

Assessing Quality of Life in Undergraduate Students with Developmental Disabilities Enrolled in the University of Cincinnati Transition and Access Program (UC TAP)

Dobbs, M¹., Duncan, A¹., Flynn, T¹., Mendez, H²., Rao, R¹., Tewar, S.N¹.

¹Cincinnati Children's Hospital, ² University of Cincinnati

Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities (LEND) Program
The Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
The University of Cincinnati University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities

uceddLEND



Background

- Post secondary education is important in achieving independence and improved quality of life
- Individuals with Developmental Disabilities (DD) have improved outcomes after completing post secondary education with increased supports
- We know little about how the participation of individuals with DD in postsecondary education affects their quality of life (QOL)

Objectives

- To examine various aspects of quality of life in University of Cincinnati Transition and Access Program (UC TAP) students using both surveys and individual semi-structured interviews
- To examine how QOL measures are related to individual, environmental, and UC TAP program factors

Methods

Participants: Undergraduate students in the UC TAP Program

Procedure: Administer QOL surveys and conduct brief, individual interviews on the UC TAP student's perspective/thoughts on their QOL

Tools:

- Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL)
- Semi-Structured Interview

Analyses:

- Individual interviews audio recorded, transcribed, and manually coded to develop themes and subthemes.
- Descriptive statistics and QOL surveys analyzed using SPSS 20.0

Results

Participants

- Gender: 13 males; 12 females (23 total)
- Age: 17-34 years (Average 22 years)

Diagnosis	N
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	9
Cerebral Palsy (CP)	1
Down Syndrome (DS)	3
Emotional Disturbance (ED)	2
Intellectual Disability (ID)	4
Learning Disability (LD)	1
Other Genetic disorder	3

Semi-Structured Interview Themes



"I think quality of life is how you see yourself in the future and what steps you are going to take to get that way."
-TAP Student

Top 3 Most Important Quality of Life Domains

- Interpersonal Relationships
- Personal Development
- Self-Determination

Physical Well-Being

- Regular Doctor visits
- Maintaining good Mental Health
- Making Healthy Choices

Emotional Well-Being

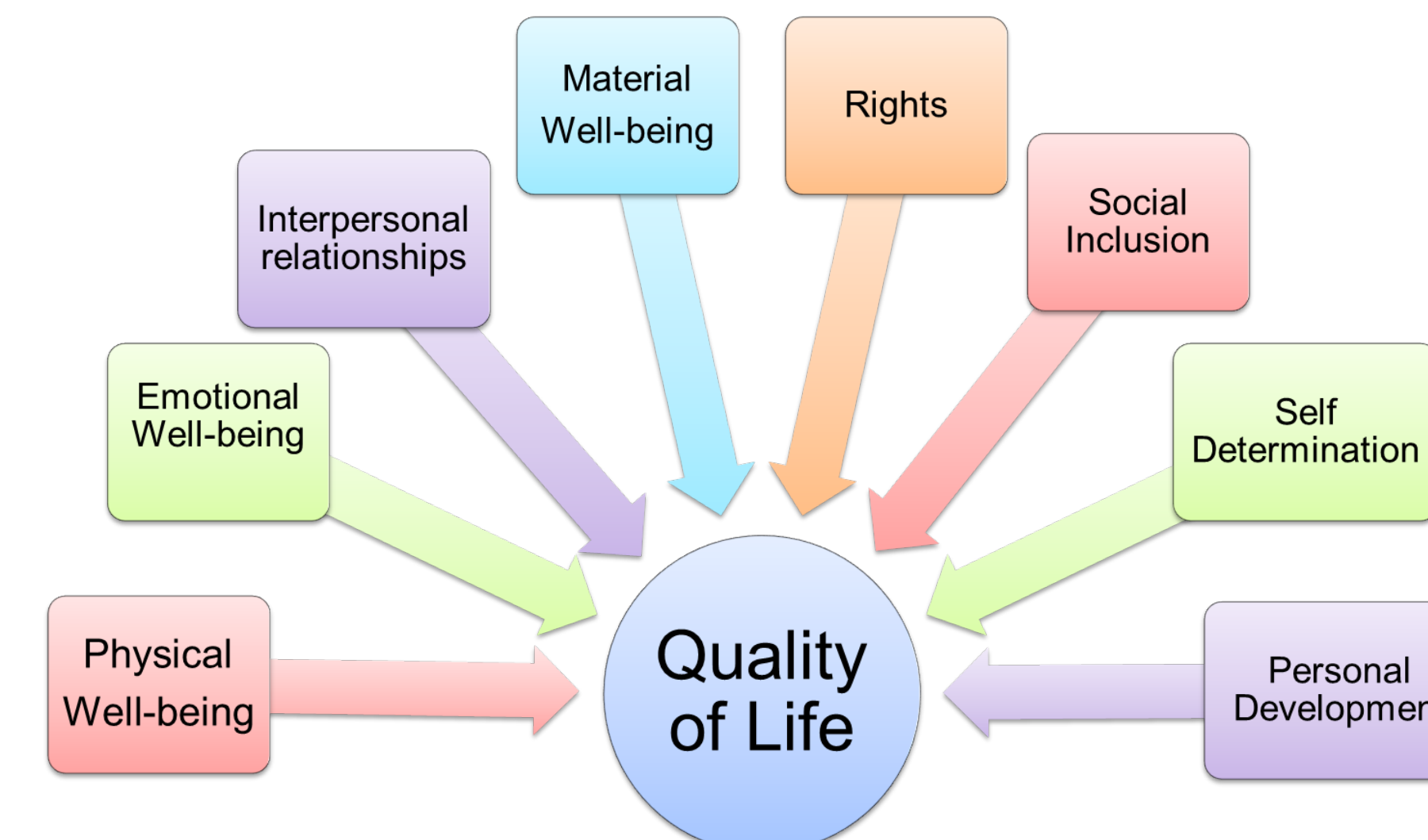
- Recreational activities
- Self-worth
- Stress: homework and dorm living
- Coping Strategies

Interpersonal Relationships

- Family: overall supportive
- Friends: mixed response in support level
- Significant Other: mixed response in support level
- TAP Staff: mixed response in support level

Material Well-Being

- Housing: somewhat restrictive but safe
- Possessions: content
- Money: have enough for daily life and activities



Rights

- Respected
- Treated differently

Social Inclusion

- Included in UC TAP: most feel included
- Included in UC Community: most feel included

Self-Determination

- Short-term goals: doing well in school
- Long-term goals: career, living alone or with others, making more friends

"I have been told my whole life that I would never go to college and now I am in college. I'm smarter now."
-TAP student

Personal Development

- Personal life: mostly feel successful with current goals
- Education: good grades, be organized and on time
- Employment: positive experiences with internships
- Daily Living Skills: able to independently complete

Conclusion

- Emotions and stress emerged as a key theme and concern
- Stressors affect current feelings and reporting
- Students are goal driven in daily life and future
- Students are motivated to have independence, work experience, and money
- QOL findings adhere to general developmental norms of adulthood and college students
- Community and social inclusion help support in times of stress and set up clear boundaries
- The negative experiences reported by participants are typical of college life

Limitations

- Small sample size
- Volunteered to participate, in consequence not all TAP students participated
- Timing of interviews around end of semester stressors and influence on responses

Next Steps

- Compare QOL of the different years at TAP
- More focused analysis of TAP program structure and opportunities that influence QOL

References

1. Brown, I., Hatton, C., & Emerson, E. (2013). Quality of life indicators for individuals with intellectual disabilities: Extending current practice. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 515, 2-7.
2. Gelbar, N., Smith, I., & Reichow, B. (2014). Systematic review of articles describing experience and supports of individuals with autism enrolled in college and university programs. *Sage*, 44(10), 2593-2601.

Acknowledgements

- This project is funded by Maternal and Child Health Bureau Grant T73MC00032
- Thank you to our policy partner Cate Weir from Think College for her guidance through this process
- Special thanks to the UC-TAP Community for the warm welcome and collaboration throughout this process