

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF NEXT YEAR?: ANNUAL GOAL PRIORITIES AMONG AUTISTIC TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

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QUESTION

What types of transition-related goals do autistic youth prioritize for themselves?

INTRODUCTION

When examining intervention outcomes for autistic young adults, it is important to consider youth's own goals and dreams for the future. One method to generate and assess progress toward personalized outcomes is Goal Attainment Scaling (Ruble et al., 2012). Drawing from the baseline of a randomized-controlled trial, we investigated the types of transition-related goals the youth preferred, as well as how their intellectual disability (ID) and high school status influenced goal choices.

METHODS

Participants

185 transition-aged youth with ASD ages 16-26 (74.6% male, 24.3% female) and a participating parent for each drawn from the baseline of a randomized control trial. 62.2% of the youth were still in high school, and 38.4% had an intellectual disability.

Procedures

Goals were collected using a novel method called Goal Attainment Scaling-Community Based (Lee et al. 2021), which we developed for the larger intervention study. Parents first chose 5 transition-related goals from a goal bank and then customized them based on the youth's strengths and challenges in a semi-structured interview with accommodations as needed. Youth then selected and further personalized their preferred three goals. Research staff coded participants' choices by marking which of the following 5 domains were represented in the three goals: Employment and Post-Secondary Education (EPSE), Daily Living Skills (DLS), Healthy Living (HL), Social & Spiritual (SOC), Safety & Security (SAFE).

Analysis

We used descriptive statistics to analyze how frequently youth selected goals in each of 5 domains. We examined frequencies stratified by whether youth were in high school at the time of the baseline interview and whether they had intellectual disability (ID).

GOAL DOMAINS

Employment & Post-Secondary Education (EPSE)	finding a job, applying to college, pursuing vocational training, writing a resume
Daily Living Skills (DLS)	hygiene tasks, chores around the home, preparing meals, following a daily routine
Healthy Living (HL)	exercising, eating healthy foods, managing stress, monitoring prescriptions
Social & Spiritual (SOC)	initiating conversations with peers, building a circle of supports, engaging in activities in the community, communicating with friends and family
Safety and Security (SAFE)	learning emergency procedures, taking precautions in the kitchen, locking doors, sharing personal information with known/safe individuals

RESULTS

59.5% of youth chose a goal in EPSE. 51.9% selected a goal in DLS, 44.9% in SOC, 41.1% in HL, and 36.8% in SAFE.

While youth in and out of high school tended to choose EPSE goals with similar frequency (59.1% and 60.0%, respectively), youth out of high school selected DLS goals more often (58.6%) than youth in high school (45.2%).

Youth without ID chose EPSE goals nearly twice as frequently as those with ID (71.9% versus 39.4%). Alternatively, youth with ID more often selected DLS goals (66.2%) compared to youth without ID (43.0%).

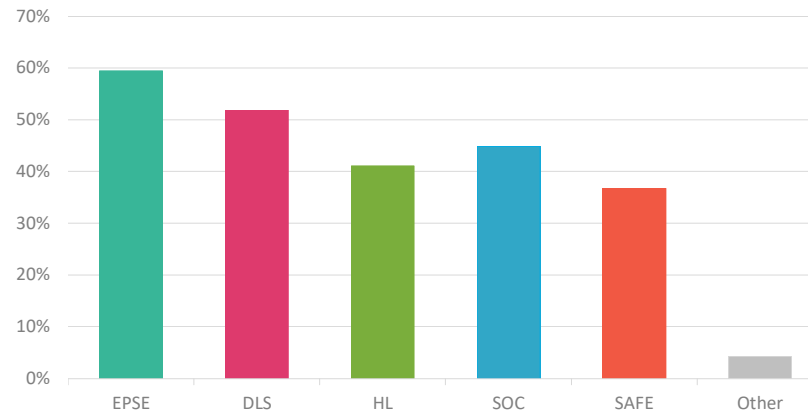


Figure 1. Distribution of goal selections by domain

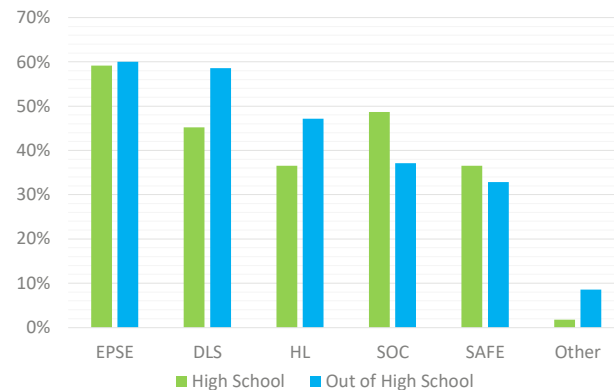


Figure 2. Distribution of goal domains stratified by high school status

RESULTS (CONT.)

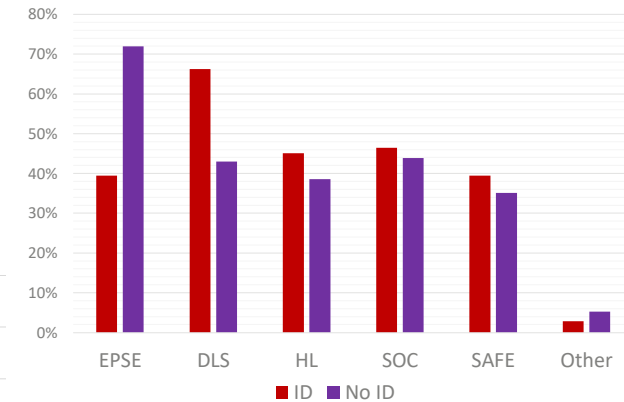


Figure 3. Distribution of goal domains stratified by intellectual disability

DISCUSSION

- Youth most often chose EPSE and DLS. Interestingly, these two domains yielded the greatest difference in selection patterns when analyzing high school and ID status.
- Although youth without ID were less likely than youth with ID to choose DLS goals, previous research has shown that assistance with DLS remains a need for autistic youth without ID (Duncan & Bishop, 2015).
- DLS goals in our sample were more salient to youth out of high school, reflecting an expectation for independence and the need to develop these life skills in adulthood.
- Given that many youth rely on the school system for services, further research could explore high school implementation of daily living skills instruction, as these skills can provide a foundation to empower young adults to pursue other types of goals upon graduation, such as employment and education.

REFERENCES



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