



SELF-DETERMINED BEHAVIOR AMONG INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES: PERSPECTIVES OF THEIR PARENTS AND PROFESSIONALS

USVOJENOST SAMOODREĐENOG PONAŠANJA OSOBA S INTELEKTUALNIM TEŠKOĆAMA IZ PERSPEKTIVE NJIHOVIH RODITELJA I STRUČNJAKA

Andrea Gašpar^{1*}, Daniela Bratković²

¹Vocational Secondary School - Special Education Center, Zagorska 14, 10 000 Zagreb

²University of Zagreb Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, Borongajska cesta 83f, 10 000 Zagreb

Original Scientific Article

Received: 30/01/26

Accepted: 18/04/26

ABSTRACT

Self-determination is the core prerequisite for the realization of dignity, autonomy, independent living, equal participation, and one of the key determinants of individual's quality of life. Accordingly, it is essential to understand how it develops and is expressed in the everyday behavior of adults with intellectual disabilities (ID), particularly from the perspective of those who provide them ongoing support. Considering the lack of research in this topic, especially in local context, the aim of this paper as part of a broader study conducted in Croatia was to investigate how parents/guardians (N = 104) and professionals/supporting staff (N = 31) estimate different aspects of self-determining behavior in adults with ID. An adapted version of the Scale for the Assessment of Self-Determination of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities was applied; the parent and professional versions demonstrated high reliability. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, and three hypotheses were tested. The findings indicate that a generally low level of self-determination among the assessed individuals prevailed, no significant differences in the results were found between parental and professional perspective. The hypothesis of a significantly higher level of self-determination in persons with mild, compared to those with moderate ID was confirmed, but not regarding the level of education of their parents. In conclusion, the need for further research into the covered topic was emphasized to understand more fully the individual and contextual factors that shape the subjective potential, as well as the objective prerequisites for the development of self-determination of persons with ID.

Keywords: self-determination, intellectual disabilities, quality of life

* **Correspondence author:** Andrea Gašpar, Vocational Secondary School - Special Education Center
E-mail: gaspar.andrea321@gmail.com

SAŽETAK

Samoodređenje je temeljni preduvjet ostvarivanja prava na dostojanstvo, autonomiju, neovisan život i ravnopravno sudjelovanje u društvu te jedna od ključnih odrednica kvalitete života pojedinca. Stoga je važno razumjeti kako se ono razvija i očituje u svakodnevnom ponašanju osoba s intelektualnim teškoćama (IT) iz perspektive njihove uže okoline. S obzirom da je to nedovoljno istraženo, pogotovo u domaćem kontekstu, cilj ovog rada proizašlog iz šireg istraživanja provedenog u Hrvatskoj, bio je ispitati kako roditelji/skrbnici ($N = 104$) i stručnjaci/osoblje u podršci ($N = 31$) procjenjuju različite aspekte samoodređenog ponašanja odraslih osoba s IT. Primljena je prilagođena inozemna Skala procjene samoodređenja osoba s IT, koja je u verzijama i za roditelje i stručnjake pokazala visoku pouzdanost mjerenja. Dobiveni podaci analizirani su deskriptivnom i inferencijalnom statistikom te su testirane tri hipoteze. Pokazalo se da prevladava niska razina samoodređenja procjenjivanih osoba, te nisu utvrđene značajne razlike u rezultatima ovisno o perspektivi procjenitelja. Potvrđena je hipoteza o značajno višoj razini samoodređenja kod osoba s lakim, u odnosu na one s umjerenim stupnjem IT, ali ne i s obzirom na stupanj obrazovanja njihovih roditelja. Zaključno je istaknuta potreba za daljnjim istraživanjem obuhvaćene teme kako bi se potpunije sagledali individualni i kontekstualni čimbenici koji oblikuju subjektivni potencijal, kao i objektivne preduvjete za razvoj samoodređenja osoba s intelektualnim teškoćama.

Ključne riječi: samoodređenje, osobe s intelektualnim teškoćama, kvaliteta života

INTRODUCTION

Deci and Ryan (2008) define self-determination as the capacity to make choices and achieve control over one's own life. Within self-determination theory, intrinsic motivation to satisfy the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is considered a central mechanism underlying self-determined behavior, together with a coherent self-concept, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and effective emotional regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A sense of personal control, manifested through opportunities for choice-making and meaningful influence over one's environment is consistently associated with greater well-being, life satisfaction, and overall quality of life. Earlier perspectives frequently and incorrectly assumed limited or absent potential for the development of self-determination, particularly among individuals with severe, profound, or multiple disabilities (Luitwieler et al., 2024). Nevertheless, core self-determination skills, including decision-making, problem-solving, goal setting and attainment, self-evaluation, and self-advocacy (Wehmeyer et al., 2007), involve complex cognitive and affective processes (Shevin & Klein, 1984, as cited in Bratković, 2003). The acquisition and expression of these skills further depend on well-developed socio-emotional competencies, which represent a fundamental component of adaptive functioning and are central to contemporary conceptualizations of ID and rehabilitation outcomes (Žic-Ralić et al., 2023).

Beyond its intrapersonal dimensions, self-determination is widely conceptualized as a relational construct, as it is shaped by environmental and social factors (Skarsaune et al., 2021; Watson et al., 2019; Luitwieler et al., 2024; Nedelsky, 2013; Wehmeyer et al., 2013). This perspective is also supported by the self-determination theory proposed by Abery and Stancliffe (2003), who define self-determination as the outcome of continuous and reciprocal interactions between the individual and multiple environmental contexts. Within Shogren's (2013) social-ecological framework, particular emphasis is placed on the microsystem, highlighting the critical role of the family environment. The author states that, individuals with ID develop self-determination skills through learning processes grounded in experience, facilitated by opportunities provided within both proximal and distal environments, and when it is appropriately and individually supported (Shogren et al., 2007).

Empirical evidence consistently indicates that individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities demonstrate lower levels of self-determination compared to their typically developing peers (Licardo & Krajnc, 2016; Chambers et al., 2007). These differences are not primarily observed in domains related to self-awareness, self-evaluation, or planning; rather, they are most pronounced in the behavioral components of self-determination, particularly in contexts of requiring experiential learning and independent, self-determined action. Such findings are commonly associated with primary difficulties in executive functioning and functional capacities of individuals with ID (Kehl & Römer, 2025; Barton & McIntyre, 2022), as well as with environmental practices that prioritize adaptation to what others perceive as "best" for the individual, often at the expense of opportunities for autonomous decision-making.

Previous research focused on examining the influence of sociodemographic determinants on self-determination in individuals with ID has consistently shown that individuals with mild ID demonstrate higher levels of self-determination (Vicente et al., 2020; Nota et al., 2007; Stancliffe et al., 2000). These individuals tend to achieve more favorable outcomes in domains such as independent decision-making, self-advocacy, goal setting and planning, self-regulation, and active participation in everyday life activities (Fusinska-Korpik & Gacek, 2024; García-Candel et al., 2023; Carney, 2015; Douglas et al., 2015).

Some studies have reported gender-related differences in levels of self-determination. For example, research conducted on an Italian sample found higher self-determination scores among males with ID compared to females (Nota et al., 2007), whereas studies based on U.S. samples reported higher levels among females (Cavendish, 2017; Shogren et al., 2007). Additionally, several studies suggest that self-determination increases with age (Moreira et al., 2025; Nunes & Santos, 2019; Nota et al., 2011; Shogren et al., 2013). In contrast, other studies have found no significant associations with either gender (Vicente et al., 2020; Palmer et al., 2012) or age (Lee et al., 2012), indicating variability across samples and contexts.

Despite these inconsistencies, higher socioeconomic status has most frequently been associated with higher levels of self-determination (Hughes et al., 2013), along with positive effects on other dimensions of quality of life among individuals with ID (Lachapelle et al., 2005; Nota et al., 2007). Although still limited in number, recent Croatian studies have reported lower levels of self-determination among individuals with ID, as well as poorer outcomes in other quality-of-life indicators (Rozman, 2012; Bratković et al., 2023; Buljevac

et al., 2022). Despite the central importance of self-determination for dignity, autonomy, and independent living, there remains a notable lack of empirical research examining the extent to which self-determination develops and is expressed among individuals with ID, particularly within this specific sociocultural context.

RESEARCH GOAL AND HYPOTHESES

The aim of this study, conducted as part of a broader research project carried out in the Republic of Croatia, was to examine how parents/guardians and professionals/support staff assess the level of self-determined behavior in adults with ID, as well as to determine whether there are significant differences between these perspectives. In addition, the study sought to explore whether significant differences in the assessed level of self-determination exist regard to the severity of intellectual disability and the level of education of their parents/guardians.

Based on these objectives, three hypotheses were defined:

H₁: Professionals/staff assess a statistically significantly higher level of self-determination in persons with intellectual disabilities than their parents/guardians do.

H₂: Parents/guardians and professionals/staff assess a statistically significantly higher level of self-determination in persons with mild compared to persons with moderate intellectual disabilities.

H₃: Parents/guardians and professionals/staff assess a statistically significantly higher level of self-determination in persons with intellectual disabilities whose parents/guardians have a higher level of education, compared to persons with intellectual disabilities whose parents/guardians have a secondary and lower level of education.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants

The study involved parents/guardians (N=104) of adults with mild to moderate ID aged 21 to 40 years, who use social services and support programs of social welfare institutions and non-governmental organizations, as well as professionals and other staff (N=31) who know them well and provide them with support. Most parents were female (N=82), with a secondary education (N=57), and aged 40 to 71. The fewest had a lower education level (N=15), while 32 had completed higher education.

Most professionals/support staff were also female (N=26), aged 25 to 35 (N=15). The main criteria for their inclusion in the sample were that they knew the individuals with intellectual disability well, based on direct support. Among them were psychologists (N=3), social workers (N=1), occupational therapists (N=2), special educators (N=7), social pedagogues (N=2), physiotherapist (N=1), physiotherapist (N=1), teachers (N=1), personal assistants (N=8) and other persons employed as support providers (N=5). Their work experience with people with ID ranged from 1 to 32 years.

Procedure

The research was conducted following approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb, i.e. with strict adherence to all ethical principles of protecting the well-being of the respondents including voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. Parents/guardians and professionals/support staff completed the questionnaires in person during previously scheduled meetings held at organizations, with provided clarification if needed.

Measuring Instruments

Relevant sociodemographic data, as reported in the description of participants, were collected using a general questionnaire developed specifically for the purposes of this study. The primary research data were obtained using an adapted version of the Self-Determination Assessment Battery (SDA; Hoffman et al., 2004), administered in the Self-Determination Parent Perception Scale (PPS) and the Self-Determination Teacher Perception Scale (TPS), designed for teachers and other professionals within formal support systems. Both versions of the instrument consist of 30 items organized into five areas assessing the extent to which individuals: (a) know and value themselves, (b) engage in short and long-term planning, (c) act autonomously and proactively, (d) has experienced self-determination, and (e) recognize concrete outcomes and consequences of their choices. Psychometric analyses demonstrated high levels of validity and internal consistency for both the parent/guardian version ($\alpha = .97$) and the professional/support staff version ($\alpha = .98$). Principal component analysis of the scale measurement structure conducted in the present study yielded six subscales: planning and evaluation ($\alpha = .91$), self-awareness and decision-making ($\alpha = .92$), self-reflection and adaptation ($\alpha = .87$), assertiveness and self-advocacy ($\alpha = .86$), initiative and persistence ($\alpha = .80$), and self-expression ($\alpha = .77$). The moderate to high reliability coefficients across subscales supported the adequacy of the instrument and justified subsequent data analyses.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows (Version 26.0; IBM Corp., Chicago, IL). Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize and describe the data, while inferential statistical procedures were employed to test the study hypotheses. For the H1 and H2 hypothesis examination a *t*-test for independent samples has been used, and for H3 analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been applied, after the verification of the normality of data distribution using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. Differences across subscales were additionally examined using the Mann–Whitney *U* test and independent-samples *t*-test, as appropriate.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents a comparative overview of descriptive statistics for the assessment of self-determination in individuals with ID as rated by parents/guardians and professionals/support staff, including the total score and the six subscales identified through principal component analysis conducted as part of the psychometric evaluation of the *Self-Determination Assessment Scale in the present study*.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the Self-Determination Assessment Scale and its corresponding subscales

	Parents/guardians R					Professionals /support staff S				
	M	SD	C	Min	Max	M	SD	C	Min	Max
Overall score	83.50	22.93	82.50	38	150	89.15	25.34	89.50	34	134
Planning and evaluating	.519	5.29	13.00	6	30	15.22	5.38	15.00	6	28
Self-awareness and decision making	18.49	6.02	18.00	7	35	20.56	6.19	21.00	7	33
Self-reflection and adaptation	13.83	4.47	13.00	5	25	14.31	4.21	14.00	6	24
Assertiveness and self-advocacy	11.30	3.70	11.00	4	20	12.20	3.93	12.00	5	20
Initiative and persistence	12.13	3.49	12.00	4	20	12.36	3.50	12.50	4	20
Self-expression	13.65	3.23	14.00	6	20	14.51	3.41	15.00	4	20

Mean scores indicate an overall low level of self-determined behavior among individuals with ID (the maximum possible score is 150 points). Across both groups of raters, the highest mean values were observed on the Self-awareness and decision-making subscale (parents/guardians: $M = 18.49$, $Md = 18$; professionals/support staff: $M = 20.56$, $Md = 21$) and the Self-expression subscale (parents/guardians: $M = 13.65$, $Md = 14$; professionals/support staff: $M = 14.51$, $Md = 15$). In contrast, the lowest mean scores were found on the Assertiveness and self-advocacy subscale (parents/guardians: $M = 11.30$, $Md = 11$; professionals/support staff: $M = 12.20$, $Md = 12$) and the Initiative and persistence subscale (parents/guardians: $M = 12.13$, $Md = 12$; professionals/support staff: $M = 12.36$, $Md = 12.50$).

Independent-samples t -test results for hypothesis H1, presented in Table 2, indicated no statistically significant difference between parents/guardians' and professionals/support staff's ratings of the overall level of self-determined behavior in individuals with intellectual disabilities ($t = -1.274$, $p = .09$).

Table 2. Comparison of parent/guardian and professional/support staff ratings of self-determination in individuals with ID

Self-determination	M	SD	t	p	Cohens d
Parents/guardians (N=104)	83.50	22.93	-1.724	.09	-0.24
Professionals/support staff (N=104)	89.15	25.34			

Accordingly, the first hypothesis (H1), which assumed that professionals would rate the level of self-determination of individuals with ID as significantly higher than would parents/guardians, was not confirmed.

In testing the second hypothesis (H2), differences in self-determination scores were examined with respect to the severity of ID. The results indicated statistically significant differences in the level of self-determination between individuals with mild and moderate ID, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of significance testing for differences in self-determination between individuals with mild and moderate ID as rated by parents/guardians and professionals/support staff

	Mild ID (N=43)		Moderate ID (N=61)				
Self-determination	M	SD	M	SD	t	p	Cohens d
Parents/guardians	89.99	22.86	79.00	22.08	2.440	.02	.49
Professionals/support staff	101.74	20.43	80.28	23.05	4.899	.00	.98

According to parent/guardian ratings, the observed differences were statistically significant with a medium effect size ($t = 2.440, p = .02$, Cohen's $d = .49$), whereas professional/support staff ratings indicated a large effect size ($t = 4.899, p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .98$). Both rater groups reported higher levels of self-determination among individuals with mild ID compared to those with moderate ID, thereby confirming the second hypothesis (H2).

To provide a more comprehensive understanding of these differences, their statistical significance was further examined across individual subscales of the latent measurement structure, separately for each rater group. Due to space limitations, a detailed tabular presentation of these results is not included; instead, the most salient findings are summarized below. From the perspective of parents/guardians, higher levels of self-determination among individuals with mild ID were evident in the domains of planning and evaluation, self-awareness and decision-making, assertiveness and self-advocacy, and initiative and persistence, but not in self-reflection and adaptation or self-expression. In contrast, according to professional/support staff ratings, individuals with mild ID demonstrated significantly higher levels of self-determination across all subscales compared to individuals with moderate ID.

Finally, the third hypothesis (H3), which hypothesized significantly higher levels of self-determination among individuals with ID whose parents/guardians had higher levels of education compared to those with secondary or lower levels of education, was not supported (see Table 4).

Table 4. Analysis of variance results for differences in self-determination ratings of individuals with ID by parents'/guardians' level of education

Self-determination	Lower level of education (N=15)		Secondary level of education (N=57)		Higher level of education (N=32)		F (2,101)	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Parents/guardians	82.67	31.391	83.46	22.423	83.97	19.836	.016	.98
Professionals /support staff	90.47	30.293	89.72	23.084	87.53	24.225	.106	.90

As shown in Table 4, differences in self-determination related to the educational level of parents/guardians were not statistically significant, either according to parent/guardian ratings ($F(2, 101) = 0.016, p = .98$) or professional/support staff ratings ($F(2, 101) = 0.106, p = .90$).

DISCUSSION

As demonstrated in the present study, and consistent with other findings (Shogren et al., 2021), individuals with ID across different ages and levels of disability or support needs tend to exhibit limited development and expression of self-determination in their everyday behavior. Parent/guardian and professional/support staff ratings proved to be largely consistent, with no significant differences observed in overall scores, which contributes to the credibility and reliability of the obtained results.

It is evident that individuals with ID are often provided with insufficient opportunities and encouragement to achieve higher levels of self-actualization consistent with the expectations of adulthood. As noted by Schalock et al. (2018), when low expectations generally prevail within the social environment, assessment outcomes are unlikely to differ substantially; instead, they tend to reflect similarly constrained perspectives regarding the potential for autonomy development in individuals with ID.

It can be assumed that the convergence of ratings across respondent groups may also have been influenced by the exchange of perspectives through direct collaboration related to the individual being assessed. Additionally, individuals with ID may display comparable patterns of self-determined behavior across different contexts or in the presence of key members of their immediate support network, including both parents and professionals. Notably, limitations in autonomy, initiative, and decision-making are more salient and more readily recognized by evaluators (Wehmeyer et al., 2003; Vicente et al., 2020).

Consistent with these findings, previous studies have similarly reported no significant differences between teachers and parents' assessment of self-determination related skills, abilities, and competencies among persons with ID (Zhang et al., 2002), nor between self-reports of individuals with ID and reports provided by their family members (Jacinto et al., 2023; Simões & Santos, 2016). In contrast, some studies have found that teachers rated the level of self-determination among youth with ID lower than the individuals themselves, but higher than ratings provided by parents (Carter et al., 2009).

Differences in self-determined behavior have also been observed between home and institutional settings for individuals with ID (Winterbottom et al., 2008). Parents may at times refrain from responding to behaviors they perceive as challenging (Lober et al., 1990, as cited in Firmin et al., 2005), and may also adopt more conservative ratings than professionals due to firmly held beliefs that their children, by virtue of having ID, possess limited capacity for more complex forms of self-determination (Carter et al., 2009).

This study also confirmed that individuals with mild ID exhibit somewhat higher levels of self-determined behavior, a finding consistent with the majority of previous research (Vicente et al., 2020; Carbó-Carreté et al., 2019; Frielink et al., 2018; McGuire & McDonnell, 2008; Nota et al., 2007; Shogren et al., 2007; Wehmeyer, 2012, as cited in Shogren, 2013). As previously noted, individual developmental predispositions significantly influence the

attainable levels of awareness, abilities, and skills related to self-determination, making it understandable that individuals with mild ID possess greater cognitive capacities compared to those with moderate or severe ID (Patel et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, it is equally important not to overlook the role of other influential factors, such as the availability of supports, the extent to which autonomy is encouraged by the environment, and the presence of genuine opportunities for decision-making (Vicente et al., 2020; Vicente et al., 2023; Chou et al., 2017). Persisting barriers and limited opportunities for active social participation, independent living, employment, and related life domains continue to substantially restrict opportunities for the development and expression of self-determined behavior among individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities (Garrels & Sigstad, 2019; Bratković et al., 2023).

Capacities and aspirations for development of self-determination are strengthened through experience, social interaction and participation, and therefore do not solely reflect individuals' intrinsic characteristics or motivation (Vicente et al., 2020), but also the quality and responsiveness of environmental supports. It is well established that individuals with more significant ID require more time and more intensive supports to formulate goals and identify structured steps toward their attainment (Wehmeyer, 2001, as cited in Shogren et al., 2007). As emphasized by Kuld et al. (2023), when support is adequately structured and individualized, all persons, regardless of the type or severity of disability, can develop specific components of self-determination, including recognizing personal strengths, expressing preferences, and participating in decision-making processes.

Interestingly, no significant differences in self-determination were found regarding the educational level of parents/guardians, a finding that contrasts with results reported by some previous studies. For example, Zhang (2005) found that parents with higher levels of education provided greater encouragement for self-determination, offered more opportunities for their children to express preferences and expectations, supported future-oriented goal setting, and facilitated decision-making in everyday life. However, that study was conducted using U.S. and Asian samples. Accordingly, the influence of demographic variables, such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status must be understood within the context of broader cultural norms that shape parenting practices and the extent to which competencies essential for planning, choice-making, and decision-making are actively fostered (Shogren & Turnbull, 2005, as cited in Rodriguez & Cavendish, 2013; Shogren et al., 2016).

Cultures that promote individual independence and autonomy, and that actively create structural conditions to support these values, tend to exert a more positive influence on the realization of self-determination across diverse population groups (Heine & Buchtel, 2009). Consequently, parenting practices that shape the development of self-determination in persons with ID may be less strongly associated with formal educational attainment and more closely linked to parents' personal experiences and values (Meral et al., 2023), attitudes and beliefs (Alrabiah, 2024), and culturally embedded perspectives within the broader social context.

CONCLUSION

Grounded in relevant theoretical frameworks and existing empirically based evidence, still limited within the national context, the purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which adults with ID demonstrate patterns of self-determined behavior, as assessed by members of their immediate support environment. The psychometric properties of the applied instrument supported its suitability for use, while the identified latent structure enabled a more nuanced examination of the underlying dimensions of the construct. Specifically, principal component analysis of the self-determination measurement space yielded six subscales: planning and outcome evaluation, self-awareness and decision-making, self-reflection and adaptation, assertiveness and self-advocacy, initiative and persistence, and self-expression.

Notably, the findings overall point to a predominantly low level of self-determination across all identified dimensions. Given that the sample comprised adults with mild and moderate ID, individuals who possess developmental predispositions for higher levels of self-determined behavior and related self-actualization in everyday life, these results are very unfavorable indicators. This interpretation is further supported by the absence of significant differences between parent/guardian and professional/support staff ratings, reflecting a relatively homogeneous perceptual framework. The identified significant differences between individuals with mild and moderate ID underscore the undeniable influence of cognitive predispositions and associated practical and social competencies. However, contrary to expectations, parental educational level did not emerge as a significant factor, challenging the assumption that their higher education would be associated with more favorable outcomes or assessments. This convergence of ratings may reflect shared family and professional expectations, attitudes, and belief systems. At the same time, the possibility of rater-related biases among both parents and professionals cannot be excluded.

The findings should be interpreted with caution considering several methodological limitations. The use of a convenience sample restricts the generalizability of the results, and the perspectives of individuals with ID themselves were not included, even though subjective experiences of autonomy constitute a core element in contemporary conceptualizations of self-determination. Furthermore, the applied instrument has inherent limitations, as it focuses primarily on observable behavior and does not capture more complex determinants of self-determination, such as individual motivation, the personal meaning attributed to choice-making, perceived control, or self-efficacy. Implicit forms of autonomy, such as internal deliberation, unexpressed preferences, or passive resistance to imposed choices are particularly difficult to assess through behavioral observation alone.

In a broader sense, the obtained results likely reflect systemic and structural constraints, including insufficient transitional services and inadequate forms of adult support for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. Particularly concerning are situations in which individuals are placed in objectively depriving living environments, where even the most basic opportunities for choice-making and participation in decisions affecting their lives are restricted. Limited opportunities and inadequate support for the development of self-determination within such imposed living conditions may contribute to passivity and

learned helplessness. The acquisition of self-determination skills through everyday self-actualization represents a critical foundation for empowerment and achieving higher levels of self-expression and self-advocacy in more complex life domains.

Therefore, further and more comprehensive research in this field is essential, particularly studies employing mixed methods designs and inclusive research approaches. Such efforts are necessary to more fully capture both the individual and contextual factors that shape subjective potential, as well as the objective conditions required for the development of self-determination among individuals with ID.

REFERENCES

- Abery, B., & Stancliffe, R. (2003). An ecological theory of self-determination: Theoretical foundations. In M. L. Wehmeyer, B. H. Abery, D. E. Mithaug, & R. J. Stancliffe (Eds.), *Theory in self-determination: Foundations for educational practice* (pp. 25–42). Charles C. Thomas.
- Alrabiah, A. H. (2024). Self-determination and parents' perceptions and practices: Opportunity and performance. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 159, 107539.
- Barton, H., & McIntyre, L. L. (2022). Caregiver-reported executive functioning and associated adaptive and challenging behaviour in children with histories of developmental delay. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 66(1–2), 121–132. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12865>
- Bratković, D., Lisak Šegota, N. i Alimović, S. (2023). Izazovi neovisnog življenja iz perspektiva osoba s invaliditetom, roditelja i stručnjaka. U M. Mirić i M. Miholić (ur.), *Mapiranje sastavnica neovisnog življenja – Prikaz rezultata istraživanja iz projekta Platforma 50+* (str. 33–96). Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Edukacijsko-rehabilitacijski fakultet.
- Bratković, D., Bilić, M. i Nikolić, B. (2003). Mogućnost vršenja izbora u svakidašnjem životu osoba s mentalnom retardacijom. *Hrvatska revija za rehabilitacijska istraživanja*, 39(2), 117–128.
- Buljevac, M., Liber, P. i Previšić, A. (2022). Kvaliteta života odraslih osoba s intelektualnim teškoćama i njihovih roditelja: Spoznaje i specifičnosti. *Ljetopis socijalnog rada*, 29(3), 381–411.
- Carney, T. (2015). Supported decision-making for people with cognitive impairments: An Australian perspective? *Laws*, 4(1), 37–59.
- Carter, E. W., Owens, L., Trainor, A. A., Sun, Y., & Swedeen, B. (2009). Self-determination skills and opportunities of adolescents with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 114(3), 179–192.
- Cavendish, W. (2017). The role of gender, race/ethnicity, and disability status on the relationship between student perceptions of school and family support and self-determination. *Career Dev. Transit. Individ.* 40, 113–122.
- Chambers, C. R., Wehmeyer, M. L., Saito, Y., Lida, K. M., Lee, Y., & Singh, V. (2007). Self-determination: What do we know? Where do we go? *Exceptionality*, 15(1), 3–15.

- Chou, Y. C., Wehmeyer, M. L., Palmer, S. B., & Lee, J. (2017). Comparisons of self-determination among students with autism, intellectual disability, and learning disabilities: A multivariate analysis. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 32(2), 124-132.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology*, 49(3), 182-185.
- Douglas, J., Bigby, C., Knox, L., & Browning, M. (2015). Factors that underpin the delivery of effective decision-making support for people with cognitive disability. *Research and Practice in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 2(1), 37-44.
- Firmin, M. W., Proemmel, E., & Hwang, C. E. (2005). A comparison of parent and teacher ratings of children's behaviors. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 29(2), 18-28.
- Frielink, N., C., Schuengel, P. J., & Embregts, C. M. (2018). Autonomy Support, Need Satisfaction, and Motivation for Support Among Adults With Intellectual Disability: Testing a Self-Determination Theory Model. *American Journal on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* 123: 33-49.
- Fusinska-Korpik, A., & Gacek, M. (2024). Decision-making regarding social situations in people with intellectual disability at different stages of the decision-making process. *Cognitive Processing*, 1-11.
- García-Candel, J. A., Belmonte, M. L., & Bernárdez-Gómez, A. (2023). Expectations of personal life development and decision-making in people with moderate intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intelligence*, 11(2), 24.
- Garrels, V., & Sigstad, H. M. H. (2019). Motivation for employment in Norwegian adults with mild intellectual disability: The role of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 21(1).
- Hoffman, A., Field, S., & Sawilowsky, S. (1996; 2004). *Self-determination assessment battery: Self-Determination Observation Checklist (SDOC), Self-Determination Student Scale (SDSS), Self-Determination Teacher Perception Scale (SDTPS), and Self-Determination Parent Perception Scale (SDPPS)*. Wayne State University. <https://www.ghaea.org/60-parents/949-selfdetermination.html>
- Hoffman, A., Field, S., & Sawilowsky, S. (2004). *Self-determination assessment battery: User's guide*. Center for Self-Determination and Transition.
- Heine, S. J., & Buchtel, E. E. (2009). Personality: The universal and the culturally specific. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 369-394.
- hein, M., Rodrigues, F., Monteiro, D., Antunes, R., Ferreira, J. P., Matos, R., & Campos, M. J. (2023). Quality of life in individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities: The congruency effect between reports. *Healthcare*, 11(12), 1748.
- Kehl, S., & Römer, N. (2025). Performance-based executive functions predict internalising but not externalising maladaptive behaviour in students with intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 69(11), 1315-1324. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.70027>
- Kuld, P. B., Frielink, N., Zijlmans, M., Schuengel, C., & Embregts, P. J. C. M. (2023). Promoting self-determination of persons with severe or profound intellectual

- disabilities: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*.
- Lachapelle, Y., Wehmeyer, M. L., Haelewyck, M. C., Courbois, Y., Keith, K. D., Schalock, R., Verdugo, M. A., & Walsh, P. N. (2005). The relationship between quality of life and self-determination: An international study. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 49, 740–744.
- Licardo, M., & Krajnc, M. S. (2016). Structural differences in the self-determination of upper secondary students with and without disabilities in vocational education/Strukturalne razlike v samoodločanju dijakov s posebnimi potrebami in brez posebnih potreb v srednjem strokovnem in poklicnem izobraževanju. *Revija za Elementarno Izobraževanje*, 9(3), 35.
- Luitwieler, N., Luijkx, J., van der Stege, H. A., Grootenok, A., van der Schans, C. P., van der Putten, A. A. J., & Waninge, A. (2024). Transition to adulthood of adolescents with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities: Content validation of the SGU-PIMD to support families. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 37(1), Article e13161. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1111/jar.13161>
- Meral, B. F., Wehmeyer, M. L., Palmer, S. B., Ruh, A. B., & Yilmaz, E. (2023). Parenting styles and practices in enhancing self-determination of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *American journal on intellectual and developmental disabilities*, 128(4), 282-301.
- Moreira, C. M., Carvalho, J., Oliveira, A., Pereira, A., Rosário, P., Shogren, K. A., Hagiwara, M., & Santos, S. (2025). *Self-Determination Profile of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disability: A Comparative Study* (Preprint). Preprints.org. <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202503.1701.v1>
- Nedelsky, J. (2013). *Law's relations: A relational theory of self, autonomy, and law*. United States of America: Oxford University Press.
- Nota, L., Ferrari, L., Soresi, S., & Wehmeyer, M. (2007). Self-determination, social abilities and the quality of life of people with intellectual disability. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 51(11), 850–865.
- Nota, L., Soresi, S., Ferrari, L., & Wehmeyer, M. (2011). A multivariate analysis of the self-determination of adolescents. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12(2), 245–266.
- Nunes, I. M. & Santos, S. (2019). A autodeterminação de adultos com e sem dificuldades intelectuais e desenvolvimentais: um estudo comparativo. *Revista de Educação Especial e Reabilitação*, (26, 4), 87-105.
- Palmer, S. B., Wehmeyer, M. L., Shogren, K. A., Williams-Diehm, K. L., & Soukup, J. H. (2012). An evaluation of the Beyond High School model on self-determination of students with intellectual disability. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 35(2), 76–84.
- Patel, D. R., Cabral, M. D., Ho, A., & Merrick, J. (2020). A clinical primer on intellectual disability. *Translational Pediatrics*, 9(1), 23–25.
- Rodriguez, R. J., & Cavendish, W. (2013). Differences in the relationship between family environments and self-determination among Anglo, Latino, and female students with

- disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 36(3), 152–162.
- Rozman, B. (2012). Povezanost samoodređenja i kvalitete života u zajednici kod osoba s intelektualnim teškoćama. *Hrvatska revija za rehabilitacijska istraživanja*, 48(1), 64–72.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and wellbeing. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68.
- Schalock, R. L., Luckasson, R., Tassé, M. J., & Verdugo, M. A. (2018). A holistic theoretical approach to intellectual disability: Going beyond the four current perspectives. *Intellectual and developmental disabilities*, 56(2), 79-89.
- Shogren, K. A. (2013). A social-ecological analysis of the self-determination literature. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 51, 496–511.
- Shogren, K. A., Rifenbark, G. G., & Hagiwara, M. (2021). Self-determination assessment in adults with and without intellectual disability. *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 59(1), 55-69.
- Shogren, K. A., Shaw, L. A., & Little, T. D. (2016). Measuring the early adulthood outcomes of young adults with disabilities: Developing constructs using NLTS2 data. *Exceptionality*, 24(1), 45–61.
- Shogren, K. A., Wehmeyer, M. L., Palmer, S. B., Soukup, J. H., Little, T. D., Garner, N., & Lawrence, M. (2007). Examining individual and ecological predictors of the self-determination of students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 73(4), 488–510.
- Shogren, K. A., Wehmeyer, M. L., Palmer, S. B., & Paek, Y. (2013). Exploring personal and school environment characteristics that predict self-determination. *Exceptionality: A Special Education Journal*, 21(3), 147–157.
- Simões, C., & Santos, S. (2016). The quality of life perceptions of people with intellectual disability and their proxies. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 41(4), 311–323.
- Skarsaune, S. N., Hanisch, H., & Gjermestad, A. (2021). Self-determination: What can we learn from persons with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities? *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 23, 317–327.
- Stancliffe, R. J., Abery, B. H., & Smith, J. (2000). Personal control and the ecology of community living settings: Beyond living-unit size and type. *Mental Retardation*, 105, 431–454.
- Vicente, E., Mumbardó-Adam, C., Guillén, V. M., Coma-Roselló, T., Bravo-Álvarez, M. Á., & Sánchez, S. (2020). Self-determination in people with intellectual disability: The mediating role of opportunities. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 17(17), 6201.
- Vicente, E., Pérez-Curiel, P., Mumbardó-Adam, C., Guillén, V. M., & Bravo-Álvarez, M. Á. (2023). Personal factors, living environments, and specialized supports: Their role in the self-determination of people with intellectual disability. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(7), 530.

- Zhang, D. (2005). Parent practices in facilitating self-determination skills: The influences of culture, socioeconomic status, and children's special education status. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 30, 154–162.
- Zhang, D., Katsiyannis, A., & Zhang, J. (2002). Teacher and parent practice on fostering self-determination of high school students with mild disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 25(2), 157–169.
- Žic Ralić, A., Pintarić Mlinar, Lj. i Hrastinski, I. (2023). Povezanost između samostalnosti djece s teškoćama u razvoju, njihovih socijalnih i emocionalnih kompetencija, roditeljskog ponašanja i obiteljskih aktivnosti. U M. Mirić i M. Miholić (ur.), *Mapiranje sastavnica neovisnog življenja – Prikaz rezultata istraživanja iz projekta Platforma 50+* (str. 7 -28). Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Edukacijsko-rehabilitacijski fakultet.
- Watson, J., Voss, H., & Bloomer, M. J. (2019). Placing the preferences of people with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities at the center of end-of-life decision making through storytelling. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 44(4), 267–279. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796919879701>
- Watson, M., Smith, S., Hind, S., & Haggard, M. (2008). Understanding similarities and differences between parents' and teachers' construal of children's behaviour. *Educational Studies*, 34(5), 483–510.
- Wehmeyer, M. L., Palmer, S. B., Shogren, K., Williams-Diehm, K., & Soukup, J. H. (2013). Establishing a causal relationship between intervention to promote self-determination and enhanced student self-determination. *The Journal of Special Education*, 46(4), 195–210.
- Wehmeyer, M. L., Palmer, S. B., Soukup, J. H., Garner, N. W., & Lawrence, M. (2007). Self-determination and student transition planning knowledge and skills: Predicting involvement. *Exceptionality*, 15(1), 31–44.