencin ebeveynlerine OSB'li gençler için hazırlanan İstihdam Güçlükleri Ölçeği uygulanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgulara göre, Suudi Arabistan'daki istihdamla ilişkin güçlüklerinin; OSB temelli güçlükler, OSB'li gençlerin ailelerine ilişkin güçlükler, çalışma ortamına ilişkin güçlükler ve sosyal güçlükler olduğu belirlenmiştir. Ebeveynlerin ölçeğe verdikleri yanıtlardan elde edilen puan ortalamaları, ebeveyn cinsiyeti, çocuğun cinsiyeti ve çocuğun yaşına göre istatistiksel olarak anlamlı farklılık göstermemiştir. Ancak mali destek alma değişkenine göre ebeveynlerin ölçeğe verdikleri yanıtların puan ortalamaları, mali destek almayanlar lehine istatistiksel olarak anlamlı şekilde farklılaşmaktadır.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* İstihdam, istihdam güçlükleri, otizm spektrum bozukluğu (OSB), OSB olan genç, OSB olan gencin ebeveyni.

### Önerilen Atıf Şekli

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ÖZEL EĞİTİM DERGİSİ

Otizm spektrum bozukluğu (OSB), sadece çocuklukta değil aynı zamanda ergenlik ve yetişkinlikte de görülen nörogelişimsel bir bozukluktur. Almoqabala'ya (2016) ile Seltzer ve Krauss'a (2002) göre bir çocuk üç yaşından önce bu bozukluktan muzdariptir ve bu bozuklukta birey başkalarına bağımlı hale gelecek derecede dalgındır, konsantrasyonu ve dikkati sınırlıdır, bireyde hiperaktivite görülür, dil gelişimi yavaştır ve dış duyu uyaranlara yanıt verme sınırlılıkları ergenliğe kadar devam etmektedir. Dahası, OSB olan gençler, özellikle görsel iletişim olmak üzere, başkalarıyla iletişimden kaçındıkları için diğerlerine ve onların varlığına ilgisiz olma eğilimindedirler. Bu durum, spektrumda karmaşık şekillerle ortaya çıkar. Diğer bir deyişle belirtileri ve özellikleri hafiften ağıra birçok örtüşen yapı halinde ortaya çıkmakta ve bu bozukluğu olanlar bozukluğun ciddiyetine göre farklı birçok davranış sergilerler.

OSB yüksek oranda görülen yaygın bir bozukluktur. Hastalık Kontrol ve Önleme Merkezi'ne (Center for Disease Control and Prevention-CDC) göre 8 yaşındaki çocuklar arasında OSB'nin yaygınlığı her 59 çocukta 1'dir (Baio vd., 2018). Bu OSB olan çocukların oranında artış olduğunu göstermektedir. Çünkü 2012'de OSB'nin, ABD'de 1/68 olduğu rapor edilmiştir (CDC, 2012). Daha sonra, ABD'de 36 çocuktan 1'ine ve dünyada ise 160 çocuktan 1'ine OSB tanısı konulması inanılmaz derecedeki artışı göstermektedir (Thombson, Bölte, Falkmer & Girdler, 2018). Suudi Otizm Topluluğunun (Saudi Autistic Society, 2009) farklı bölgelerde uyguladığı bir anket çalışmasına göre Suudi Arabistan'da 120.000'den fazla OSB olan genç bulunmaktadır (Qutb, 2012).

OSB olan bireyler zihinsel açıdan bazı meslekler için yetkin olmalarına rağmen sosyal yetersizliklerinden ötürü kariyer olanakları sınırlıdır. OSB olanların çoğu kamuda çalışmamakta becerileri ile uyumlu mesleklere gereksinim duymaktadırlar. OSB olan bireyler için özel birimler oluşturmak zor olsa da kamu sağlık kuruluşları ve topluma hizmet merkezleri tarafından yönetilen özel bakım birimleri ve eğitim merkezleri OSB olan bireyleri çalıştırmamaktadır (Barnhill, Polloway & Sumutka, 2011; Majid, 2010).

ABD, OSB olan bireylerin istihdamı konusunda, olanaklara eşit erişim için 1975'te engelli bireylerin işlerini düzenlemeye yönelik kanun koyan ilk ülke olmuştur (Wieren, Armstrong & McMahon, 2012). 1990 yılında ise devlet ve yerel yönetim hizmetlerinin yanı sıra konaklama, istihdam ve ulaşımda engelli bireylerin olanaklara eşit erişimi için Engelli Amerikalılar Yasasını (Americans with Disabilities Act-ADA) geçirmişlerdir (Wieren vd., 2012). Bu yasa, engelli bireylerin istihdam, yükseltme, işten çıkarma, maaş ve eğitim süreçlerinin uygun olması durumunda bu bireylere yönelik özel ya da kamu işverenlerinin ayrımcılık yapmasını yasaklamıştır. Örneğin ADA, uygun konaklama ve çalışma saatlerini, makul bir iş ve araç-gereç sağlamayı işverenlere zorunlu kılmaktadır. Dahası, etkinliklerde, sağlık sigortasında, ulaşımda veya diğer iş haklarında engelli çalışanlara karşı ayrımcılık yapılmasını yasaklamıştır (Herdo Center to Support the Digital Expression, 2014).

Suudi Arabistan, OSB'li bireyler için yeterli eğitim merkezi ve program sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır ve bu bireylere uygun hizmetleri sağlamak için yasa ve yönetmelikler çıkarmıştır. Fakat bu yasa ve yönetmelikler birçok istihdam güclüğü ile karşılaştıkları için engelli birey ailelerinin beklentilerini karşılamamaktadır. Özel gereksinimli bireylerin istihdam haklarına yönelik Arap ve Uluslararası yasa ve yönetmelikler ile OSB olan bireylerin istihdamına yönelik uluslararası ilgi olmasına karşın işsizlik oranı gelişmiş ülkelerde %50-70, gelişmekte olan ülkelerde %80-90 gibi oldukça yüksek oranlardadır. Başka bir deyişle özel gereksinimi olan diğer bireyler gibi OSB olan bireylerin de istihdamı henüz yeterli düzeyde değildir.

Aileler, OSB olan bireylere daha yakın oldukları ve onlarla daha fazla ilgili oldukları için ailelerin görüşlerine göre OSB olan bireylerin iş ve istihdama ilişkin güçlüklerin belirlenmesi önemlidir. Bununla birlikte yazarın bilgisi doğrultusunda Suudi Arabistan'da OSB olan gençlerin istihdam güçlüklerini ebeveyn perspektifinden belirlemeye yönelik hiçbir çalışma yapılmamıştır. Bu yüzden bu çalışmanın amacı karar vericilerin güçlükler için çözüm üretmeleri veya bu güçlüklerin üstesinden gelmelerine yardımcı olacak bilgi ve verileri sağlamak amacıyla ebeveynlerin görüşlerine göre OSB olan gençlerin istihdamına yönelik güçlükleri incelemektir.

### Problem Durumu

OSB olan gençlerin çoğu çeşitli nedenlerden dolayı işsiz kalmaktadır. Suudi iş piyasasında OSB olan gençler yeterince iş bulamamaktadır. İşverenler mazeretler göstererek onlara iş vermeyi reddetmektedir. Bu nedenle OSB olan bireylere yönelik farkındalığı artırmak ve onların yeteneklerine odaklanmak gerekmektedir. Ayrıca çalışma ortamını bu bireylere göre düzenleyebilmek için olumsuz tutumların üstesinden gelmek de önemlidir. Son olarak iş güvenliği prosedürlerinin sağlanması ve OSB olan bireyler için mesleki eğitim programlarının geliştirilmesi de önemlidir. Bu yüzden bu çalışmanın problemi aşağıdaki gibidir:

Ebeveynlerinin görüşlerine göre Suudi Arabistan'daki OSB olan gençlerin istihdam güçlükleri nelerdir?

Bu araştırmada yanıt aranan diğer sorular şunlardır:

1. Ebeveynlerinin görüşlerine göre Suudi Arabistan'daki OSB olan gençlerin en yaygın istihdam güçlükleri nelerdir?
2. Ebeveynlerinin cinsiyetine göre OSB olan gençlerin istihdam güçlükleri arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı fark var mıdır?
3. OSB olan gençlerin cinsiyetlerine göre istihdam güçlükleri arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı fark var mıdır?
4. OSB olan gençlerin yaşlarına göre istihdam güçlükleri arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı fark var mıdır?
5. Mali destek alma durumlarına göre istihdam güçlükleri arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı fark var mıdır?

### Önem

Bu çalışma, eğitimcilerin OSB olan bireylerin bakımı ve istihdam sorunlarına yönelik objektif bir yanıt aradığı için önemlidir. Ayrıca dünya genelinde yaygın olan OSB, aile problemlerine ve sosyal sorunlara neden olduğu için de önemlidir. Bu çalışma, Survey-Monkey (<https://surveymonkey.com/>) yazılımı kullanılarak Suudi Arabistan'daki OSB olan gençlerin istihdam güçlüklerini belirlemeye yönelik bir ölçek de sağlamaktadır. Ayrıca çalışma OSB olan gençlerin istihdam güçlüklerini belirleme açısından da önemlidir. Böylece bu çalışma ebeveynlerin, işverenlerin ve karar vericilerin bu tür güçlüklerle başa çıkabilmeleri ve sorunlara yönelik önlemleri almalarına yardımcı olabilir. Bu çalışma, ileride yapılacak olan ilişkili çalışmaların yapılmasına olanak sağlayacaktır. Çalışmanın bulguları ve önerileri, uygulamada yer alan ilgili kurumlara ve paydaşlara bu bireylere yönelik daha uygun kararlar almaları yönünde bilgiler verecek toplumun bu bireylerle daha fazla etkileşime girmesini sağlayacaktır.

### Yöntem

Bu çalışma betimsel bir araştırmadır. Betimsel araştırma, gerçekte var olan fenomenleri açıklayan ve tartışan bir yaklaşımdır. Ayrıca bu yaklaşımla belirli bir fenomenin özelliklerini göstermek için nitel olarak, büyüklüğünü göstermek içinde nicel olarak, değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiyi istatistiksel yöntemler kullanarak belirlenmekte ve bulgular elde edilmiştir (Ellian, 2001). Bu yaklaşım, OSB olan bireylerin ebeveynlerinin görüşlerine göre istihdam güçlüklerini belirlemeyi amaçlamakta ve bu güçlüklerin ebeveynin cinsiyetine, çocuğun cinsiyetine, çocuğun yaşına ve mali destek değişkenlerine göre farklılık gösterip göstermediğini belirlemeye çalışmaktadır.

### Evren

Riyad'da OSB olan çocukların aile sayısını belirten güvenilir listelerin veya istatistiklerin bulunmaması nedeniyle evreni tanımlamak zordur. Bu nedenle, araştırmacı, çalışmayı Riyad'daki Hayırsever Otizimli Aileler

Derneği'ne (Charitable Society of Autism Families in Riyadh) kayıtlı OSB olan bireylerin aileleriyle sınırlandırmıştır.

### Örneklem

Pilot çalışma Riyad'daki Hayırsever Otizmliler Aileler Derneğinden yaşları 35-55 ( $\bar{X} = 46.03$ ,  $SS = 4.87$ ) arasında olan 50 ebeveyn ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. OSB olan gençler ise yaşları 14-24 ( $\bar{X} = 17.66$ ,  $SS = 3.47$ ) arasında olan 37 erkek ve 31 kadından oluşmaktadır. Suudi Arabistan'ın farklı bölgelerinden 3500'den fazla aile olduğu için böyle bir örneklem seçilmiştir. Ayrıca Suudi Genel Spor Otoritesi (Saudi General Sports Authority) ile iş birliği içerisinde eğlence, spor ve eğitim programları ile OSB olan yetişkinlerin ve gençlerin becerilerini geliştirmek için bir program hazırlanmıştır.

Yazar Survey-Monkey (<https://surveyMonkey.com/>) aracılığı ile OSB olan gençler için istihdam güçlükleri ölçeğini hazırlamıştır. Belirtilen ölçütleri karşılayan 200 aileye ölçeğin linki çevrimiçi olarak dağıtılmıştır. Yazar link aracılığı ile OSB olan gençlerin ebeveynlerinin soruları yanıtlamasını istemiştir. Ek olarak çalışmaya katılacak OSB olan gençlerin zihinsel yetersizliğinin olmaması ve yaşının 15'ten küçük olmaması ölçütü aranmıştır.

Ebeveynlerin ölçeklere verdiği yanıtlar üç hafta sonra toplanmıştır. Gönderilen 122 ölçeğin 37'si tamamlanmadığı için çalışma dışında tutulmuştur. Sonuç olarak katılımcılar Riyad'daki Hayırsever Otizmliler Aileler Derneği'nde kayıtlı olan yaşları 36-55 ( $\bar{X} = 44.2$ ,  $SS = 4.86$ ) arasında olan 85 (31 baba ve 54 anne) ebeveyn oluşmuştur. OSB olan bireyler ise yaşları 15-28 ( $\bar{X} = 18.29$ ,  $SS = 3.76$ ) arasında olan 66 erkek ve 19 kadından oluşmaktadır. Ebeveyn cinsiyeti, çocuk cinsiyeti, çocuk yaşı ve mali destek değişkenlerine ilişkin bilgiler Tablo 1'de yer almaktadır.

Tablo 1

#### Örneklem Dağılımı

Değişken	Ebeveynin Cinsiyeti		Çocuğun Cinsiyeti		Çocuğun Yaşı		Mali Destek	
	Erkek	Kadın	Erkek	Kadın	Genç	Yetişkin	Alıyor	Almıyor
Toplam	31	54	66	19	58	27	28	57

### Bulgular ve Tartışma

Çalışmanın birinci sorusunu yanıtlamak üzere OSB olan gençler için istihdam güçlükleri ölçeği ortalama puanları ile standart sapmaları hesaplanmıştır ve sonuçlar Tablo 2'de yer almaktadır.

Tablo 2

#### OSB olan Gençler için İstihdam Güçlükleri Ölçeğine Ebeveyn Yanıtlarının Ortalamaları

Güçlük Alanı	$\bar{X}$	SS	Sıra
OSB Temelli Güçlükler	22.54	3.74	1
OSB Olan Gençlerin Ailelerinin Yaşadığı Güçlükler	20.95	3.7	2
Çalışma Ortamına İlişkin Güçlükler	19.71	3.85	3
Sosyal Güçlükler	17.72	3.79	4

Suudi Arabistan'daki OSB olan yetişkinlerin en yaygın istihdam güçlüğü birinci sırada yer alan OSB temelli güçlükler olduğu Tablo 2'de görülmektedir. Ayrıca diğer OSB istihdam güçlüklerinden çalışma ortamına ilişkin güçlüklerin üçüncü sırada yer aldığı görülmektedir.

Arap OSB olan gençlerin istihdamına yönelik yapılan az sayıdaki çalışma da OSB olanlara yönelik farkındalığın sınırlı olduğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca OSB olan gençlerin istihdamına yönelik birçok işveren hala olumsuz tutuma sahiptir. Bu nedenle kurumların, OSB olan yetişkinlere yönelik hizmet öncesi eğitim programlarına, yaz eğitimlerine ve gönüllü eğitimlere önem vermesi gerekmektedir. Bu eğitimler, OSB olan yetişkinlerin profesyonel eğitim çevrelerine, gerçek çalışma ortamlarına katılımlarında önemlidir ve kendilerini

kanıtlama olanağı sağlar. Ayrıca çalışma ortamlarına uyumlarını belirlemek, mesleki gelişimlerini ve iş kazanımlarını engelleyen durumları saptayıp çözüm üretebilmek için OSB olan bireyler çalışma sırasında izlenmelidirler. OSB olan bireylerin yetenekleri ve potansiyellerine yönelik toplumdaki olumsuz tutumların belirlenmesi de ayrıca önemlidir. Bu, görsel ve işitsel medya aracılığı ile OSB olanlara yönelik sosyal farkındalığın artırılması ile başarılabilir.

Her ne kadar Suudi Arabistan, iş verenlerin özel gereksinimli bireyleri istihdam etmeleri, normal gelişim gösterenler ile eşit haklar vermeleri ve onları istismardan korumaları için işverenlere zorunluluk getiren birçok yasa ve yönetmelik çıkarmış olsa da bu yasalar aktif değildir. Bu çerçevede devlet, yasaları aktif hale getirmek amacıyla OSB olan bireyleri istihdam etmeyi reddeden, uygun olmayan işlerde çalıştıran, aynı becerideki ve aynı konumda çalışan normal gelişen kişilere kıyasla daha az maaş veren işverenleri cezalandırmak için harekete geçmelidir.

OSB olan çocuklar için istihdam güçlükleri ölçeğine ebeveynlerin verdikleri yanıtların puan ortalamalarında ebeveynin cinsiyeti, çocuğun cinsiyeti ve çocuğun yaşı açısından ilişkin istatistiksel olarak anlamlı fark yoktur. Bu bulgu Suudi topluluğunda aile yapılarının ve yaşam koşullarının benzer olması ile açıklanabilir. Ek olarak bu durum katılımcı ailelerin Riyad'daki Hayırsever Otizmlili Aileler Derneği'nin üyeleri olması ile de açıklanabilir. Bu nedenle tüm grubun benzer faktörlerden etkilendiği söylenebilir.

OSB olan gençler arasındaki istihdam güçlüklerinde yaşanan farklılıkların ebeveynin cinsiyeti, çocuğun cinsiyeti, çocuğun yaşı ve mali destek alma açısından belirlemek üzere ikinci, üçüncü ve dördüncü soruları yanıtlamak için, Tablo 3'te gösterildiği gibi, bağımsız örneklem için t-testi yapılmıştır.

Tablo 3

*Ebeveynin Cinsiyetine, Çocuğun Cinsiyetine, Çocuğun Yaşına ve Mali Desteğe Göre OSB Olan Gençlerin İstihdam Güçlüklerine İlişkin Ortalama Puanlar Arasındaki Farklar*

Değişken	Gruplar	N	$\bar{X}$	SS	t
Ebeveynin Cinsiyeti	Baba	31	80.23	13.90	.5
	Anne	54	81.50	8.70	20
OSB Olan Çocuğun Cinsiyeti	OSB olan Yetişkin Erkeklerin Ebeveynleri	66	82.06	10.30	1.6
	OSB olan Yetişkin Kadınların Ebeveynleri	19	74.47	12.13	43
OSB Olan Çocuğun Yaşı	Genç OSB Olan Bireylerin Ebeveynleri	58	81.78	9.52	1.2
	Yetişkin OSB Olan Bireylerin Ebeveynleri	27	79.44	13.28	10
Mali Destek Alma Durumu	Mali Destek Alanlar	28	70.07	7.90	9.28*
	Mali Destek Almayanlar	57	86.42	7.50	

\* $p < .01$

Tablo 3'te, ebeveynin cinsiyeti, çocuğun cinsiyeti ve çocuğun yaşı açısından OSB olan gençler için istihdam güçlükleri ölçeğine ebeveynlerin verdikleri yanıtların puan ortalamalarının anlamlı şekilde farklılaşmadığı görülmektedir. Normal gelişim gösterenlerin ebeveynleri ile karşılaştırıldığında işsiz OSB olan yetişkin ebeveynlerinin stres, kaygı ve depresyon düzeyleri daha yüksektir. Aldıkları sosyal destek ihtiyaç duyduklarından daha düşüktür. Bu yüzden ebeveynler ailelerine, arkadaşlarına ve iş arkadaşlarına karşı sürekli gerginlerdir. Tablo 3'te, mali destek alma değişkenine göre ebeveynlerin ölçeğe verdikleri yanıtların puan ortalamalarının, mali destek almayanlar lehine .01 düzeyinde anlamlı şekilde fark olduğu da görülmektedir. OSB olan gençlerin ebeveynlerinden mali destek almayanların mali destek alanlara kıyasla daha fazla istihdam güçlükleri yaşadığı görülmektedir.

Bu bulgu, OSB olan gençlerin ebeveynlerinin ergenlik ve gençlik dönemlerinde çocuklarının gereksinimlerinin artması ile birlikte daha fazla mali zorluk yaşamaları ile açıklanabilir. OSB olan gençlerin evlenip kendi ailesini kurarak bağımsızlık kazanmaları gerekmektedir. Bu doğrultuda ebeveynleri, temel gereksinimlerini karşılayabilmeleri için çocuklarına iş bulmak için uğraşırlar. Fakat daha önce de değinildiği gibi bu süreçte OSB olan gençlerin istihdamında güçlüklerle karşılaşmaktadırlar. İşsizlikten ötürü ebeveynler

OSB'den kaynaklanan mali sorunlarla karşılaşmakta ve çocuklarının gereksinimlerini karşılamakta zorlanmaktadır. Ebeveynlerden bazılarının aldığı mali destek çocuklarının işsizliğinden kaynaklanan stresi azaltmaktadır. Diğer taraftan mali destek almayanların, OSB olan gençlerin istihdam güçlüklerinden dolayı stres düzeyleri artmaktadır.

Çalışmanın amacı Suudi Arabistan'daki OSB olan gençlerin ebeveynlerinin görüşlerine göre istihdam güçlüklerini araştırmaktır. Yazarın bilgisi doğrultusunda bu konuya yönelik genel çerçevede Arap özelde ise Suudi Arabistan'da herhangi bir çalışma yoktur. Ayrıca bu çalışma, kullanılan aracın özel eğitim alanında kullanılabilmesi bakımından da önemlidir. Bu, yazarları OSB alanında ileri çalışmalar yapmaları konusunda motive edebilir. Ayrıca alanyazında yer almasıyla birlikte özel eğitim uzmanları tarafından veri tabanı olarak da kullanılabilir. OSB olan bireylerin tekrarlayıcı davranış yapıları ve sosyal etkileşim ve iletişimde yetersizlik gibi OSB ile ilişkili olan davranış yapıları istihdam edilmelerini engellemektedir.