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Work Participation of Adults with ASD from the Self-Determination Theory Perspective: A Survey Study Proposal in Taiwan

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Abstract: Motivation is a crucial factor in successful work participation. Few studies explicitly adopt a specific theory to examine the motivational state of work participation in people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Taiwan. The self-determination theory (SDT) stresses that external supports may facilitate the motivation stage shifting that leads to long-term behaviors changing. Understanding the current status of motivation and family support in the ASD population would reveal unfulfilled areas for intervention. We proposed a study designed around the SDT to examine the motivation stage, perceived family support, and effort of work participation in cognitively adults with ASD.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder; Self-Determination Theory; Taiwan

Knowledge Focus: Research/Theory Focus

Topic: Postsecondary Education & Employment

Background

Cognitively-able adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often experience challenges such as low employment rate. Studies recognize that lack of motivation in job seeking or maintaining at work are important issues that need attention. In order to systematically explore these issues and transit the findings to practice, we intend to adopt the self-determination theory (SDT) as our theoretical framework to design a study. According to the SDT, the lack of work participation might be an indication of being in a passive-motivation stage. The SDT stresses that providing specific social context that fulfills the three basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) would propel an inner-motivation shift from a passive to an active stage, and leads to sustainable work participation. Unfortunately, after a literature review, we recognize that information regarding the motivation stage and perceived family support for work participation in cognitively able adults with ASD in Taiwan is almost non-existent.

To fulfill this literature and practice gap, this proposal adopted the SDT as the theoretical framework, targeting cognitively-able adults with ASD in Taiwan to: 1) investigate their current state of motivation stage and perceived family support (according to the three basic needs) regarding work participation; 2) investigate self-perceived effort and actual behavioral attempts

related to work participation in the past 6 months; 3) examine the associations between motivation stage, perceived family support, self-perceived effort, and actual behavioral attempts.

Method

We hypothesized that the motivation-stage would moderately correlate with perceived support and individual's effort. A power analysis suggests that a sample size of 68 would be required. Convenient and snowball samplings will be carried out based on the contact lists of social services agencies and autism associations in Taiwan. Our inclusion criteria will be: adults, between 20 to 50 years old, with ASD diagnosed by a registered psychiatrist-based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR) criteria. Individuals with intellectual disability will be excluded. Participants will finish a self-reported questionnaire using a Likert scale rating system.

The sessions included: motivation stage, perceived family support, and effort (i.e., self-perceived job search effort and numbers of different actual attempts) regarding work participation. Descriptive statistics was used to examine the current state of motivation stage, family support, and effort (self-perceived and actual actions). Pearson correlation coefficients were used to study the associations between variables. The findings will reveal the current state of work participation in ASD in Taiwan and identify areas to be improved. The insight would inform the development of support strategy for work participation in cognitively able adults with ASD.

Authors



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