LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

LIVING WITH DISABILITY RESEARCH CENTRE

Examining two elements of good Active Support: Technical and Interpersonal support

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Background Active Support

- Active Support is a practice used to support people with intellectual disabilities
- Staff working in supported accommodation services are trained in how to provide opportunities, assistance and choice that enables a person with intellectual disabilities to participate in everyday activities and social interactions
- Contrasts with “hotel model” where staff prioritise domestic tasks
- People with intellectual disabilities significantly increase their levels of engagement in meaningful activities and social interactions when Active Support is implemented well (Flynn et al., 2018; Stancliffe et al., 2008)
- Variability in implementation, the quality of Active Support and levels of engagement (Bigby et al., 2019; Mansell et al., 2013)
- Research has turned to explaining this variability using multiple regression and multilevel modelling

Research Evidence

- Researchers have analysed predictors of the quality of Active Support and levels of engagement separately
- *What predicts engagement?* Adaptive behaviour, staff support, age, challenging behaviour
- Active Support Measure (ASM): higher scores → higher levels of engagement
  - ASM has been used as a dependent variable
- *What predicts good Active Support?* Practice leadership, culture of Supporting Well-Being, service size, adaptive behaviour
- Assumption of a relationship between variables

  E.g. practice leadership → active support → engagement
- No study has tested the relationship between all these factors
- But could mean stronger evidence that they are connected, greater confidence in their importance for good support and outcomes, implications for implementing and improving Active Support
- ASM has been used in research as a single dimension, but exploratory factor analysis identified two dimensions – Technical Active Support and Interpersonal Active Support (Humphreys et al., 2024)

Aim and Research Questions

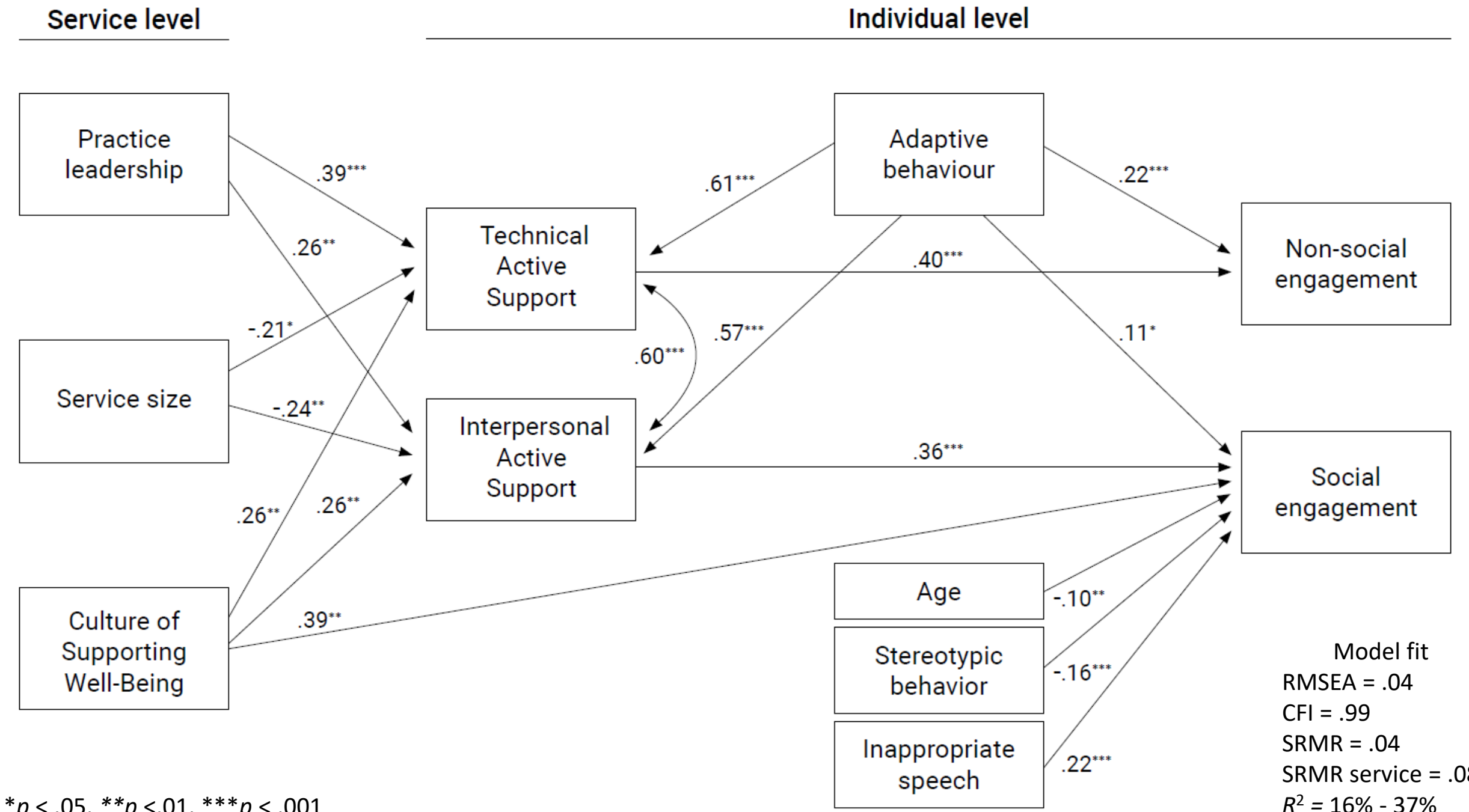
- Test a model comprising key variables that predict Active Support and levels of social and non-social engagement
- Does Technical Active Support predict non-social engagement?
- Does Interpersonal Active Support predict social engagement?

Data Collection and Participants

- Data collected 2021 to 2025, mostly 2024 to 2025
- 573 adults with intellectual disabilities, across 198 supported accommodation services, from 20 disability organisations
- On average, participants were 52 years (23 to 86), had severe intellectual disabilities (ABS mean = 135, range = 24 – 272), 55% males
- Various types of accommodation services, ranged from 1-10 people, average 4 people
- **2-hour observation**: EMACR (Mansell & Beadle-Brown, 2005) and ASM (Mansell & Elliot, 1996)
- **Interview with frontline supervisor**: Observed Measure of Practice Leadership (Beadle-Brown et al., 2015)
- **Survey about the people supported**: Adaptive Behaviour Scale (Hatton et al., 2001), Aberrant Behavior Checklist (Aman et al., 1995), age
- **Frontline staff survey**: Group Home Culture Scale (Humphreys et al., 2020)

Analysis

- Multilevel path analysis was used to analyse data
- A hypothesised path model was developed guided by previous evidence and theory
- Included service and individual level predictors of Active Support and engagement in non-social and social activities
- Service level predictors: Frontline practice leadership, Supporting Well-Being, service size
- Individual level predictors: Technical Active Support, Interpersonal Active Support, adaptive behaviour, age, Stereotypic behavior and Inappropriate speech


Service level
Individual level
Practice leadership
Service size
Culture of Supporting Well-Being
Technical Active Support
Interpersonal Active Support
Adaptive behaviour
Non-social engagement
Social engagement
Age
Stereotypic behavior
Inappropriate speech
.39***
.26**
-.21*
-.24**
.26**
.26**
.39**
.61***
.60***
.57***
.40***
.22***
.11*
.36***
-.10**
-.16***
.22***
Model fit
RMSEA = .04
CFI = .99
SRMR = .04
SRMR service = .08
R^2 = 16% - 37%
*p < .05, **p <.01, ***p < .001

Conclusions

- The findings confirm and extend previous evidence about the predictors of Active Support and engagement
- Supports previously assumed relationships
  - Strong practice leadership, culture of Supporting Well-Being, smaller sized services, higher levels of adaptive behaviour → better Technical and Interpersonal Active Support
  - Good Technical Active Support → higher levels of engagement in non-social activities
  - Good Interpersonal Active Support → higher levels of engagement in social activities
- People with severe and profound intellectual disabilities receive poorer quality support and are less engaged
- Confirms smaller size is better. Larger accommodation services (≥ 6 people) associated with poorer quality support
- The model could serve as an evidence informed blueprint for researchers, organisations and staff about what to focus on to implement and improve Active Support and engagement in services

Thank You

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