

Research Paper

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

Shabnam Akbar^{1*}, Neha Jain¹, Prof. Shawkat Ahmad Shah²,
Prof. Touseef Rizvi²

ABSTRACT

Objective: To synthesize evidence on how the attitudes and perceptions of persons with physical disabilities (PwD) relate to their quality of life (QoL), organized using the Antecedent–Decision–Outcome (ADO) framework. **Methods:** A systematic search of Scopus (last week of June 2025) identified studies using the terms “*quality of life*” AND “*physical disability*” AND (“*attitude*” OR “*perception*”), limited to English, articles, and the subject areas Health Professions, Psychology, Social Sciences, and Arts & Humanities. The search returned 124 records; two reviewers screened abstracts, moved 65 to full-text, and 41 met inclusion criteria focusing on PwD’s own attitudes/perceptions and their QoL. No formal risk-of-bias assessment was conducted. **Results:** Across disabilities predominantly of a physical/mobility nature (with frequent attention to spinal cord injury and multiple sclerosis), antecedents clustered as personal/clinical (symptoms, functional limitation), psychosocial (resilience, acceptance, perceived control), and environmental (accessibility, supports, technologies, social attitudes). Decisions were typically adaptive choices engagement in sports/leisure, uptake of assistive or tele-supports, pursuing employment/education, cultivating peer networks, and living-arrangement autonomy. Outcomes consistently linked resilience, acceptance, participation, and supportive environments with higher QoL, while pain, fatigue, depressive symptoms, and environmental barriers predicted poorer QoL. Methodologically, cross-sectional designs dominated; mixed-methods, longitudinal and interventional work was less common. **Conclusions:** PwD’s QoL emerges from a dynamic interplay of personal adaptation and enabling environments rather than impairment alone. Practice and policy should pair psychosocial strengthening (e.g., resilience/acceptance-based approaches) with environmental and technological enablement. Research should advance longitudinal, causal, and mixed-methods designs with transparent, standardized QoL and attitude measures.

Keywords: *Quality of life, Physical disabilities, Attitudes, Perceptions, Antecedent–Decision–Outcome (ADO) framework, Psychosocial adaptation, Rehabilitation, Disability studies*

¹Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, India

²Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, India

*Corresponding Author

Received: August 19, 2025; Revision Received: August 21, 2025; Accepted: August 25, 2025

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

Quality of life (QoL) is increasingly recognized as a multifaceted construct, extending beyond medical or functional outcomes to include psychological, social, and environmental dimensions especially for individuals with physical disabilities (PwD). Historically, disability research centered on quantifiable impairment and the medical model, viewing disability primarily as a dysfunction needing correction or cure (Fisher & Goodley, 2007). In contrast, more recent perspectives emphasize the social model, which situates disability within the broader context of environmental barriers and societal attitudes, arguing that QoL is shaped not just by bodily limitations, but also by how societies respond (Hendren, 2020).

Indeed, numerous studies reveal that two individuals with similar physical impairments can report vastly different QoL depending on how they perceive and adapt to their disability. Concepts such as self-acceptance, resilience, personal control, and internalized stigma play critical roles in mediating the impact of clinical symptoms on well-being (Mastrilli et al., 2020). For example, research in China demonstrates that even when physical disability severity is moderate, individuals' QoL is substantially influenced by their attitudes and by how they perceive the quality of care they receive (Ye et al., 2013). These findings challenge simplistic associations between impairment and QoL and call for models that incorporate psychosocial dimensions into our understanding.

To structure such complexity, this review adopts the Antecedent–Decision–Outcome (ADO) framework, which offers a useful lens for organizing how personal, environmental, and psychosocial factors (Antecedents) lead to adaptive or maladaptive behaviors (Decisions) that ultimately influence well-being (Outcomes). Antecedents may include individual characteristics such as functional status, resilience, and identity; contextual features like social support, accessibility, and service quality; as well as broader cultural narratives and biases. Decisions encompass adaptive strategies such as engagement in assistive technologies, rehabilitation, peer networks, or advocacy. Outcomes measure QoL across physical, psychological, social, and environmental domains.

This framing aligns with key insights from the World Health Organization's World Report on Disability, which underscores that over one billion people worldwide live with disability and often face avoidable barriers yet many overcome these through social inclusion and supports (WHO & World Bank, 2011). Similarly, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) emphasizes inclusion, autonomy, and the right to the highest attainable standard of QoL (UN, 2006). Despite these global frameworks, empirical literature remains siloed, with few studies systematically examining how PwD's own attitudes and perceptions co-shape their QoL.

Moreover, societal attitudes and internalized ableism frequently undermine well-being. Ableism a system of discrimination that devalues disability, can infiltrate healthcare, employment, and everyday interactions, conveying that people with disabilities have diminished QoL (Iezzoni et al., 2021). Internalized ableism further occurs when PwD unconsciously adopt negative views about themselves, undermining self-esteem, social engagement, and overall QoL (Campbell, 2022). Yet, resilience and community identification can mitigate these negative effects (Mastrilli et al., 2020).

At the same time, adaptive behaviors and environmental participation, from sports and leisure activities to technology adoption and peer support, emerge as powerful pathways to improved QoL. For instance, studies show that involvement in physical activity correlates

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

with greater life satisfaction and positive self-perception among PwD (Alqahtani & Alsenany, 2021). Peer relationships and mutual support networks further buffer psychological distress and enhance self-worth (Silverman et al., 2017).

Given this landscape, the present review systematically identifies and integrates research on QoL among PwD that explicitly considers PwD's attitudes and perceptions about their own disability. We conducted a Scopus database search in June 2025, using keywords "quality of life" AND "physical disability" AND ("attitude" OR "perception"), and applied filters for subject area (Health Professions, Psychology, Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities), document type (articles), and language (English). From 124 initial results, 41 studies ultimately met inclusion criteria providing substantive analysis of PwD's own attitudes and QoL, distinct from external observers' views.

This review aims to: (1) map the range of antecedents, decisions, and QoL outcomes studied; (2) identify methodological patterns and gaps; and (3) suggest directions for practice and policy that better support QoL through psychosocial and environmental interventions.

By emphasizing the agency and perceptions of PwD themselves, this work fills a critical gap in disability QoL research. It promotes a holistic, rights-based approach, one that recognizes that improving QoL requires not only addressing functional limitations but also empowering individuals through acceptance, adaptation, inclusion, and supportive environments.

METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature search was conducted in the last week of June 2025 to identify studies examining the quality of life (QoL) of persons with physical disabilities (PwD) in relation to their attitudes or perceptions toward disability. The search was carried out in the Scopus database, as shown in Figure 1, using the keywords: "quality of life" AND "physical disability" AND ("attitude" OR "perception"). To focus the review on relevant and high-quality sources, several filters were applied: subject area was limited to Health Professions, Psychology, Social Sciences, and Arts & Humanities; document type was restricted to articles; and language was limited to English. This initial search yielded 124 studies.

Screening process

Two authors independently screened the abstracts to assess relevance. Studies were included if they provided a substantive discussion on:

1. The quality of life as experienced or reported by PwD, and
2. The attitude or perception of PwD toward their own disability.

Studies that primarily focused on the perceptions of others toward PwD or discussed QoL only indirectly were excluded. Studies providing only passing mentions of QoL or attitude without detailed analysis were also excluded. Discrepancies between the two reviewers regarding study relevance were resolved through discussion and consensus. After abstract screening, 65 studies were selected for full-text review, resulting in a final inclusion of 41 studies.

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

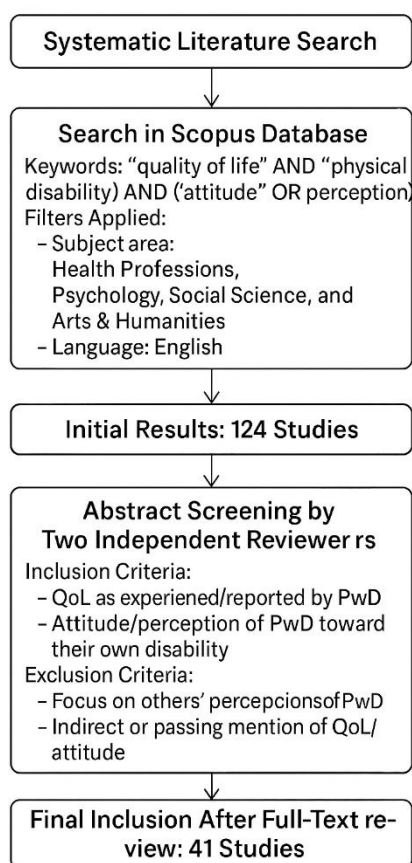


Figure 1: Screening Process of Studies

Data extraction

Data from the included studies were collaboratively extracted by all authors using a shared Google Sheet. Key details recorded included study design, sample characteristics, measures of QoL, attitude/perception constructs, and relevant findings. This collective approach ensured consistency and reduced potential bias in data recording.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDIES

Table 1: Overview of reviewed studies

SN	Title	Authors	Year	Source Title	Publisher	Country
1	Self-managed versus agency-provided personal assistance care for individuals with high level tetraplegia	Prince J.M.; Manley M.S.; Whiteneck G.G.	1995	Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation		USA
2	Autobiographical memory, depression and quality of life in multiple sclerosis	Kenealy P.M.; Beaumont J.G.; Lintern T.; Murrell R.	2000	Journal of Clinical and Experimental Neuropsychology	Swets en Zeitlinger B.V.	UK
3	The role of adaptation to disability and	Menzel P.; Dolan P.; Richardson J.; Olsen J.A.	2002	Social Science and Medicine		Not Specified

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

SN	Title	Authors	Year	Source Title	Publisher	Country
	disease in health state valuation: A preliminary normative analysis					
4	Patterns of psychosocial adaptation to chronic illness and disability: A cluster analytic approach	Livneh H.; Lott S.M.; Antonak R.F.	2004	Psychology, Health and Medicine		USA
5	Relationships between environment and quality of life of older adults with physical disabilities	Levasseur M.; Desrosiers J.; Noreau L.	2004	Physical and Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics	Haworth Press Inc.	Canada
6	Relations between coping strategies and health-related quality of life in patients with spinal cord lesion	Elfström M.L.; Rydén A.; Kreuter M.; Taft C.; Sullivan M.	2005	Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine	Taylor and Francis A.S.	Sweden,
7	Predictors of psychosocial adaptation among people with spinal cord injury or disorder	Martz E.; Livneh H.; Priebe M.; Wuermsler L.A.; Ottomanelli L.	2005	Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation		USA
8	Prenatal diagnosis and selective abortion: A result of the cultural turn?	Bromage D.I.	2006	Medical Humanities		UK
9	Mothers' perceptions of the introduction of a hoist into the family home of children with physical disabilities	Shepherd A.; Stewart H.; Murchland S.	2007	Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology		Australia
10	The self-perceptions and interpersonal relationships of persons with significant physical disabilities: A qualitative pilot study	Riley Jr. D.; De Anda D.; Blackaller C.A.	2007	Journal of Social Work in Disability and Rehabilitation		USA
11	An evaluation of a biopsychosocial framework for health-related quality of life and	Nicassio P.M.; Kay M.A.; Custodio M.K.; Irwin M.R.; Olmstead R.;	2011	Journal of Psychosomatic Research		USA

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

SN	Title	Authors	Year	Source Title	Publisher	Country
	disability in rheumatoid arthritis	Weisman M.H.				
12	Electronic aids to daily living and quality of life for persons with tetraplegia	Rigby P.; Ryan S.E.; Campbell K.A.	2011	Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology		Canada
13	Self-perceived quality of life of people with physical disabilities and labour force participation	Pawłowska-Cyprysiak K.; Konarska M.; Żołnierczyk-Zreda D.	2013	International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics		Poland
14	Acceptance of pain in neurological disorders: Associations with functioning and psychosocial well-being	Kratz A.L.; Hirsh A.T.; Ehde D.M.; Jensen M.P.	2013	Rehabilitation Psychology		USA
15	Effects of an 1-day education program on physical functioning, activity and quality of life in community living persons with multiple sclerosis	Feys P.; Tytgat K.; Gijbels D.; De Groote L.; Baert I.; Van Asch P.	2013	NeuroRehabilitation		Belgium
16	Correlation between upper limb function and oral health impact in stroke survivors	da Silva F.C.; da Silva D.F.T.; Mesquita-Ferrari R.A.; Fernandes K.P.S.; Bussadori S.K.	2015	Journal of Physical Therapy Science	Society of Physical Therapy Science (Rigaku Ryoho Kagakugakkai)	Brazil
17	Psychosocial impacts of engaging in Second Life for individuals with physical disabilities	Kleban C.; Kaye L.K.	2015	Computers in Human Behavior	Elsevier Ltd	UK
18	Examining perceptions of social acceptance and quality of life of pediatric campers with physical disabilities	Knapp D.; Devine M.A.; Dawson S.; Piatt J.	2015	Children's Health Care	Routledge	USA
19	A retrospective study of past graduates of a	Kingsnorth S.; King G.; Mcpherson A.;	2015	Child: Care, Health and Development		Canada

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

SN	Title	Authors	Year	Source Title	Publisher	Country
	residential life skills program for youth with physical disabilities	Jones-Galley K.				
20	Resilience, age, and perceived symptoms in persons with long-term physical disabilities	Terrill A.L.; Molton I.R.; Ehde D.M.; Amtmann D.; Bombardier C.H.; Smith A.E.; Jensen M.P.	2016	Journal of Health Psychology	SAGE Publications Ltd	USA
21	Teleexercise for persons with spinal cord injury: A mixed-methods feasibility case series	Lai B.; Rimmer J.; Barstow B.; Jovanov E.; Bickel C.S.	2016	JMIR Rehabilitation and Assistive Technologies	JMIR Publications Inc.	USA
22	Solace in solidarity: Disability friendship networks buffer well-being	Silverman A.M.; Molton I.R.; Smith A.E.; Jensen M.P.; Cohen G.L.	2017	Rehabilitation Psychology	American Psychological Association Inc.	USA
23	Resilience and Function in Adults With Physical Disabilities: An Observational Study	Battalio S.L.; Silverman A.M.; Ehde D.M.; Amtmann D.; Edwards K.A.; Jensen M.P.	2017	Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	W.B. Saunders	USA
24	Do athletes with physical disabilities perceive their quality of life similarly when involved in different Paralympic Sports?	Ciampolini V.; Pinto M.G.; De Sousa G.R.; Silva D.A.S.; Galatti L.R.	2018	Motriz. Revista de Educacao Fisica	Universidade Estadual Paulista - UNESP	Brazil
25	Associations of sport participation with self-perception, exercise self-efficacy and quality of life among children and adolescents with a physical disability or chronic disease—a cross-sectional study	Te Velde S.J.; Lankhorst K.; Zwinkels M.; Verschuren O.; Takken T.; de Groot J.; Backx F.J.G.; de Groot J.F.; Nijboer T.C.W.; Takken T.; Smits D.W.; Visser-Meily J.M.A.; Volman M.J.; Wittink H.W.	2018	Sports Medicine - Open	Springer Science and Business Media Deutschland GmbH	Netherlands
26	Exploring the	Kim J.; Kim M.;	2018	American	PNG	South

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

SN	Title	Authors	Year	Source Title	Publisher	Country
	relationship between types of leisure activities and life satisfaction, health perception, and social support among Korean individuals with physical disabilities	Han A.		Journal of Health Behavior	Publications	Korea
27	The multi-dimensional influence of a sports activity on the process of psycho-social rehabilitation and the improvement in the quality of life of persons with physical disabilities	Niedbalski J.	2018	Qualitative Sociology Review	Lodz University	Poland
28	Nurses' attitudes and emotions toward caring for adults with intellectual disabilities: Results of a cross-sectional, correlational-predictive research study	Desroches M.L.; Sethares K.A.; Curtin C.; Chung J.	2019	Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities	Blackwell Publishing Ltd	USA
29	Dental caries and oral health related to quality of life of children with disabilities	Ulfah S.F.; Marjianto A.	2019	Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology	Indian Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology	Indonesia
30	Productive activities, mental health and quality of life in disability: Exploring the role enhancement and the role strain hypotheses	Fekete C.; Siegrist J.; Post M.W.M.; Brinkhof M.W.G.	2019	BMC Psychology	BioMed Central Ltd.	Switzerland
31	Quality of life of children with ICP as assessed by parents; [Jakość życia dzieci z zespołem Mózgowego Porażenia Dziecięcego w	Marszałek A.; Płaza Z.; Śliwiński Z.	2020	Fizjoterapia Polska	DJ Studio	Poland

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

SN	Title	Authors	Year	Source Title	Publisher	Country
	ocenie rodziców]					
32	Filipino attitudes to disability scale (Fil-ads(d)): Factor structure validation and an assessment of filipino attitudes	Palad Y.; Ignacio M.L.; Genoguin R.K.; Perez K.E.; Lunar F.R.	2021	Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research	Stockholm University Press	Philippines
33	Persons with physical disabilities and autonomous vehicles: The perspective of the driving status	Petrović Đ.; Mijailović R.M.; Pešić D.	2022	Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice	Elsevier Ltd	serbia
34	The impact of physical activity on the quality of life of a sample of Italian people with physical disability	Biagini A.; Bastiani L.; Sebastiani L.	2022	Frontiers in Sports and Active Living	Frontiers Media S.A.	Italy
35	UNTREATED GERIATRIC PHENYLKETONURIA WITH DELAYED DIAGNOSIS: AN ICF-BASED CASE REPORT	Öztürk F.; Kinikli G.İ.; Günel M.K.; Özalp İ.	2022	Turkish Journal of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation	Turkish Physiotherapy Association	Turkey
36	Quality of Life of Older Adults with Physical and Mobility Disabilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Cross-Sectional Study in Thailand	Nanthamongkolchai S.; Tojeen A.; Munsawaengsub C.; Yodmai K.; Suksatan W.	2022	Sustainability (Switzerland)	MDPI	Thailand
37	Dignity of Risk and Living at Home Despite Severe Disability	Iezzoni L.I.	2022	Perspectives in Biology and Medicine	Johns Hopkins University Press	USA
38	Promoting mental health in children and adolescents with disabilities through school-based physical activity intervention during the COVID-19 pandemic	Yang W.; Yu J.J.; Wong S.H.-S.; Sum R.K.-W.; Carty C.; Sit C.H.-P.	2023	Mental Health and Physical Activity	Elsevier Ltd	China
39	What factors affect the quality of life of employed physically disabled people? A qualitative	Pouresmaeil M.; Dehdari T.; Zeidi I.M.	2024	Journal of Education and Health Promotion	Wolters Kluwer Medknow Publications	Iran

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

SN	Title	Authors	Year	Source Title	Publisher	Country
	exploration of their experiences					
40	The impact of living with assistance dog placements on quality of life in children and adults with autism spectrum disorder or a physical disability: A longitudinal service evaluation	Shoosmith E.; Gibsons S.; Bracher E.; Smolkovič I.; Jennings K.; Viles L.; Easton K.; Ratschen E.	2024	Human-Animal Interactions	CABI International	UK
41	Preparedness and attitudes of emergency medicine residents in caring for patients with disabilities: What do we know?	Sapp R.W.; Rotoli J.M.; Backster A.; Monette D.L.; Egan D.J.; Gisondi M.A.; Coates W.C.; Poffenberger C.M.	2025	AEM Education and Training	John Wiley and Sons Inc	USA

Table 1 summarizes 41 studies published between 1995 and 2025 that explore disability, quality of life, and psychosocial dimensions from multiple perspectives. Early research focused on adaptation, coping, and health state valuation, while later studies expanded into areas such as rehabilitation frameworks, resilience, sports participation, assistive technologies, and social acceptance. More recent work highlights mental health, the impact of COVID-19, inclusive education, and service evaluation. Collectively, the studies demonstrate an evolution from primarily clinical concerns toward more holistic, bio psychosocial, and rights-based approaches, emphasizing participation, lived experiences, and well-being of persons with disabilities.

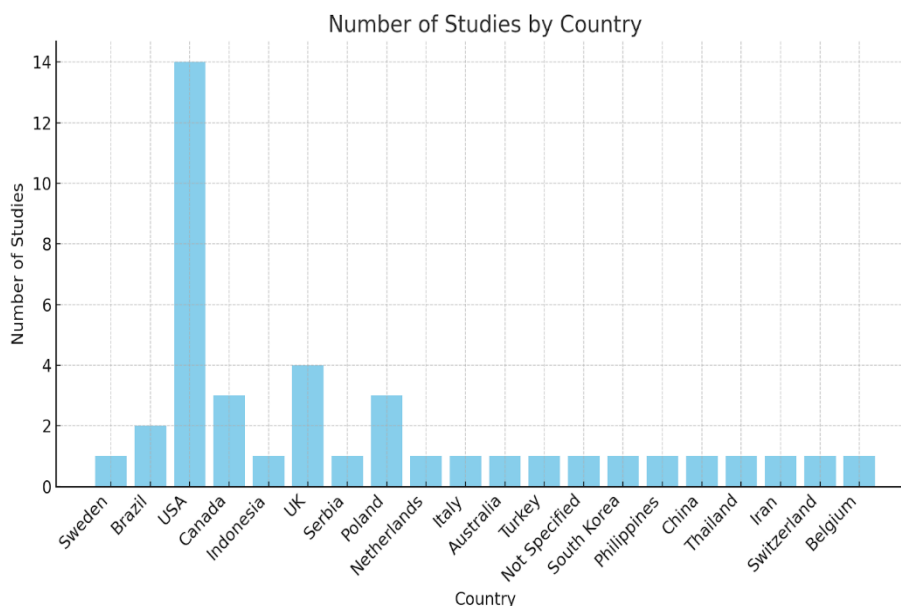


Figure 2: Country wise published studies

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

The bar chart, in Figure 2, illustrates the distribution of studies by country. The United States contributes the largest share, accounting for 14 studies, highlighting its strong research output in this area. The United Kingdom follows with 4 studies, while Canada and Poland each contributed 3 studies. Other countries such as Brazil, Australia, Netherlands, Switzerland, Iran, Belgium, Italy, Turkey, South Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, China, Thailand, and Serbia contributed one or two studies each, reflecting a more modest but notable engagement in the field. Additionally, one study did not specify the country of origin. Overall, the chart emphasizes the dominance of research from the USA, with supplementary contributions from both developed and developing nations, demonstrating the global relevance of the topic.

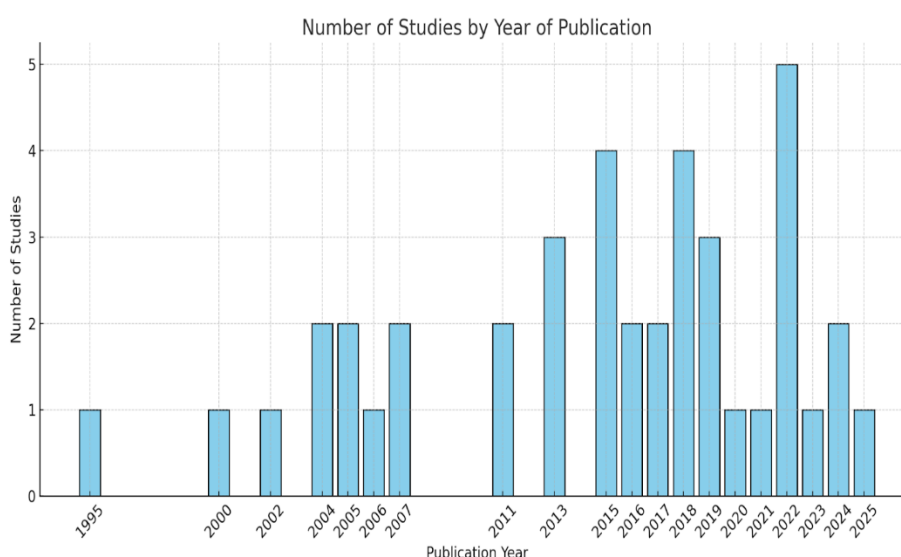


Figure 3: Year Wise Published Studies

The bar chart in Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of studies by year of publication. The earliest study in the dataset dates back to 1995, with a gradual rise in publications observed after 2000. A small number of studies appeared between 2000 and 2010, while the trend gained momentum after 2011, peaking during 2015–2022. The highest number of studies were published in 2022, followed by 2018 and 2015, indicating increased scholarly interest in recent years. The data also include studies projected up to 2024 and 2025, suggesting ongoing research activity. Overall, the trend shows a steady growth in publications over the years, with a clear concentration in the last decade.

Analysis

The extracted data will be analyzed using the Antecedent–Decision–Outcome (ADO) framework, allowing for systematic categorization of the antecedents influencing PwD attitudes, the decisions or behaviors resulting from these attitudes, and the outcomes related to their quality of life. Apart from ADO, we also tried to analyze the methodology used in the literature, kind of disabilities focussed and what other variables were studied along with the perception or attitude and Quality of life. No formal quality assessment or risk of bias evaluation was conducted for the included studies.

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

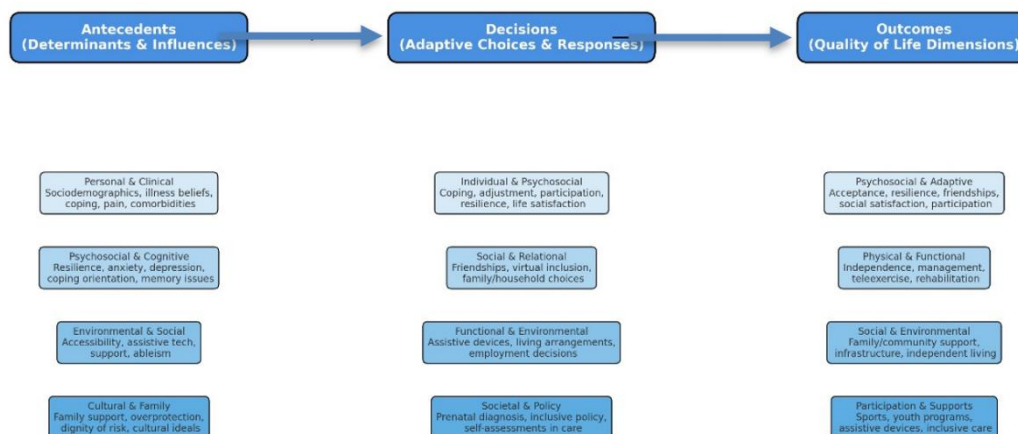


Figure 4: ADO Framework for QoL and Disability

Figure 4 shows the ADO model illustrates how antecedents (personal, psychosocial, environmental, and cultural factors) shape individuals’ decisions and adaptive choices, which in turn influence quality of life outcomes across psychosocial, functional, and social domains. It highlights the dynamic interplay between determinants, coping strategies, contextual responses, and participation in shaping overall well-being. These are discussed in details in following sections.

Antecedents

Research on disability, quality of life (QoL), and social participation identifies a wide spectrum of antecedent factors that shape individuals’ lived experiences. These determinants can broadly be grouped into personal, psychosocial, environmental, and cultural dimensions.

Personal and clinical characteristics such as sociodemographic profiles, functional limitations, and disease severity are consistently shown to influence attitudes and QoL. Variables including coping strategies (e.g., acceptance, social reliance) and demographic markers were early predictors of adjustment to disability (Elfström et al., 2005). The extent of functional impairment, measured through validated scales such as SSQOL-Brazil, demonstrates a direct relationship with reduced participation (da Silva et al., 2015). Similarly, psychosocial reactions, including anxiety, depression, denial, and spiritual well-being, serve as critical antecedents for how individuals manage chronic illness and disability (Livneh et al., 2004). Clinical markers such as self-reported or physician-assessed disease activity, illness beliefs, and personal mastery are strongly linked with perceived QoL among persons with rheumatoid arthritis (Nicassio et al., 2011). The severity of disability or comorbid symptoms such as pain and fatigue further compound participation restrictions and mood disturbances (Terrill et al., 2016; Martz et al., 2005).

Psychosocial and cognitive factors, including resilience, perceived control, and coping orientation, shape individuals’ capacity to navigate environmental challenges. Resilient individuals show better psychological health outcomes despite high symptom severity (Battalio et al., 2017). Chronic pain acceptance, both in terms of activity engagement and willingness to experience pain without avoidance, is another critical factor influencing

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

adaptive behavior and participation (Kratz et al., 2013). Meanwhile, memory deficits and impairments in personal semantic recall can hinder individuals' sense of self-continuity and adaptation (Kenealy et al., 2000).

Environmental and social variables also play a decisive role. Perceived support, social attitudes, and socioeconomic resources act as enabling or disabling forces (Levasseur et al., 2004). Accessibility to leisure opportunities, transportation, and workplaces directly influences participation (Kleban & Kaye, 2015; Pawłowska-Cyprysiak et al., 2013; Petrović et al., 2022). The introduction of assistive devices ranging from home hoists for caregiving (Shepherd et al., 2007) to electronic aids to daily living (Rigby et al., 2011), reflects how physical environments can reduce functional barriers. Likewise, assistance dogs have been shown to foster independence and confidence in individuals with physical disabilities or autism (Shoosmith et al., 2024). However, societal attitudes such as aesthetic bias, ableism in medical decision-making, and cultural ideals of “perfection” often act as negative antecedents, discouraging inclusion (Bromage, 2006; Iezzoni, 2022).

Social participation, sports, and structured programs emerge as both determinants and mediators of attitudes. Regular involvement in sports or life-skills training builds social connectedness and fosters more positive self-perceptions (te Velde et al., 2018; Kingsnorth et al., 2015). Community engagement activities, from volunteering and cultural programs to disability-specific camps, provide psychosocial benefits, enhancing resilience and reducing stigma (Kim et al., 2018; Knapp et al., 2015; Niedbalski, 2018). Conversely, reduced opportunities for participation, exacerbated during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, highlight environmental inequities (Yang et al., 2023; Nanthamongkolchai et al., 2022).

Cultural and family-level antecedents further shape individual experiences. In some contexts, supportive family attitudes and modeled perceptions of potential are associated with better self-perception and adaptation (Riley et al., 2007). In contrast, paternalistic or overly protective caregiving can undermine autonomy. The “dignity of risk” principle emphasizes the right of individuals to live independently despite requiring extensive assistance, challenging ableist assumptions among professionals and policy constraints (Iezzoni, 2022).

Together, these findings illustrate that attitudes toward disability and QoL outcomes are not solely determined by medical conditions but by a dynamic interplay of personal resilience, psychosocial adaptation, environmental accessibility, and cultural narratives about disability.

Decisions

Across the reviewed literature, decision-related factors were primarily implicit rather than direct interventions. Many studies focused on how individuals with disabilities, their families, and professionals make adaptive choices in response to personal, social, and environmental demands. Several works highlight **coping strategies, psychosocial adaptation, and self-determined actions** as decisions that influence well-being, even when these were not framed as formal “decision-making” processes (Elfström et al., 2005; Livneh et al., 2004; Nicassio et al., 2011; Martz et al., 2005). Others describe contextual or external decisions, such as the provision of support services or inclusive environments, which affect individual quality of life (Levasseur et al., 2004; Desroches et al., 2019; Ciampolini et al., 2018).

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

Choices about social participation and relationships also emerge as salient themes. These include cultivating friendships within shared disability networks (Silverman et al., 2017), engaging in virtual environments like Second Life for inclusion (Kleban & Kaye, 2015), or selecting adaptive technologies such as hoists for family caregiving (Shepherd et al., 2007). Broader societal or policy-driven decisions, such as trends in prenatal diagnosis and selective abortion (Bromage, 2006) or the moral validity of using adapted patients' self-assessments for resource allocation (Menzel et al., 2002), reflect collective value judgments with downstream consequences for individuals with disabilities.

Several studies examined **functional or environmental decisions**, such as preferences for autonomous vehicles (Petrović et al., 2022), willingness to use disability-focused tools in clinical education (Sapp et al., 2025), and engagement in employment or job-seeking behavior (Pawłowska-Cyprysiak et al., 2013). Choice of living arrangement, living independently versus institutional care, also reflects critical autonomy decisions (Iezzoni, 2022). Similarly, Lai et al. (2016) reported decisions to participate in tele exercise, while Niedbalski (2018) discussed meaning-making decisions in sports participation.

A large body of work focused on **decisions manifesting as psychosocial or health outcomes**, for example, fostering resilience (Terrill et al., 2016), maintaining mental health (Yang et al., 2023; Fekete et al., 2019), or enhancing self-concept and social identity (Riley et al., 2007; Palad et al., 2021). Decisions around adjustment (Kratz et al., 2013), social acceptance (Knapp et al., 2015), and life satisfaction (Kim et al., 2018; Biagini et al., 2022; Kingsnorth et al., 2015) were frequently embedded in the assessment of quality of life. Relatedly, parental perceptions of children's QoL (Marszałek et al., 2020) and functional independence (Öztürk et al., 2022; Battalio et al., 2017) reflect household-level decision processes.

Several longitudinal or large-cohort studies (Shoesmith et al., 2024; Rigby et al., 2011; Prince et al., 1995; Kenealy et al., 2000; Feys et al., 2013; Pouresmaeil et al., 2024; Nanthamongkolchai et al., 2022) measured QoL, control, or satisfaction as indicators of adaptive decision-making without directly intervening. Together, these findings indicate that “decisions” in this literature are not typically discrete events but embedded processes of adaptation, resource use, and self-determination shaped by personal, social, and systemic contexts.

Outcomes

The literature shows that quality of life (QoL) outcomes among people with disabilities are highly multidimensional, influenced by psychosocial, environmental, physical, and adaptive factors.

Psychosocial and adaptive factors were repeatedly highlighted as critical determinants of QoL. Acceptance predicted lower pain interference, depression, and higher social role satisfaction (Kratz et al., 2013), while resilience improved QoL and role satisfaction (Battalio et al., 2017) and mediated the negative impact of symptoms (Terrill et al., 2016). Adaptive coping and perceived control were linked to higher life satisfaction (Livneh et al., 2004), and friendships buffered the effects of impairment on well-being (Silverman et al., 2017). Participation in cultural, volunteer, and productive roles was consistently tied to better mental health, social support, and QoL (Kim et al., 2018; Fekete et al., 2019; Riley Jr. et al., 2007).

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

Physical health and functional limitations also shaped QoL outcomes. Higher impairment severity was associated with poorer QoL (da Silva et al., 2015; Martz et al., 2005; Öztürk et al., 2022), whereas interventions improving physical independence or management of complications enhanced QoL (Shepherd et al., 2007; Prince et al., 1995; Lai et al., 2016). Some conditions (e.g., intracranial pressure, Marszałek et al., 2020) or comorbidities (Nicassio et al., 2011) directly reduced QoL.

Social and environmental contexts exerted a major influence. Supportive family and community environments correlated with higher subjective QoL (Levasseur et al., 2004; Kingsnorth et al., 2015), while environmental barriers or insufficient civil infrastructure constrained participation and life satisfaction (Pouresmaeil et al., 2024; Öztürk et al., 2022). Remaining at home improved well-being compared with institutionalization (Iezzoni, 2022). **Participation and activity engagement** repeatedly correlated with enhanced outcomes. Sports participation and active lifestyles improved QoL, self-perception, and social relationships (te Velde et al., 2018; Niedbalski, 2018; Biagini et al., 2022). Youth programs and camps fostered skill acquisition and psychosocial benefits, though positive effects sometimes failed to generalize beyond structured settings (Knapp et al., 2015).

Programmatic and technological supports showed tangible benefits. Environmental assistive technology (Rigby et al., 2011) and service-dog placements (Shoesmith et al., 2024) enhanced independence and life satisfaction, while autonomous vehicles may improve mobility for non-drivers with disabilities (Petrović et al., 2022). Tele exercise programs achieved full adherence and improved QoL (Lai et al., 2016), whereas nurses' attitudes and experiences influenced perceived care quality (Desroches et al., 2019; Sapp et al., 2025).

Quantitative trends demonstrated that resilience and acceptance explained more variance in QoL than pain intensity alone (Kratz et al., 2013), productive roles predicted mental health and QoL (Fekete et al., 2019), and self-esteem, age, and benefit perception accounted for over half the variance in QoL in some samples (Nanthamongkolchai et al., 2022).

In sum, QoL outcomes are best understood as interplay of personal adaptation, physical condition, social participation, and environmental support, rather than a function of impairment alone.

Methodologies

The reviewed studies used a diverse mix of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches, reflecting both the complexity of disability-related quality-of-life (QoL) research and the need to triangulate subjective and objective perspectives.

Quantitative and cross-sectional designs dominated, providing statistical associations between psychosocial, physical, and environmental factors and QoL (Elfström et al., 2005; Livneh et al., 2004; Nicassio et al., 2011; Ciampolini et al., 2018). Many applied correlation, regression, or structural equation modeling to examine predictors or mediators of adaptation and well-being (Kratz et al., 2013; Martz et al., 2005; Palad et al., 2021). Large-scale surveys (e.g., Nanthamongkolchai et al., 2022; Sapp et al., 2025) allowed for population-level insights but were limited by reliance on self-report and cross-sectional snapshots.

Qualitative methodologies enriched this picture by capturing lived experience, nuanced barriers, and contextual meaning (Kleban & Kaye, 2015; Niedbalski, 2018; Pouresmaeil et

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

sociocultural contexts, physical accessibility, assistive technology, transportation options, peer/family support, community inclusion, and prevailing social attitudes, either enable or constrain participation and self-determination. Together, these antecedents illustrate that QoL is not a linear function of impairment but the product of interaction between the individual and their environment.

Decisions. Rather than discrete one-off choices, decisions in this corpus appear as ongoing adaptive behaviors: engaging in sports/leisure and life-skills programs, adopting assistive/tele-health technologies, pursuing education or employment, building peer networks, and asserting autonomy in living arrangements (including the “dignity of risk”). Systems-level decisions (service models, clinical training practices, program designs) also contour individual agency by expanding or narrowing the set of viable options. These decisions function as mechanisms translating antecedents into outcomes: for example, resilience may increase the likelihood of participation, while accessible environments lower the effort cost of engaging.

Outcomes. Across studies, participation (in work, sport, leisure, education) and supportive social ties align with higher QoL, while pain, fatigue, depression/anxiety, and environmental barriers predict poorer QoL. Psychosocial constructs such as acceptance and resilience often mediate or moderate symptom impacts, underscoring that attitude/perception is a lever rather than a passive correlate. Interventions and supports, assistive technologies, service dogs, tele-exercise, targeted education, tend to improve independence, role satisfaction, and life satisfaction, although durability beyond program periods is variably reported.

Methodological landscape and gaps. The field is dominated by cross-sectional surveys, with fewer mixed-methods, longitudinal, or experimental studies, which limits causal inference about how changes in attitudes/perceptions drive QoL over time. Measures of QoL and attitudes vary widely, complicating synthesis. Most included work centers on physical/mobility disabilities, especially spinal cord injury and multiple sclerosis, with fewer studies on sensory, cognitive, psychiatric, or rare conditions; this skews generalizability. Additionally, the review’s English-language, single-database scope and absence of a formal risk-of-bias appraisal temper conclusions. Future research would benefit from (a) standardized, theory-aligned measures of QoL and attitudes; (b) longitudinal and interventional designs that model mediation/moderation within ADO; (c) mixed-methods work to capture lived experience and mechanism; and (d) broader disability representation and settings.

Practice and policy implications. An ADO-informed view suggests that best outcomes arise when health and social systems pair psychosocial strengthening (e.g., resilience/acceptance-oriented approaches, peer mentorship) with environmental enablement (accessibility, assistive tech, transportation, inclusive programs). Training for professionals should address attitudes and expectations that can either empower or inadvertently constrain autonomy. Designing services that honor self-determination, including the dignity of risk, is both ethically sound and QoL-enhancing.

CONCLUSION

This review shows that the QoL of persons with physical disabilities is co-produced by personal adaptation (resilience, acceptance, perceived control) and enabling environments (access, supports, technology, inclusive opportunities). Within the ADO framework,

Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities

antecedents shape the context, adaptive decisions convert capacity into participation, and outcomes reflect the success of that translation. To advance the field, research must move beyond cross-sectional association to longitudinal, causal, and mixed-methods designs using standardized measures and more inclusive disability representation. For practice and policy, interventions that strengthen psychosocial resources while removing environmental barriers are most likely to deliver sustained improvements in QoL. This review's main strength is its application of the ADO framework, which allowed for a structured synthesis of diverse evidence on QoL and perceptions among persons with physical disabilities. The inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative studies across different contexts further strengthens its integrative perspective.

Limitations include the restriction to Scopus and English-language articles, the absence of formal quality appraisal, and the dominance of cross-sectional studies focusing mainly on a few disability groups (e.g., SCI, MS). These factors may limit generalizability and the strength of causal claims.

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Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Akbar, S., Jain, N., Shah, S.A. & Rizvi, T. (2025). Quality of Life and Disability Perceptions: An ADO-Based Synthesis of Research on Persons with Physical Disabilities. *International Journal of Indian Psychology, 13(3)*, 2492-2513. DIP:18.01.229.20251303, DOI:10.25215/1303.229