Title: Assessing Employment Needs of Bulgarian Youths with Intellectual Impairments

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Major Finding: The model of human occupation informed a needs assessment for the development of an employment program for socially disadvantaged Bulgarian youths with intellectual impairments.

Participants:
- 15 students close to graduating participated in the needs assessment
  - Ages 17-21 (mean age=18); 12 females, 3 males
  - 9 Bulgarian, 3 Turkish, and 3 Roma students
  - 7 students from intact families, 5 from single-parent homes, 3 from orphanages
  - Most participants had mild to moderate intellectual impairments or learning disabilities. One had Down syndrome.

Method: Observation, interviews, proxy reports from teachers (including the Functional Behavior Profile), family members, and supervisors, and self-report questionnaires (Interest Checklist, Ideal Employment Exercises) were used to gather information on the students’ volition, habituation, and performance capacity. Information on the potential impact of the environment on employment was gathered through an Internet search and a meeting at a local employment agency.

Analysis: MOHO was used a framework for classifying the occupational problems faced by the students.

Findings:
- Most participants experienced problems with volition, as evidenced by an unrealistic appraisal of their abilities, a deficit in self-confidence, and limited expectations for future success in work.
- Students were able to identify reasons for being employed but most were unable to state clear vocational interests.
- Most students were not able to organize productive routines if not structured for them. Participants exhibited adequate motor skills but limitations in process, communication, and interaction skills.
- The local economy was unstable and many employers were uncomfortable hiring people with disabilities.

Conclusion: MOHO was used to consider students’ circumstances in a holistic way in order to identify key needs on which to focus an employment program.

Implications for future research: The findings will be used during service identification and development and a standardized process for generating individual vocational profiles for the students will be created.

Evidence– based practice implications:
- MOHO can be used as a framework for guiding needs assessment by creating a holistic profile of the participants.
- Strengths in areas like motor skills should be considered along with challenges like limited expectation for success and problems identifying vocational interests when considering tools to help youths with intellectual disabilities explore employment.