

Predicting Vocational Rehabilitation outcomes for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Background

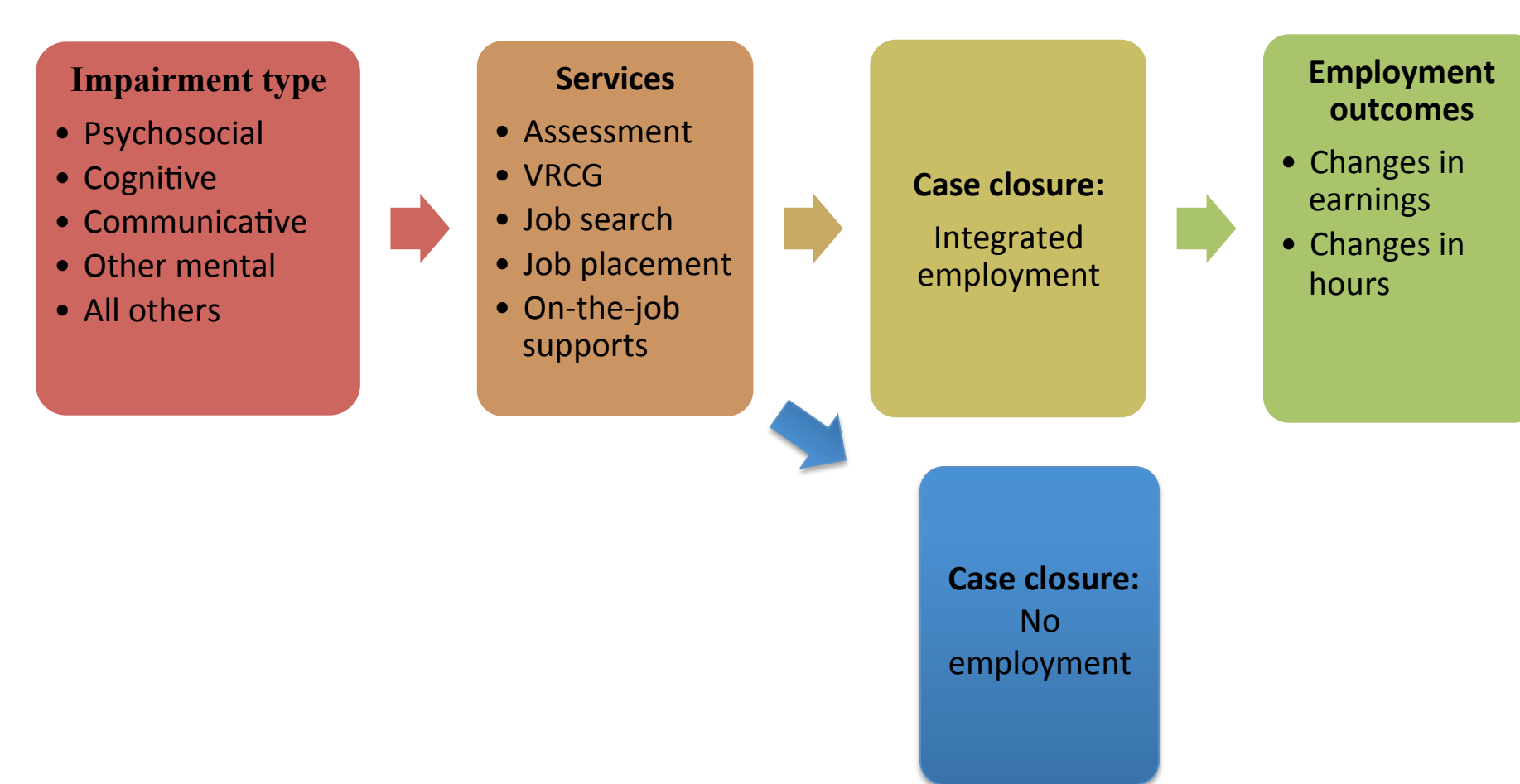
Overview

Employment is a mechanism for individuals with and without disabilities to participate in and benefit from the full social and economic benefits of community living. Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), a neurodevelopmental disability, are often socially and systematically prevented from full participation in the workforce. Individuals with ASD experience high rates of unemployment and low rates of workforce participation. Despite significant federal and state investment in employment services and supports for individuals with ASD and other disabilities, we understand very little about what programs and services produce successful employment outcomes. State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs provide a critical gateway between individuals with ASD and employment opportunities. This study was designed to explore the relationships of participant characteristics, service delivery patterns, and employment outcomes within VR in an attempt to understand which types of services lead to improved employment outcomes for individuals with ASD.

Research Questions

1. Does the type of ASD impairment influence which service(s) is utilized by individuals with ASD?
2. Does the type of service(s) received affect integrated employment at closure?
3. What types of service(s) produce improved employment outcomes for individuals with ASD?

Conceptual Model



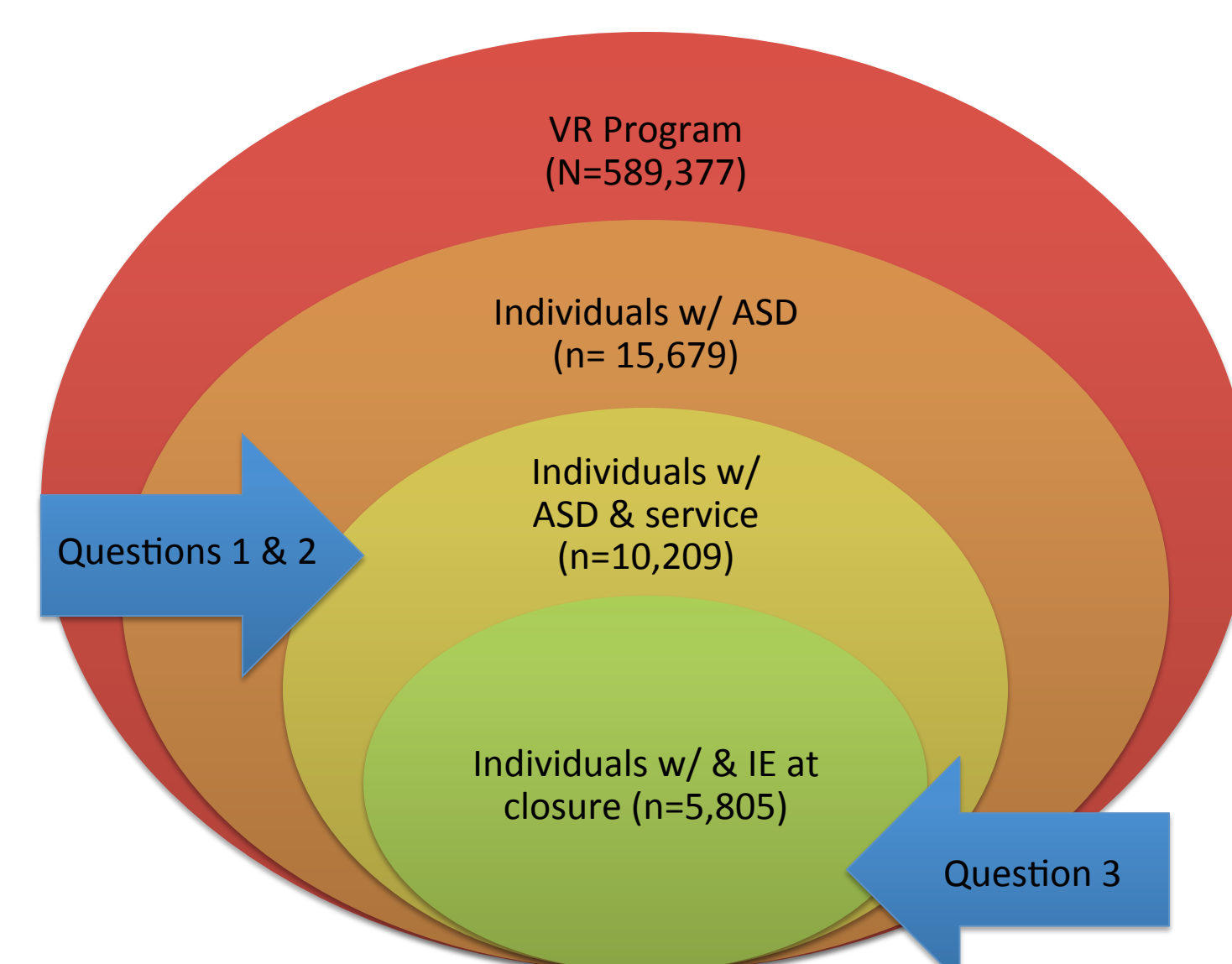
Methods

Design

Non-experimental correlation design to describe how VR services are provided to individuals with ASD.

Participants

Individuals with ASD (primary or secondary diagnosis) who received VR services in FY 2013 (N=10,209).



Variables & Analysis

Research Question	IV	DV	Statistical Test
1	Impairment type	Services	Binary logistic regression
3	Services	Integrated employment at closure	Binary logistic regression
3	Services	A: Earnings difference B: Hours difference	Multivariate linear regression

Control Variables

Gender
Age
Race/Ethnicity
State system
Employment status at application

Results

Question one:

The most common VR services for this population are: assessment, Vocational Rehabilitation counseling & guidance (VRCG), job search, job placement, and on-the-job supports. Service receipt could not be predicted by impairment type, with the exception of the assessment service (OR= .726). Although assessment services were associated with various impairment types, the role of impairment did not produce significant findings when looking at VRCG and job-related services, case closure in integrated employment, or changes in earnings and hours worked. The control variables of state system, gender, age, and employment status application were significant for some types of services.

Question two:

Job-related services resulted in increased rates of case closures in integrated employment. The receipt of job related services did increase a VR recipient's odds ratio of leaving the VR program in integrated employment. There was also a significant negative relationship between the receipt of assessment (OR = .832) and case closure in integrated employment. However, there were positive medium effect sizes detected between integrated employment at closure and job placement and on-the-job supports (OR =1.335, 3.242, 3.867). State system, gender, employment status at application, and race (African American) were significant predictors.

Question three:

Findings indicate that job-related services were related to changes in earnings and hours worked between closure and application. All three job-related services resulted in produced significant relationships in hours worked ($r = 0.001, 0.040^{**}, -0.111^{**}$), and job placement ($r = .067^{**}$) and on-the-job supports ($r = -0.161^{**}$) resulted in significant changes in earnings. Note: ****** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

Hypothesis

1. Individuals with psychosocial impairments will be more likely to experience positive employment outcomes. Impairment is not related to employment outcomes (except receipt of admin. services).
2. Individuals who receive job-related services are more likely to have their cases closed in integrated employment. There are differences between services related to integrated case closure.
3. Individuals who receive job-related services are more likely to experience changes in weekly earnings and hours worked. There are differences in services related to changes in earnings and hours.

Future research

Future research could explore a variety of additional topics to expand the knowledge of VR service usage and employment outcomes including but not limited to: Other VR services or combinations of services, role and influence of public benefits (SSI, SSDI, etc.), exploration of those who apply for VR but do not make it to service, lived experiences of VR service users

Conclusions

1. Equity in service access matters.
2. Job-related services are more likely to lead to positive employment outcomes.
3. The state system in which an individual receives services plays a role in service access and outcomes.

Acknowledgements

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