
REVIEW ARTICLE (META-ANALYSIS)

Community Participation Measures for People With Disabilities: A Systematic Review of Content From an *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* Perspective

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Abstract

Objective: To identify instruments that measure community participation in people with disabilities and to evaluate which domains, to what extent, and how precisely they address this construct. The review aims to provide information to guide the selection of community participation instruments and to identify limitations of existing measures.

Data Sources: A systematic search was performed in PubMed, CINAHL, and PsychINFO in February and March 2012. The latest systematic reviews and references of searched articles were also reviewed to check for measures that were not identified in the initial search.

Study Selection: Instruments were included if they (1) were a self-report questionnaire; (2) measured community participation, participation, or community integration; (3) measured actual participation (rather than subjective experience); (4) had available information on the instrument content and measurement properties; (5) were designed for adults; and (6) were applicable for all disabled populations.

Data Extraction: Instruments were obtained from identified full-text articles, reference lists, or websites. Two researchers independently reviewed each selected instrument to determine which of their items measure community participation. These items were then classified using 9 community participation domains from the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* to reflect each instrument's domain coverage.

Data Synthesis: Seventeen instruments were identified as containing community participation items, 2 of which were 100% composed of community participation items. The rest of the instruments included 8.7% to 73.1% items measuring community participation. The domain coverage varied from 3 to 8 domains across the instruments.

Conclusions: None of the 17 instruments covered the full breadth of community participation domains, but each addressed community participation to some extent. New instruments that evaluate community participation more comprehensively will be needed in the future.

Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 2013;94:771-81

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Community participation has been regarded as a key indicator of successful rehabilitation for people with disabilities.^{1,2} The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services¹ listed “participating in community activities” as one of the health goals for people with disabilities. Community participation is also related to other important outcome indicators such as quality of life, social functioning, and health.³ A lack of community participation is related to the emergence of depressive symptoms, functional limitations, morbidity, and mortality.⁴⁻⁷ Despite its significance, however, there is lack of consensus on the definition, operationalization, and

measurement of community participation.⁸ Before introducing the concept of community participation, the definition of participation needs to be clarified.

The World Health Organization *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF) defines participation as involvement in life situations.⁹ The definitions of “involvement” incorporate taking part, being included or engaged in an area of life, being accepted, or having access to needed resources. However, this definition of participation is vague and leads to problems operationalizing this concept.¹⁰ Many researchers have proposed further clarification of the definition provided by the ICF. Perenboom and Astrid¹¹ defined participation as being autonomous to some extent or being able to control one's own life, including to fulfill personal goals and societal roles. Brown et al² interpreted

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participation as active engagement in activities that are intrinsically social and are part of household, occupational, or recreational activities occurring in community settings. Whiteneck and Dijkers¹² asserted that participation refers to the fulfillment of social roles and performance at the societal level. According to these extended definitions, participation includes social interaction with the environment while getting involved in various life situations.

With a clearer definition of participation, the concept of “community participation” can be defined. In current literature, different domains of participation are often distinguished in instruments that intend to measure participation.¹³ Among all the content areas of participation, those that are outside of home or involve fulfilling roles outside the household, which can refer to community in a broad sense, should be separated from those involving household life only. Participating in activities outside the household requires different or even advanced capabilities, such as mobility in the community and socializing with more people.^{14,15} Therefore, the concept of community participation should be distinguished from the domestic life domain by including engagement in vocational, social (outside the household), and other community roles. Community participation can then be defined as *active involvement in activities that are intrinsically social and either occur outside the home or are part of a nondomestic role*. It is important to note that this definition emphasizes connection to the community but does not necessarily require physical presence in the community. Thus, for example, working on a civic task from home would still be considered community participation. The phrase “intrinsically social” indicates that the participation either directly involves interaction with other people or is in a situation with a high likelihood that there will be other people around with whom an individual may interact. “Nondomestic roles” include all roles that are not part of the family role or not typically part of institutional life. For example, nondomestic roles include one’s role as a worker, friend, neighbor, or community member. Some participation belongs to nondomestic roles even if it occurs at home, such as calling a friend, hosting a party, or writing to a friend. This working definition of community participation will be consistently used in this article.

Now that community participation is defined, the next step is to determine how to measure it. Although there have been a few previous reviews of instruments that measure participation or community integration,^{11,13,16} it is unclear whether and how existing instruments specifically address community participation. Since community participation represents a different domain than home participation, it needs to be measured separately. Without

separating the measurement of community participation from participation, we may not get an exact picture of how individuals participate in activities outside the household or institution. This question is particularly relevant for populations such as persons who are homeless or who have recently left institutions.

In discussions of participation, 2 dimensions are usually distinguished: objective and subjective.² The objective dimension is operationalized as behaviors that can be observed.¹⁰ Objective indicators include such features as frequency, intensity, length, and variety of activities performed outside the household. The subjective dimension, such as perception of involvement or sense of belonging and satisfaction with engagement in community activities, addresses the individual’s internal experience.² Although objective and subjective dimensions are equally important in understanding community participation, they have very distinct functions. Objective measures reflect individuals’ observed or reported performance and provide quantifiable information in a more standardized way that can be used for detecting treatment effects and comparing results across different contexts or populations.^{17,18} Subjective information can help the interpretation of objective results by providing insight into the meaning and affective experience associated with participation.¹⁹ This study focuses on objective measures of community participation as the first step toward identifying useful measurement tools for quantifying community participation of people with disabilities.

The purposes of this review include (1) identifying and describing instruments that measure community participation, (2) examining to what extent the overall concept of community participation is represented in these instruments, and (3) examining how extensively and frequently the community participation domains identified within the ICF are addressed by these instruments. The results can provide rich information about the features and limitations of existing measures and guide selection of instruments for the practitioners and researchers who plan to measure community participation.

Methods

Search strategy

A comprehensive literature search was carried out between February and March 2012 to identify instruments that assess community participation. The following search terms were entered in the online databases MedLine (PubMed), CINAHL, and PsychINFO (up to 2012): ([“participation,” “community integration” or “community functioning] and [“instrument,” “outcome measure,” “scale” or “questionnaire”]). These databases were deemed broad enough to identify relevant instruments. The specific set of terms was selected to efficiently locate literature related to instruments and limit articles that involved other applications of the term “participation.” In addition, the latest systematic reviews were consulted to check for measures that were not identified in the initial search. We also checked reference lists to retrieve studies that were related to instruments identified in the initial searches.

Screening abstracts and articles

We reviewed the abstracts on the basis of the following eligibility criteria: the articles (1) were journal articles (excluding dissertation abstracts); (2) were published in English; (3) had adults as the study population; and (4) evaluated or used at least 1 instrument

List of abbreviations:

CASIG	Client’s Assessment of Strengths, Interests and Goals
CHART	Craig Handicap Assessment and Reporting Technique
CPI	Community Participation Indicators
FAI	Frenchay Activities Index
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
ICI	Index of Community Involvement
ILSS	Independent Living Skills Survey
KAP	Keele Assessment of Participation
KAS	Katz Adjustment Scale
MSPP	Maastricht Social Participation Profile
PART-O	Participation Assessment with Recombined Tools –Objective
SFS	Social Functioning Scale

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