**AN EXPLORATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF SUPPORT NEEDS ON QUALITY OF LIFE AFTER DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION FOR ADULTS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

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**Objectives:** There has been almost 50 years of research examining the processes and outcomes of deinstitutionalization for adults with developmental disabilities. There are few studies examining the factors that influence quality of life in community settings after long periods of institutionalization. We hypothesized that a person’s need for supports would predict outcomes on quality of life indicators over and above individual characteristics. The current research examined the influence of individuals support needs on five indicators of quality of life including: decision making, opportunity for change, satisfaction/importance, overall quality of life, and the frequency of involvement in preferred activities.

**Methods:** Data were collected (using standardized and locally developed measures) from 120 participants (67 males, 53 females) who had moved from institutions to community settings as part of the Facilities Initiative Studies. The current study conducted multiple regression analyses using SPSS statistical software. Five stepwise regressions were used to test models in which personal characteristics (health, years in institution, problem behaviour, adaptive behaviour) were entered into the regression in the first step, and the support needs were entered into the second step for five different outcome variables (decision making, opportunity for change, satisfaction/importance, engaging in activities one enjoys the most, overall quality of life).

**Results:** In the model predicting decision making, support needs accounted for 11.6 percent of unique variance over and above individual characteristics (F5,110 = 10.1, *p* < .01). The model predicting overall quality of life, support needs accounted for 10.8 percent of the variance over and above individual characteristics (F5,97 = 7.2, *p* < .01). Support needs accounted for 7.7 percent of the unique variance in the model predicting opportunity for change (F5,110 = 5.67, *p* < .05) above and beyond individual characteristics. In the model predicting engaging in activities one enjoys the most, support needs accounted for 7.7 percent of the unique variance over and above individual characteristics (F5,112 = 5.56, *p* < .05). Support needs did not significantly predict the satisfaction/importance indicator.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** This study demonstrates the small but significant role of support needs in predicting important quality of life outcomes. Assessing the influence of support needs as a predictor of individual quality of life may be a good first step towards understanding the impact that relying on others has on client quality of life. The implications of these results on policy and practice as well as ideas for future research related to this topic will be discussed.

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