Introduction

Young adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) are underemployed compared with peers without disabilities. Few studies focus on the perspective of young adults with ID, instead relying on informants such as employers and parents. Research related to long-term employment experiences is limited, often only short-term job acquisition and retention. Due to new federal legislation, there may be more opportunities for occupational therapists (OTs) to support postsecondary employment.

Research Question
What are the employment experiences of young adults with intellectual disabilities?

Method

- Participants: 3 young adults (ages 19-23) with mild-moderate ID; employed for ≥ 9 months; all working between 8 and 40 hours/week
- Design: Two semi-structured interviews with each participant
- Analysis: Thematic coding

Discussion

- Job satisfaction was connected mainly with social environment of work, suggesting that factors beyond specific job responsibilities are important to consider
- Though all participants identified existing sources of support, challenges with social skills and self-advocacy are potential areas of need for further support
- Diverse future goals highlight variability within this population and thus the need for person-centered prospective planning

Implications

- Pre-employment support should include training in soft skills such as social skills and individualized long-term planning based on personal goals and contextual factors
- OTs are well-suited to provide employment support because of skills in optimizing the person-occupation-environment fit

References