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Initial validation of the Brief Assessment of Service Satisfaction in Persons with an Intellectual Disability (BASSPID)



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ABSTRACT

Individuals with an intellectual disability often require intensive services to promote their social participation to the fullest extent. As such, measuring satisfaction with these services appears essential to enhance the quality of life of individuals with an intellectual disability and to improve service delivery within agencies. Thus, the purpose of the study was to conduct an initial validation of the Brief Assessment of Service Satisfaction in Persons with an Intellectual Disability (BASSPID), a 15-item questionnaire designed to assess service satisfaction. To examine the structure, reliability, and validity of the BASSPID, we interviewed 98 individuals with an intellectual disability and 23 parents. Overall, the BASSPID contained one scale, which had strong content and convergent validity as well as items easily understandable for individuals with an intellectual disability. Furthermore, the questionnaire had good internal consistency and adequate test-retest reliability. However, parents generally overestimated the perceived satisfaction of their child. The study suggests that the BASSPID may be useful to assess the satisfaction of individuals with an intellectual disability, but more research is needed to examine its potential impact on improving service quality.

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1. Introduction

Educational and health services provided to individuals with an intellectual disability generally aim to improve their quality of life and social participation. Quality of life is a multidimensional phenomenon involving core domains such as emotional well-being, physical health and well-being, personal development, self-determination, social inclusion, rights, and interpersonal relationships (Schalock, 2000). Researchers and clinicians assess quality of life by evaluating a wide range of personal, environmental, and contextual characteristics (Verdugo, Schalock, Keith, & Stancliffe, 2005). Given that individuals with an intellectual disability often require intensive care to promote their social participation to the fullest extent, quality of life in this population is closely related to services provided by governmental or private agencies (Townsend-White, Pham, & Vassos, 2012). As such, service satisfaction is generally an embedded theme within the broader concept of quality of life and both share common dimensions (Schalock et al., 2002). Quality of life dimensions relevant to service satisfaction include service quality, rights, relationship with others, and physical environment.

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Because individuals with an intellectual disability are often dependent on service providers, measuring service satisfaction appears essential in order to improve quality of life (Lasalvia et al., 2005; Slade et al., 2004). Although a causal relationship between satisfaction and service quality has not been clearly established, researchers generally agree that service quality is the best predictor of individual satisfaction (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994; Duffy & Ketchand, 1998; Reidenbach & Sandifer-Smallwood, 1990). Levels of satisfaction may also be related to the individual's adherence to treatment (Lamoureux, Magnan, & Vervloet, 2005). High levels of service quality, which may in turn leads to high levels of satisfaction, may thus promote a greater individual implication in clinical treatment and ultimately increase the quality of life, empowerment, and social participation of the individual with an intellectual disability (Balcazar, Keys, Kaplan, & Suarez-Balcazar, 1998; Lasalvia et al., 2005). Encouraging individuals with an intellectual disability to articulate their needs may also produce other desirable consequences. By expressing his or her satisfaction, an individual with an intellectual disability may be more likely to be given the support or treatment that he or she needs. Furthermore, the individual may feel more supported in his or her capacity in taking decisions, which may increase satisfaction (Prosser & Bromley, 1998). Involving individuals with an intellectual disability in the assessment of services may also produce benefits for the service provider. More specifically, service providers may use satisfaction data in order to improve the quality of their services while better responding to their users' needs. Satisfaction measures may also provide objective measures of progress and improve accountability of service providers. Therefore, involving individuals with an intellectual disability in assessing service satisfaction and quality is an imperative issue.

Over the past three decades, social service providers have slowly begun to recognize individuals with an intellectual disability as being capable of evaluating the services provided to them (Morrison, 1978). However, service providers often give a passive role to individuals with an intellectual disability when evaluating the quality of services by only asking caregivers or relatives about their satisfaction (Kroese, Gillott, & Atkinson, 1998). One concern with using informant-based or indirect assessments to measure satisfaction is that parent and caregiver perceptions may not necessarily reflect the opinion of the individual with an intellectual disability. Likewise, the mission of agencies providing services to individuals with an intellectual disability is to promote their right to self-determination. Thus, asking someone else about their satisfaction may be perceived as counterproductive by infringing on their basic rights (Lecompte & Mercier, 2007).

Another concern with previous studies is that researchers often used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (e.g., Gregory, Robertson, Kessissoglou, Emerson, & Hatton, 2001; Rourke, Grey, Fuller, & McClean, 2004). Using semi-structured interviews may be a valid strategy to assess satisfaction, but the process requires considerable training for the interviewers and can be time consuming for large agencies who service hundreds to thousands of individuals with an intellectual disability. Furthermore, the qualitative data collected as part of semi-structured interviews may be difficult to aggregate and interpret in an objective manner when the sample size is large. In contrast, managers, policymakers, and stakeholders need objective and aggregated data in order to rapidly identify areas needing improvement. Finally, the verbal repertoire of certain individuals with an intellectual disability may be too restricted to respond to open-ended questions. In these cases, using semi-structured interviews may limit the number of individuals who can respond to a satisfaction assessment.

A handful of studies have alleviated these concerns by assessing satisfaction using questionnaires (e.g., Barlow & Kirby, 1991; Chilvers, Gratton, & Bernard, 2013; Slevin, McConkey, Truesdale-Kennedy, Barr, & Taggart, 2007). However, each questionnaire had serious limitations that restricted its utility in assessing satisfaction in a large number of individuals with an intellectual disability. For example, Barlow and Kirby (1991) developed a comprehensive questionnaire to assess satisfaction in individuals with an intellectual disability, but administration took approximately 1 h. Moreover, some questionnaires proposed yes–no questions (e.g., Barlow & Kirby, 1991; Chilvers et al., 2013), which have been shown to overestimate the level of satisfaction in individuals with an intellectual disability (Sigelman, Budd, Spanhel, & Schoenrock, 1981). Other limitations of previous studies using questionnaires include the low number of participants that often precluded an analysis of psychometric properties, self-reports that restricted the use of the questionnaire to individuals who were able to read, the use of questionnaires that were not specifically designed for individuals with an intellectual disability, and the lack of validity measures showing that the participants were understanding the items on the questionnaire (e.g., Barlow & Kirby, 1991; Chilvers et al., 2013; Slevin et al., 2007).

To our knowledge, policymakers, managers, and stakeholders do not have access to a brief validated questionnaire to adequately assess satisfaction in a large number of individuals with an intellectual disability. Because assessing service satisfaction is essential to respect the rights of individuals with an intellectual disability while improving service quality, developing a satisfaction questionnaire may be important to promote their social participation (Balcazar et al., 1998). To this end, the purpose of the study was to examine the validity and reliability of the Brief Assessment of Service Satisfaction in Persons with an Intellectual Disability (BASSPID), a questionnaire designed to assess service satisfaction in this population using interviews.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

We used convenience sampling to recruit research participants from a government-funded agency in the province of Quebec, Canada. The agency was responsible for providing specialized services to individuals with an intellectual disability

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