

research snapshot

summarize | mobilize



What Predicts Life Satisfaction In Adults With Autism?

What is this research about?

Adaptive functioning is defined by how well a person can handle real-life situations and it requires practical skills like communication, self-care, and motor skills. Young adults with autism have poorer adaptive functioning levels, leading to worse outcomes such as lower employment rates and less independence. Besides those outcomes, a person's rating of their own life satisfaction, or subjective well-being, is now considered an important measure of quality of life. In this study, the researchers compared the adaptive function and overall subjective life satisfaction of adults with and without autism and examined which areas of function were related to life satisfaction.

What did the researcher do?

Forty-three adults with autism (mean age=31, 63% female, no intellectual disability) were recruited from an outpatient clinic and 44 controls (people without autism that were the same gender and age as the autism group) were recruited via media advertisements. Participants completed a survey about their demographics, health and ability to function in the following areas: understanding and communicating (cognition); getting around (mobility); self-care (ability to attend to personal hygiene, dressing, and eating, and to live alone); getting along with people (social and interpersonal functioning); life activities (household and work or school activities); and participation in society (participation in family, social, and community

What you need to know:

Adults with autism have more challenges in various domains of function and less life satisfaction overall. However, participation in society was the only domain that had an impact on life satisfaction in those adults.

activities). They also completed a survey about their quality of life, which combined different domains to create a single score summarizing their overall sense of well-being. The researchers looked at how demographics and functional ability were related to well-being.

What did the researcher find?

The researchers found that adults with autism had more self-reported impairments and less life satisfaction than the adults without autism. Areas that had more impairments involved interaction with others: understanding and communication, getting along, and participation in society. However, practical daily living skills (e.g. getting around, self-care, household activities) were not different between the groups. Out of all these areas, the only factor that was related to life satisfaction in adults with ASD was participation in society. The changes in participation in society accounted for 49% of the difference in life satisfaction. Other challenges did not impact life satisfaction in this study.

How can you use this research?

Interventions for adults with ASD need to ultimately enhance their well-being. Since societal inclusion



was the main factor that increased quality of life for adults with autism, programs that include inclusion by shared interests as well as face-to-face interactions may be beneficial. Further research using a larger sample will be needed to see if differences due to outcomes such as jobs, income, leisure and housing affect well-being.

About the Researchers

Lilly Schmidt (PhD) is from the Berlin School of Mind and Brain at Humboldt University and associated with Freie Universität in Berlin, Germany.

Jennifer Kirchner was a PhD student and the lab manager of the Social Cognition research group at the Berlin School of Mind and Brain at Humboldt University and associated with Freie Universität in Berlin, Germany

Sandra Strunz Charite and Julia Brozus Charite were at Universitätsmedizin Berlin.

Kathrin Ritter (PhD) is at Charite – Universitätsmedizin Berlin

Stefan Roepke (MD) is a senior psychiatrist at the Department of Psychiatry at Charite – Universitätsmedizin Berlin.

Isabel Dziobek (PhD) is a professor in social cognition from the Berlin School of Mind and Brain at Humboldt University and associated with Freie Universität in Berlin, Germany.

Citation

Schmidt L, Kirchner J, Strunz S, Brozus J, Ritter K, Roepke S, Dziobek I (2015) Psychosocial Functioning and Life Satisfaction in Adults With Autism Spectrum Disorder Without Intellectual Impairment. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 71, 1259-1268.

Keywords

Adult, Quality of Life, Participation, Society, Autism, Life Satisfaction

This research summary was written by Dr. Jonathan Lai for the Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research. This research summary, along with other summaries, can be found on our [blog](#) and at asdmentalhealth.ca/research-summaries

About the Chair

The Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research is dedicated to studying ways to improve the mental health and well-being of people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and their families in Canada.

The Chair is funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research in partnership with Autism Speaks Canada, the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorders Alliance, Health Canada, Kids Brain Health Network (formerly NeuroDevNet) and the Sinneave Family Foundation. Additional support was provided by York University.

For more information, visit the Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research website at asdmentalhealth.ca

Partners

