Assessment of Community Participation and Self-Determination as Outcomes of Transition for Youth and Young Adults With ASD

Jorgina Boloor1, Wing Hang Wong1, Medina Jackson1, Jordan Findley1, John McGrew, Ph.D2, Lisa Ruble Ph.D.1
Department of Educational, School, and Counseling Psychology, University of Kentucky1 Department of Psychology, and University of Indiana-Purdue University Indianapolis2

BACKGROUND
• National data of transition outcomes indicate that the transition planning process needs improvement as adults with ASD have the lowest rate of employment, and the highest rate of no activities (Shattuck et al., 2012).
• As part of a larger study that used focus group methodology to identify issues of transition planning, student self-determination and participation in the community emerged as important stakeholder identified outcomes.
• Self-determination can be operationalized as setting goals reflecting personal interests and making choices (Wehmeyer & Field, 2007).
• Community engagement considers participation in activities that are commensurate with peers.
• A review of the literature revealed that there is a lack of available assessments that tap into these constructs.

OBJECTIVES
• Describe two assessments for measuring (i) student’s self-determination associated with transition planning and (ii) community involvement.

METHODS
1. Focus groups were conducted with 40 stakeholders that identified community participation and self-determination as key outcomes.
2. Two measures representing these constructs were developed and piloted with 20 youth with ASD as part of a larger study.
3. Mean age of the students was 18.2 (SD = 1.1).

Measures
Self Determination
• A questionnaire for parents and students was developed with 12 items (e.g. My child leads his or her transition meetings) on a four-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree) to assess 3 areas of self-determination: Transition participation (α = .84), Goal setting and attainment skills (α = .88), Choice making (α = .94).
• Students whose reading abilities allowed comprehension of the self-report version of the self-determination measure completed the survey (n = 13).
• Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare means for parent-report of student self-determination and means of student self-report of self-determination.

Community Participation
• A survey of 33 items was developed that covered seven types of activities—educational, exercise, online/computer, volunteer, jobs, leisure, daily life, and social media.
• Parents also identified group activities their child participates in (performing arts group) and documents he/she has.
• Involvement in the seven types of activities was assessed based on frequency of participation (1 = rarely/never to 6 = several times each day).
• Frequency tables and descriptive statistics were generated for community participation.

RESULTS

Self Determination
• Overall, parents and students generally agreed that they make choices and agreed about setting goals.
• The lowest score in participation in transition meetings was reported by the student. Further, this score was discrepant from parent report.

Community Participation
• Parents reported highest average participation in educational activities, attending lectures or learning in a classroom (M = 4.8) and watching videos or movies (M = 4.8) about weekly.
• Lowest participation was reported for leisure activities such as traveling or taking a vacation (M = 0.7) rarely or never.
• No participants have membership in a cultural group.

DISCUSSION
• Students generally disagreed that they participated in their transition meetings, while their parents agreed.
• Community engagement was highest for structured activities (school) and solo activities (watching TV). Working and volunteering was limited.
• Future research on communicating engagement rates of peers will provide contextual information for interpreting results.

CONCLUSION

REFERENCES:
• Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Public Law 101-470, 1990.

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