

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

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Disclosures

- No conflicts of interests or disclosures

Background

- Post-secondary education is a developmental task of adulthood that has become increasingly accessible to individuals with developmental disabilities (DD)
 - Has positive effects in areas such as independent living, social interaction, and employment skills

Background

- Transition from high school to adulthood can have a profound impact on Quality of Life (QOL)
- Quality of Life is **individual's perception** of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns.

Background

- Transition from high school to adulthood can have a profound impact on Quality of Life (QOL)
- Quality of Life is **individual's perception** of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns.

Background

- Increasing number of post-secondary education programs available for individuals with DD
- Supportive social networks and local supports
 - Positive impact on Quality of Life
 - Lead to successful adult outcomes

Background

- We know little about how the participation of individuals with DD in postsecondary education affects their quality of life (QOL)
- Some studies in young adults with Autism in post-secondary courses
- Significant symptoms of anxiety, loneliness and depression and lower QOL
- Lack of data for QOL in adults with other developmental disabilities
- Impact of post secondary education on QOL and adult outcomes.

Study Objectives

- Examine various aspects of QOL in UC TAP students using both questionnaires and individual semi-structured interviews.
- Examine how QOL measures are related to individual, environmental, and UC TAP program factors

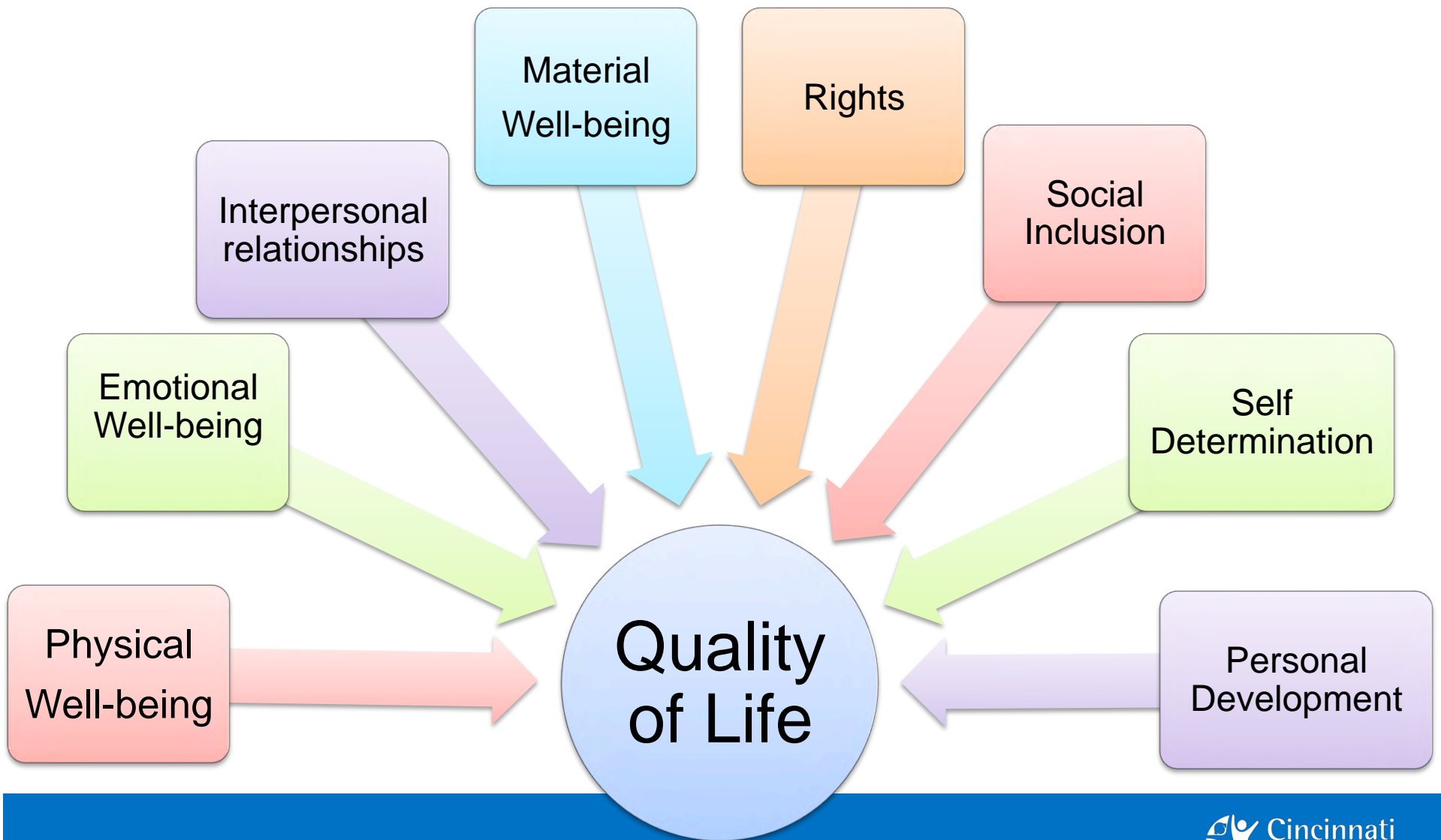
University of Cincinnati Transition and Access Program (UC TAP)

- 4-year
- Non-degree undergraduate program
- Mild to moderate intellectual disabilities
- Postsecondary experience on a college campus to achieve success with appropriate supports
 - Inclusive college classes
 - Professional internships
 - Active social life
 - Campus housing

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
 - WHO QOL- BREF

Outcomes



Analyses

- Individual interviews: audio recorded, transcribed, and manually coded
- Statistical Analysis - SPSS 20.0
 - WHOQOL- BREF
 - Interpersonal Support Evaluation List

Sample Characteristics (N = 23)

Characteristic	
Mean Age, in years	22.6 (\pm 3.9)
Male, n (%)	11 (48 %)
Mean IQ (Std. Deviation)	70 (\pm 17)

Diagnoses

n

Autism Spectrum Disorder



9

Cerebral Palsy

1

Down Syndrome

3

Intellectual Disability



4

Learning Disability

1

Emotional Disturbance

2

Other Genetic Disorders

3

What is Quality of Life?

- Majority – I don't know

“Quality of life means to me, like the way I am living is something that I am like proud of, I really enjoy, even though I might have really big struggles sometimes, I still can get through it because I have a great support system that I can always go to for help”

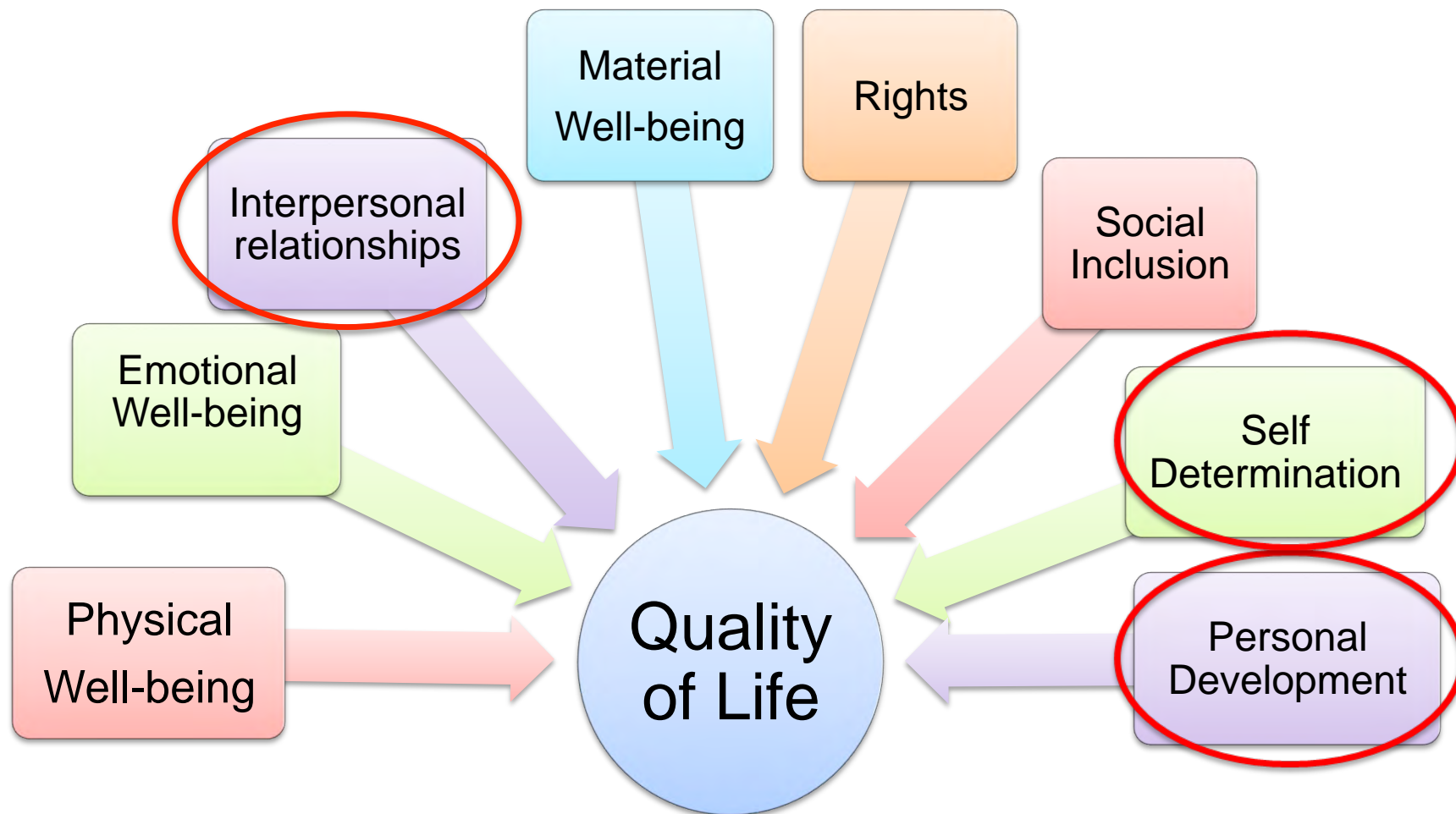
- TAP student

WHOQOL-BREF

Quality of Life Domain	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
Physical Health	→ 61*	14
Psychological	67	12
Social Relationships	→ 64*	27
Environment	75	17

- Range of standard scores: 20-100
- Higher scores mean better health

Top 3 Quality of Life Domains



Key Themes

- Valued physical health and well being
- Being happy and feeling good about themselves
- Feeling supported by family
- Friendship is important; friends are valued
- Interactions with TAP staff – mostly positive
 - supportive during crises
 - problem solving

Key Themes

- Stress was universally reported
- Multiple stressors
- Academic work/ exams
- Conflict with room mates
- Time management (study and leisure)
- Conflicts in family (outside of TAP)
- Underlying mental health illness
- Emerging coping skills

Key Themes

- Rights – treated equally and respected
- Social Inclusion – both in TAP program and UC community

“For the first time, I feel like I fit in and this is a huge thing because I have never felt like that”

– TAP student

Self Determination & Personal Development

- Self determination – goals for future emerging
- Living independently or with roommates
- Activities of daily living (cooking, laundry)
- Managing personal health
- Self advocacy
- Becoming financially independent
- Time management and coping with stress
- Academic success (getting good grades)

Conclusions

- Young adults with DD perceived lower quality of life in physical health and social relationships
- Self determination was an important emerging theme
- Emotions and stress emerged as a key theme and concern
- Student experiences also very typical of challenges encountered in college life

Limitations

- Small sample size
- Results specific to UC TAP program, not all post-secondary education program have the same model
- Other factors* impacting quality of life
- Timing of interviews during the semester influenced responses

Future Steps

- Assess which specific support characteristics predict better adult outcomes
- To develop specific supports to help students cope with their stress and improve quality of life
- Assess for change in QOL over time (at the beginning of program vs. towards the end)

Thank you!

Questions?

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