



Self-determination and language skills in adults with autism spectrum disorder

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Background



In the scientific literature, a limited number of studies focus on the self-determination of adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), although the manifestations of the disorder affect several aspects of their lives, including access to care and services, autonomy, employability, integration into the community, social relations and education.

In Schalock's quality of life model (2000), self-determination refers to autonomy, self-control, personal values and goals, and the ability to make choices.

Thus, the objective of the study is to examine whether the language level of adults with ASD has an influence on their self-determination.



Method



Participants

The sample is composed of 19 adults with ASD.

They are mostly male (79%) and their average age is 24 years old.



Instruments

The adults completed a socio-demographic questionnaire.



They also completed two language assessment tools, the third edition of the Expressive Vocabulary Test (Williams, 2019) and the fifth edition of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn, 2019).

Data analysis

First, descriptive statistics were completed.

Then, multiple linear regressions were completed.



Discussion



It is therefore necessary to work on the different aspects of communication in adults with ASD, since their difficulty in demonstrating self-determination can be explained by their communication difficulties.

Establishing an alternative communication system is essential for adults who do not have a functional language level in their daily lives. The tool must be adapted to the language level and chronological age of the adult. Adults and those around them must understand and use the communication tool correctly.

For those who have a higher level of language, it is necessary to ensure that they have different opportunities to communicate on a daily basis and to ensure that they vary their topics of conversation, particularly since the diversity of vocabulary and the ability to maintain a topic during a conversation are predictors of social relationships in adulthood.

Conclusion



To conclude, this research highlights the importance of considering the language level of adults with ASD since it has an influence on their self-determination.

References



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Results



Participants' median expressive language level is at the 13th percentile and is estimated at 12 years and 4 months.

Similarly, the participants' median receptive language level is at the 13th percentile and is estimated at 12 years and 11 months.



Among the different language profiles, 35% of the participants have expressive language skills greater than their receptive language skills, 30% of these have equivalent expressive and receptive language skills and 35% of them have receptive language skills greater than their expressive language skills.

The results show that expressive and receptive language skills explain a percentage of the variance in self-determination.

In the linear regression model, expressive language is significantly and positively associated with self-determination, $\beta = 0.77$, $p = 0.008$.

Similarly, receptive language is significantly and positively associated with self-determination, $\beta = 0.72$, $p = 0.006$.

So, the better the expressive and receptive language skills of adults with ASD are, the better their self-determination is.