

Happy to be taking part? .

Rick Kwekkeboom

Hogeschool van Amsterdam  
University for Applied Sciences

[r.kwekkeboom@hva.nl](mailto:r.kwekkeboom@hva.nl)

# Investigating participation and its relation with happiness

‘independent living’ people with  
learning disabilities or chronic  
psychiatric problems

# Presentation

- Designing and carrying out the **study**
- Aspects of **life situation**
- **Model** for participation (and happiness)
- **Findings**
- Plans for **future** research

# Presentation

- Designing and carrying out the **study**

# Background

- ‘Vermaatschappelijking (social inclusion)’:  
stressing participation and integration
- Proclamation/Introduction Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning **WMO – Law on social support**
- People with learning disabilities or chronic psychiatric problems **underrepresented** in surveys
- **Gaps in knowledge** about participation, obstacles, wishes and needs

# Carrying out the research

- Cooperation between **Avans University for applied Sciences** and **Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP)**
- Contribution institutions and client movements **South –Western** part of the Netherlands (predominantly rural)
- **Two phases**: qualitative and quantitative methods
- **Second** phase: **392** respondents (219 ld vs 173 cpp)
- Expanding to **national level**???

# Topic list

- Personal characteristics (age, sex, education, perceived health, attitude);
- Housing situation;
- Financial situation;
- professional and informal support received;
- Employment and day-activities;
- Leisure time use;
- Social network;
- mobility;
- Perceived contentment and happiness

# Presentation

- Aspects of life situation



# Some findings

- Support [support.pptx](#)
- Employment and day-activities [employment and day-activities.pptx](#)
- Social network [Social network.pptx](#)
- Loneliness [Loneliness.pptx](#)
- Happiness [happiness.pptx](#)

# Support

- **Big need** for support, especially where it concerns **control**
- **Social network** provides in **half of need**; biggest role in supporting dealing with **emotions** (+ household chores)
- Personal support worker **more important** for people with **learning disabilities**
- Circa **20%** gets **no support** at all
- Roles social network and personal support worker are **not exchangeable**
- Large contentment regarding support, but: **less content** about **informal care** than about professional help

# Employment and day-activities

- Halve of respondents **mostly at** home during the day (esp. those with **psychiatric problems**)
- **1/5** of those who work are employed by regular employers
- Halve of those with **learning disabilities** are employed by **sheltered workshops** etc.; **1/5** of those with **chronic psychiatric problems** are working as **volunteers**
- **60%** of those who do not work are too ill or have too many problems
- About a quarter visits a **daycenter**, esp. those with psychiatric problems (33% vs.22%)

# Social network

- Nearly 40% involved in partner-relationship; almost 30% has children (16% of those with learning disabilities);
- 60% has contact with 2-5 members social network on regular basis; 10% has such contact with at most 1 person;
- 2 of the most important people are family, 3rd a friend; 3% could not name anyone, 4% 1 person;
- Contacts with neighbours and colleagues seem to be the same as those of 'rest of society';
- Leisure time often spent with others, but depending on living situation;

# Loneliness

- 40% never or seldom feels lonely, 39% sometimes
- Large differences between both groups :

	learning disabilities	psychiatric problems
Never or seldom	53	26
Often till allways	12	31

- More lonely than average society: 3% feels themselves isolated from others
- Due to housing situation or to disabilities?

# Happiness

- 51% content with (aspects of) life, 9% very content;
- 50% happy, 6% very happy
- Differences between two groups

	learning disabilities	psychiatric problems
(very) happy	70	37
(very) unhappy	9	24

- Dutch society: 66% happy, 14% very happy  
(different questionnaire, other categories)

# Presentation

- **Model** for participation (and happiness)

# Again: Topic list

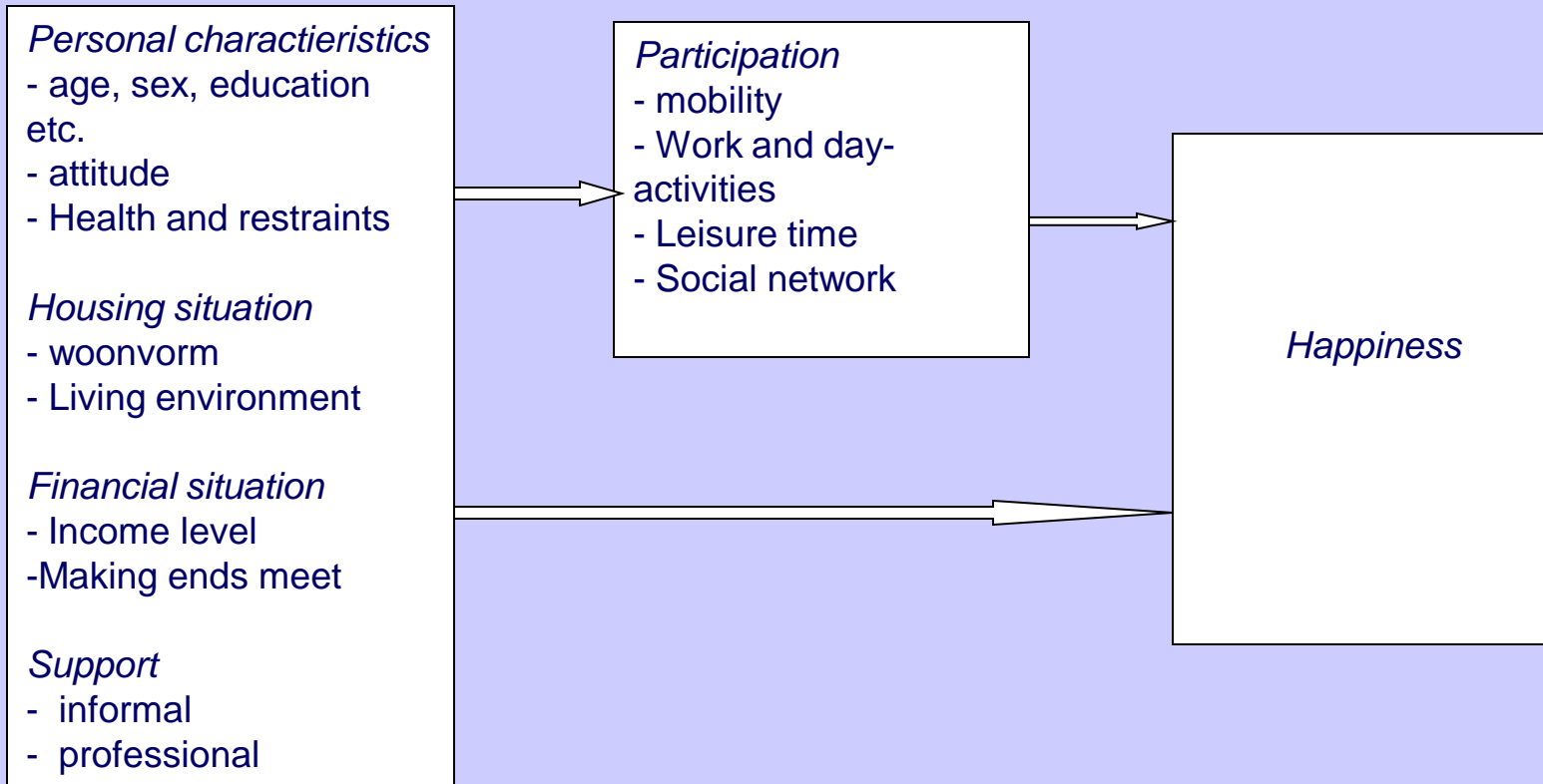
- Personal characteristics (age, sex, education, perceived health, attitude);
- Housing situation;
- Financial situation;
- professional and informal support received;
- Employment and day-activities;
- Leisure time use;
- Social network;
- mobility;
- Perceived contentment and happiness



# Questions:

- What is 'participation' exactly?
- Under what conditions is participation achieved?
- Does (more) participation make happi(er)?
- Is happiness depending on participation?

# Model for participation by people with learning disabilities or chronic psychiatric problems



# Presentation

- Findings

# About participation

- **General mobility** contributes to contentment amongst people with learning disabilities
- A job on the **regular** employment market does **not** contribute to contentment with work and day-activities.
- With people with learning disabilities a **larger social network** does **not** contribute **unlimitedly** to contentment
- Aspects of participation do connect, but an overall concept '**participation**' could not be constructed with available data

# About conditions

- Characteristics of **housing situation** show only **limited connection** with (aspects of) **participation**;
- More **labor participation** goes together with larger **need for support** (management tasks as well as social and emotional skills);
- Besides **age** attitude has the most impact on (level of) participation;
- It looks like the two groups respond to **different conditions** for (more) participation.

# About happiness

- **Sheltered employment** contributes to happiness, as regular employment doesn't
- **Contentment** with circumstances (assessment) contributes more to **happiness** than circumstances themselves
- People with chronic psychiatric problems far **less happy** than people with learning disabilities
- **Attitude** influences happiness more than all other variables in this model

# Presentation

- Plans for future research