Analysis of Community Engagement for Youth with Significant Disabilities

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Why Community Participation

‘(1) Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.

“(d) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this title are

“(1)(A) to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living (Sec. 651, 118 STAT. 2651)

Theoretical Framework


Predictive Factors from Past Research

Youth Factors
- Functional cognitive skills
- Self-care skills
- Household skills
- Social skills
- Self-determination

Family Factors
- Involvement in education
- Parental expectation
- Support

School Factors
- Inclusion
- Job-related school programs
- Interagency collaboration
- Paid work experience

Community Factors
- Geographic location of school
- Interagency collaboration
- Availability of public transportation
**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**RQ1:** What are the characteristics of post-high school community participation of youth with significant disabilities as measured from the NLTS2?

**RQ2:** Can community participation outcome constructs and predictor constructs be established?

**RQ3:** To what extent are youth, family, school, and community constructs predict the post-high school community participation of youth with significant disabilities?

**RQ4:** To what degree do key covariates influence community participation of youth with significant disabilities?

**PARTICIPANTS**

- 470 youth with significant disabilities selected from the NLTS-2
- Inclusion criteria:
  - Met the criteria of significant disability in Wave 1; and
  - Enrolled in school in Wave 2 and Wave 3, and out of school in Wave 4 and 5

Age when Wave 1 data was collected:

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**Race/Ethnicity**

- White: 63.8%
- African American: 20.5%
- Hispanic: 13.2%
- Others: 2.5%

**Gender**

- Male: 67%
- Female: 33%

**Disability Category**

- Intellectual disability: 24.7%
- Autism: 36.2%
- Multiple Disabilities: 33.9%
- Deaf-Blindness: 5.1%

**Family Income**

- $25,000 or less: 26.9%
- $25,01 - $50,000: 31.1%
- More than $50,000: 42.1%
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION OUTCOME CONSTRUCTS

- Community Presence
  - Mall/café/coffee shop
  - Outdoor physical activity settings
  - Indoor physical activity settings
  - Movies
  - Bars/Clubs
  - Church
  - Travel
  - Camping/hiking
  - Health service facilities
  - Entertainment

- Community Involvement
  - Social activities
  - Volunteer
  - Vote
  - Driving
  - Saving account
  - Credit card
  - Job
  - Postsecondary school

- Social Engagement
  - Organized activities
  - Friendship

10 items:

- 8 items:
  - Community activities
  - Volunteer
  - Vote
  - Driving
  - Saving account
  - Credit card
  - Job
  - Postsecondary school

3 items:

- Social activities
- Volunteer
- Vote

YOUTH-LEVEL CONSTRUCTS

- Functional Skills
  - Self-care Skills
  - Household Responsibilities Skills

- Classroom Behaviors

- Social Skills
  - Communication Skills
  - Role in Transition Planning

- 4 items:
  - Tell time
  - Read common signs
  - Count changes
  - Use telephone

- 2 items:
  - Dress
  - Feed

- 3 items:
  - Fix meal
  - Do laundry
  - Straighten up room

- 11 items:
  - Join group
  - Make friends
  - Handle disagreements
  - Avoid trouble
  - Start conversation
  - Receive criticism
  - Avoid problem at home
  - Control temper
  - Keep working
  - Speak appropriate tone

- 4 items:
  - Speak clearly
  - Communicate
  - Convey a conversation
  - Understand what people say

- 1 item:
  - Student role in transition planning

- 5 items:
  - Stay focused
  - Withdraw from class activities
  - Perform up to own ability
  - Follow directions
  - Ask for what he/she needs

FAMILY-LEVEL CONSTRUCTS

- Involvement in General Education
  - Attend general school meeting
  - Attend class events
  - Volunteer at school
  - Attend conference

- Involvement in Special Education
  - Attend IEP meeting

- Outcome Expectations
  - Attend postsecondary school
  - Get a driver's license
  - Live independently
  - Get a paid job

- Family Support
  - Speak about school experiences

SCHOOL-LEVEL CONSTRUCTS

- Inclusion

- Access to the General Curriculum
  - English courses
  - Science courses

- Accommodations/Modifications
  - More time in taking tests
  - Test read to modified grading
  - Slower-paced additional time to complete assignments
  - Shorter assignments
  - Large print

- Access to Social Networks

- Access to Vocational Programs

- 4 items:
  - Activities outside of school
  - Activities out of school
  - Volunteer or community services

- 7 items:
  - Vocational goal
  - Vocational goal
  - Formal assessment
  - Instruction
  - Looking for jobs
  - Job shadowing
  - Specific job skills
  - Training; job coach
COMMUNITY-LEVEL CONSTRUCTS

RQ1: What are the characteristics of post-high school community participation of youth with significant disabilities as measured from the NLTS2?

DATA ANALYSIS
Using descriptive analysis (means, standard errors, percentages)

RQ2: Can community participation outcome constructs and predictor constructs be established?

DATA ANALYSIS
Using Unidimensional Item Response Theory (IRT) and Multidimensional Item Response Theory (MIRT)

RQ3: To what extent are youth, family, school, and community constructs predict the post-high school community participation of youth with significant disabilities?

DATA ANALYSIS
Using a latent regression analysis

RQ4: To what degree do key covariates influence community participation of youth with significant disabilities?

DATA ANALYSIS
Using a latent regression analysis
RQ 3: To what extent do youth, family, school, and community constructs predict the post-high school community participation of youth with significant disabilities?
RQ 3: To what extent do youth, family, school, and community constructs predict the post-high school community participation of youth with significant disabilities?

SE = Social Engagement Construct
FSS = Functional Skills Construct
CB = Classroom Behaviors Construct
ASN = Access to Social Network Construct
AVP = Access to Vocational Program Construct

RQ 4: To what degree do key covariates influence community participation of youth with significant disabilities?

- 3 covariates (gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status) could not be determined

KEY FINDINGS: Descriptive

Community Presence: Youth rarely participated in community locations
- Highest rated: outdoor physical activities including jogging, swimming, biking, skating
- Few rated: visit mall/café/coffee shops, indoor physical activity, bars/clubs, churches, health centers, other
- None: restaurant

Community Involvement:
- More than half participated in community activities or volunteer
- Few have established adult roles (paid employment or being registered to vote)
- Level of involvement were not measured in this study

Social Engagement:
- >½ engaged in social interactions mostly with friends in social activities, getting invitations, or hanging out
- Level of social engagement was not measured in this study

KEY FINDINGS: Predictive

Access to a social networks is predictor of both post-school community involvement and social engagement
- a. Social networks provide opportunities to engage in social activities, volunteering, and community services
- b. “Social Capital” (Trainor, Carter, Swedeen, & Pickett, 2012; Trainor, Morningstar, Murray, & Kim, 2013)

Functional skill level of youth was a predictor of postschool community involvement, but not social engagement
- a. Expands current research of daily living and self-care skills
- b. Broaden view of what constitutes functional skills
LIMITATIONS

- Study based on self- and parent-report
- Sample was selected through systematic regression analysis and not exclusively from the disability category: sampling weights not used
- Variables selected to examine community participation were limited
- Some predictor variables recognized as important contributors were excluded in this study due to high levels of missing data

IMPLICATIONS

1. Better understanding of community participation of youth with significant disabilities
2. Multi-dimensionality of adult outcomes
3. Measurement of community participation quantitatively vs. qualitatively
4. Significant predictors of meaningful community involvement and social engagement of youth with significant disabilities
   ▪ Functional skills of youth
   ▪ Access to social network while in school
5. Other predictors found not significant are known to have effect on independent living outcomes