A Survey of Autistic Employees' Preferences for Workplace Accommodations in Poland

Summarized by Audrey Homan | Spring 2023

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Abstract

Background and Aims: This study aimed to learn about what autistic employees in Poland prefer for workplace accommodations. The accommodations that autistics were asked to review helped with four areas: 1) communicating effectively, 2) effective time management, 3) stress management and emotion control, and 4) sensory overload. Most of the accommodations were technology tools.

Conclusions: Autistic employees preferred accommodations that limited overstimulation most of all. They also preferred accommodations that provided a flexible work schedule, gave them access to a job coach, and made it possible to talk with non-autistic coworkers electronically (rather than face-to-face).

Summary

Researchers in Poland read other research studies and decided to survey autistics to get their opinions on how, in the workplace, technology can help with communicating effectively, time management, stress management and emotional control, and sensory overload. The researchers advertised on autism-focused websites and discussion forums for autistics to

participate in their study. The autistics who responded then took a survey that asked them to rate accommodations that made it easier for them to do their jobs.

The survey asked autistics to rate specific types of accommodations on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was very bad, and 5 was very good. Most of the accommodations they rated were provided by technology.

113 women and 27 men took the survey. All of them were autistic adults. 85% of them were employed when they took the survey. 65% of them had some college education, and most of them had been working more than five years.

Findings

Here are the accommodations that received the highest ratings in the survey:

WORKPLACE CHALLENGE	HIGHEST-RATED ACCOMMODATIONS
Effective Communication	Email, chat software, online communications
Time Management	Flexible schedules, remote work, task management tools, access to a job coach
Stress Management	Stress-level measurement, customized office environment based on individual preference
Sensory Overload	Customizing office space based on individual preference

- The survey also found that autistics who were in their first five years of work preferred task management apps more than autistics who had been at work longer.
- Autistic employees with less education preferred task management apps more than autistics with more education.
- Overall, autistic employees gave the highest scores to accommodations that help limit sensory overload.

Limitations

- The study only took place in one country: Poland.
- Autistics chose to participate in the study after seeing it advertised online; this means the sample wasn't random.
- Many more women than men or non-binary autistics took part in this study. This means that the study wasn't balanced in terms of gender.

- Offering technology solutions for accommodations can bring with it the danger of "techno-stress".
- Research that shows a group of autistics prefer one kind of thing over another cannot be applied to every autistic.

Real-World Implications

This research study indicates that autistic employees prefer a number of workplace accommodations, many of which are technology tools. These findings could help convince employers all over to offer workplace accommodations to autistic employees. If employers need ideas on what accommodations to offer, this data shows some popular accommodations.

But regardless of what this study found out about autistic employees as a group, this data can never replace the value of asking individual autistics about their own preferences for workplace accommodations.

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