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## **An Autistic Perspective on Workplace Disclosure and Accommodation**

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## **An Autistic Perspective on Workplace Disclosure and Accommodation**

### **Une perspective autiste sur la divulgation de la condition et les accommodements en milieux de travail**

**Eric Samtleben**

#### **Abstract**

The negative stereotypes associated with autism have created many barriers to employment. As a result, the autistic population has some of the lowest workforce participation rates among all types of disability; with about only one-quarter of the working age population actively participating. These low unemployment rates persist despite many autistic people expressing the desire to work and being more than capable to do so. Among successfully employed autistic people, disclosure and effective accommodations appear to be key factors for the maintenance of long-term employment. Thus, the present study aimed to provide a qualitative exploration of autistic perspectives on how managers/organizations can encourage disclosure and accommodation requests. In addition, this project sought to explore how managers and/or organizations can best support their autistic employees following an accommodation request. Results from the thematic analysis revealed four primary themes (i.e., authentic culture of caring and inclusivity; strengths approach; individualization and collaboration; and clear and consistent structure/communication) stratified by two categories (i.e., encouraging disclosure and accommodation requests; and supporting autistic employees). The results from this study provide managers/organizations with a practical framework for encouraging disclosure and informing the accommodation process.

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## Resumé

Les stéréotypes négatifs associés à l'autisme ont créé de nombreuses barrières à l'emploi. En conséquence, la population autiste a l'un des taux de participation les plus faibles sur le marché du travail parmi tous les types de handicaps avec seulement un quart de la population qui est en âge de travailler qui participe activement. Ces faibles taux de chômage persistent, bien que plusieurs personnes autistes expriment le désir de travailler et qu'ils soient plus que capable de le faire. Parmi les personnes autistes qui ont du succès dans leur emploi, la divulgation de leur condition et des accommodements efficaces semblent être des facteurs clés pour le maintien d'un emploi à long terme. Ainsi, la présente étude visait à fournir une exploration qualitative des perspectives autistes sur la façon dont les directeurs d'entreprise/les organisations peuvent encourager la divulgation de la condition et les demandes d'accommodements. De plus, ce projet cherchait à explorer comment les directeurs d'entreprise et/ou les organisations pouvaient mieux supporter leurs employés autistes après une demande d'accommodement. Les résultats de l'analyse thématique ont révélé quatre thèmes principaux (c'est-à-dire, une culture authentique du bien-être et de l'inclusivité; une approche basée sur les forces; l'individualisation et la collaboration; et une structure et une communication claires et cohérentes) stratifiés en deux catégories (c'est-à-dire, encourager la divulgation de la condition et des demandes d'accommodements; et supporter les employés autistes). Les résultats de cette étude fournissent aux directeurs d'entreprise/aux organisations un cadre pratique pour encourager la divulgation de la condition, ainsi pour informer sur le processus d'accommodement.

## Keywords

*Autism, ADHD, accommodation, disclosure, employment*

## Mots-clés

*Autisme, TDAH, accommodement, divulgation de la condition, emploi*

## An Autistic Perspective on Workplace Disclosure and Accommodation

### Introduction

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a collection of neurodevelopmental disorders that can range from severe to mild and are commonly characterized by social deficits in establishing/maintaining relationships and verbal/nonverbal communication, as well as by repetitive restrictive patterns of behaviour, interests, or activities (Attwood, 2006). Currently, the autistic population is growing with an estimated 1/88 to 1/66 children meeting the criteria for ASD (Johnson & Joshi, 2016; Parr & Hunter, 2014). Within this growing community, unemployment is a pressing issue as estimates indicate the current unemployment rate among autistic adults ranges from 50% to 80% with an estimated >500 thousand autistic youth entering the workforce in the next 5 years (Government of Canada, 2018; Khalifa et al., 2020; Zwickey et al., 2017).

Current workforce participation rates among the autistic are notoriously low ranging from 22% to 34% among ASD adults compared to 54% among adults with other disabilities (e.g., visual impairments, hearing impairments, learning disabilities, chronic pain, mental and psychological deficits) and 80% to 83% among adults with no disabilities (Cope & Remington, 2020; Khalifa et al., 2020; Statistics Canada, 2017). One could easily assume this is indicative of a lack of capability. However, this appears to not be the case as the majority of autistic adults have average to above-average intelligence and can often possess strengths in one of many areas (e.g., memory, visuospatial awareness, reading, drawing, computation; Bury et al., 2020; Mottron et al., 2006; Scott et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2018). Alternatively, a lack of motivation and/or desire

to work but are unable to find and/or maintain employment (Cope & Remington, 2020). When autistic individuals do manage to find employment, they often work below their qualifications and struggle to maintain this employment long-term as many work environments are not suited to support the unique challenges associated with autism (Harvery et al., 2021; Scott et al., 2019). Collectively, the above research highlights the need to better support employment among autistic adults.

Past research examining successful employment among autistic adults has demonstrated that those who disclose their diagnosis are three times more likely to get hired (Lindsay et al., 2021), and those who received workplace accommodations focused on utilizing personal strengths and interests, identifying person-job fit, and providing long term support demonstrated an 89% job retention rate after one year (Keel et al., 1997). However, the effectiveness of workplace accommodations can be negated from the perspective of the autistic employee when managers and co-workers lack the necessary confidence and ASD awareness to implement accommodations properly (Lindsay et al., 2021; Romualdez et al., 2021b). Despite the potential benefits of disclosure and workplace support for the successful employment of adult autistics disclosure rates can vary from 25% to 69% with an average of 52%. Among those who disclose, accommodation request rates range from 50% to 85% (Romualdez et al., 2021b). Commonly reported barriers to disclosure and accommodation requests within the workplace include fear of discrimination, fear of bullying, fear of repercussions, lack of perceived organizational support, and the mentality that disclosure is not beneficial (Thompson-Hodgetts et al., 2021; Romualdez et al., 2021b). Further complicating the issue of successfully accommodating ASD employees is the nature of the disability itself as it exists on a spectrum meaning there are great variations in its presentation and therefore in the necessary accommodations (Vogelely et al., 2013).

In light of this research, the present paper aims to examine autistic perspectives on how managers/organizations can encourage disclosure and accommodation requests. In addition, this project sought to explore how managers and/or organizations can best support their autistic employees following an accommodation request. Results, from this study, can help organizations and managers better understand and integrate autistic employees into the workplace by providing a practical framework for encouraging disclosure and informing the accommodation process.

## Methods

### Procedure and Ethics

The sample consisted of 6 participants all diagnosed or self-identified as ASD and/or ADHD; also included, was the author himself who has a diagnosis of ASD+ADHD for a total of 7 participants (N = 7). 7 participants were deemed sufficient for the qualitative study as this is the commonly recommended sample size for qualitative research (Howitt, 2010). The author was included as he met all the inclusion criteria (i.e., low support needs, sustained employment for greater than 3 years, and diagnosed or self-identified ASD and/or ADHD). Furthermore, steadily employed low support need autistic adults are a relatively niche population which can be difficult to access. Regarding possible bias, his inclusion would not have biased the data and resulting analysis anymore than if he would not have participated as the data was collected independently and all participants had the same level of knowledge regarding the study objectives. Thus, given his wealth of work experience across multiple fields his exclusion would risk missing valuable insights (Wong et al., 2018). Both ASD and/or ADHD participants were included in the present study because insights from the ASD population may benefit those with ADHD and vice versa due to the high degree of overlap between the two conditions (Antshel & Russo, 2019; Craig et al., 2015; May et al., 2018). All procedures and materials used in the present study were approved by

Trent University's Research Ethics Board.

Recruitment was done via routine social interactions such as text messages and workplace socialization. Those who expressed interest in sharing their perspective had any questions answered and were sent an email containing a link to a Qualtrics questionnaire. After providing consent participants were redirected to five study items assessing age, work history, and workplace disclosure and accommodations. Example items include: *'In your past/current experiences what reasonable accommodations could your employer have provided to improve your overall experience?'* and *'In your past/current experiences what reasonable actions could your employer take to make you feel comfortable disclosing your autism?'*

### Data Analysis

Participants' text responses were transcribed into an excel sheet for thematic analysis. After a familiarization period, the author assigned initial codes to each participant's transcript (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013). From the coded data an initial set of 7 themes were identified. After reviewing these themes for overlap a final set of 4 themes was developed. Each theme was then defined in terms of the general actions managers can take and/or changes they can make to encourage disclosure and better support their autistic employees.

### Results

Participant	Age	Years of Work Experience	Occupational History
1	44	20	IT/Web developer
2	31	14	Salesperson; sales manager; wedding photographer; warehouse manager
3	30	14	Salesperson; warehouse worker
4	30	14	Psychotherapist; unspecified
5	27	5	University student services; research assistant; teaching assistant
6	45	22	Behaviour services
7	28	12	Coaching; landscaping; recycling person; salesperson; tutor; teaching assistant

Note. *This table contains participants' age, work experience in years, and occupational history.*

The average age of the sample was 33.57 years ranging from 27 to 45 with 14.42 average years of work experience ranging from 5 to 22. Participants held a wide range of jobs over their working lives including positions in technology, sales, labour, health services, and teaching/higher education (see Table 1). Overall, these demographics indicate that the perspectives included were from individuals who have ample experience in the workforce and a diverse background of employment history; meaning they are likely to have valuable insight into the successful employment of autistic individuals. The results of the thematic analysis are presented in detail below and summarized in Table 2.

## Encouraging Disclosure and Accommodation Requests

### ***Theme 1: Authentic Culture of Inclusivity and Caring***

For autistic workers to be properly supported they first must disclose their diagnosis and feel comfortable enough to request accommodations. To encourage these behaviours participants' indicated that an *authentic culture of inclusivity and caring* within the organization would be effective. The desire for authenticity is not surprising given that autistic individuals tend to be very loyal and care deeply about those they are involved with (Russell et al., 2019; Scott et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2018 ). Furthermore, they expect these qualities in return meaning the autistic employee will feel less comfortable disclosing their diagnosis and requesting accommodations if the organization is perceived as having a faux culture of inclusivity and caring (Parr & Hunter, 2014; Romualdez et al., 2021a). The desire for authenticity was best reflected in a quote from Participant 1 who stated:

*Personally, I'm always pretty open about things I go through, but it feels like people don't really care. It would be nice if you felt like an employer actually cared about you, rather than treated you like a cog in a big machine.*

When assessing the authenticity of an organization's approach to neurodiversity three main characteristics emerged from the participants' responses. Participants expressed a desire to see organizational efforts aimed at increasing awareness of general mental health and ASD (e.g., workshops, and wellness policies) to foster an open environment where these subjects are not viewed as taboo. This was best reflected in responses from Participant 4 who stated that *“In my experience a lack of understanding often leads to fear of disclosure”* and further recommended that organizations adopt, *“An inclusivity acknowledgment and commitment to continued education in the workplace. In my experience education leads to understanding, which leads to acceptance”*.

Furthermore, participants expressed a desire to see organizations adopting a person-environment fit for all employees. A person-environment fit approach is when organizations identify employees' strengths and match them to a work role/environment to which they are best suited (Van Vianen, 2018). This desire was best reflected in a quote from Participant 2 who indicated *“I feel that if an employer strived to provide an environment where all employees were able to work to their fullest potential it would make me feel more comfortable disclosing my autism”*.

Lastly, participants indicated a desire to see neurodivergent employees in senior positions as this sends a message that neurodivergence is valued. This can be infrequent though as senior management positions tend to be held by older individuals who if neurodivergent are more likely to have gone undiagnosed due to historical trends in autism diagnostic procedures (Lewis 2018; Pellicano et al., 2022). However, when these role models are present and open about their



experiences it helps individuals feel more comfortable discussing their own experiences as a neurodivergent or with mental health in general. This desire was best reflected in a quote from Participant 5 who stated:

*In terms of comfort disclosing my diagnosis, I think the open culture of my current workspace has made me feel comfortable to disclose my diagnosis and to talk about my experiences with it. Part of that probably comes from my supervisor and other senior colleagues modeling this behaviour by being comfortable sharing their own neurodivergent experiences or struggles with learning disabilities.*

In summary, to encourage disclosure and accommodation requests from autistic employees' organizations and managers should strive to create a genuine culture of caring and inclusivity. They can achieve this through the primary strategies: First, by implementing wellness policies that consider the needs of all their employees. Second, the use of a person-environment fit strategy when assigning work roles. Lastly, ensuring there are autistic or neurodivergent role models in senior positions.

## Supporting Autistic Employees'

### **Theme 2: Strengths Approach**

To effectively support autistic employees, participants stressed employers needed to adopt a strengths-based over a deficits-based approach to supporting autistic workers. This is not surprising given that in recent times the neurodivergent community and its advocates have been calling for an approach to workplace support that recognizes and attempts to maximize the potential of neurodivergent workers while minimizing their deficits (Waisman-Nitzan et al., 2021). Within the workplace autistic employees commonly display various strengths including enhanced focus and perception, superior attention to detail, and strong logical thinking that result in average to above-average performance ratings from their employers (Cope & Remington, 2022; Khalifa et al., 2020). Thus, autistic employees do possess strengths employers can focus on and the desire for employers to do this was best reflected in a quote from Participant 6:

*The biggest part is employers understanding the value that neurodiversity brings to a workplace. Much like adding racial and/or gender diversity to a team adding diverse abilities and neurotypes strengthens a team.*

*To achieve a strength-based approach participants' responses were reflective of two defining characteristics. First, participants expressed the desire for employers to identify their unique strengths through open and honest communication which is not surprising given that autistic individuals have an affinity for honesty and a preference for direct/open communication (Parr & Hunter, 2014; Russell et al., 2019). Furthermore, participants desired for their strengths to be matched with their work role, although no specific strategies were recommended on how this could be achieved. Previous research has highlighted 'try it out' roles as promising; these roles involve a trial experience in a specific position to determine its suitability to an employee's strengths and are effective for finding the ideal person-environment fit (Hagner & Cooney, 2005).*

Second, participants felt that to help create a better person-environment fit employers should aim to create teams that integrate neurodivergent individuals with neurotypicals in a complementary fashion meaning each individual's strengths should complement the other's weaknesses. This is best reflected in a quote from Participant 6 who stated "a disorganized ASD/

*ADHD employee that understands their co-worker can help them to organize a project and allow the ASD/ADHD employee to explore many perspectives to avoid challenges and pitfalls*". Lastly, participants felt that adopting a complimentary team-building approach would feedback into open and honest communication at the employer-to-employee and employee-to-employee levels.

In sum, organizations and managers can best support their autistic employees by adopting a strength-based over deficit-based approach. A strengths-based approach tends to focus on maximizing the individual's strengths and exploring their interests; while a deficits-based approach tends to solely focus on minimizing dysfunctional or unwanted behaviours (Urbanowicz et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2022). A deficits-based approach can be detrimental to the autistic employees as it can leave their potential unrecognized and contribute to a negative self-image (Wong et al., 2022). Concerning autistic employees, managers can achieve a strengths-based approach through a collaborative process characterized by open and honest communication and 'try it out' roles. Additionally, creating integrated teams where neurodivergent strengths/weaknesses complement neurotypical strengths/weaknesses can be an effective strategy.

### **Theme 3: Individualization and Collaboration**

Building off the strengths-based approach, participants also stressed the need for individualization of their accommodations and collaboration with managers when determining their nature. There is little wonder why this theme emerged when we consider the great variety in how autism can present itself (Attwood, 2006). Common examples of individual differences include social impairments (e.g., interpreting verbal/non-verbal communication), and behavioural impairments (e.g., emotional meltdowns/shutdowns, partial or full Tourette's, selective mutism) ranging from severe to mild; there are large variations in hypo/hyper sensory reactivity; and some show special isolated skills in areas such as memory, reading, visuospatial awareness/intelligence, music, art, and mathematics/computation (Attwood, 2006; Bury et al., 2020; Russel et al., 2019; Scott et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2018). Based on the great variation in strengths and deficits it follows that autistic employees may require a variety of accommodations and be best suited to differing roles. Accordingly, it would benefit managers to work with their autistic employees at the one-on-one level to successfully integrate them.

Participants' responses revealed three key characteristics that can help guide managers in collaborating with their autistic employees to develop personalized accommodations. The first was to ensure the appropriate structure of the work environment which included adjusting elements such as lighting, introducing personalized organization systems, providing control of background stimuli (e.g., listening to one's music, noise-canceling headphones), and adjusting environmental rewards (e.g., social praise, fidget toys). The desire for the individualized structure was best exemplified by the following two quotes: Participant 7 stated "*When working, I need absolute silence to focus or I become easily distracted*". In contrast, participant 3 stated:

*Being able to listen to my own music. I have a hard time focusing on the task at hand with music I don't like playing in the background. I find being able to sing/listen along with the music while I'm working will keep me on track because I am less likely to be distracted if I'm concentrating on something not important in the back of my mind.*

Second, participants expressed a desire for the ability to self-manage their workflow in a manner that as one participant put it "*was focused on task completion, not hours put in*" as they often expressed maintaining a rigid 9 to 5 schedule frequently contributed to greater autistic burnout which occurs when the individual's self-regulatory resources are depleted resulting in the exacerbation of any ASD impairments (e.g., increased frequency of emotional meltdowns,



increased self-harm or suicidal ideation; Raymaker et al., 2020). This effect was best demonstrated by the following quote from participant 1:

*At work, we're generally forced to put in hours, regardless of how we're feeling. On a good day, I can cope with being at work, and I might even find that things aren't moving fast enough for me. But then I'll inevitably need to crash a bit, and be a little less productive. It's on those days when it's so hard to be at work just putting in my time.*

The logic behind the need for atypical flexibility is not to avoid work but rather to take a different route to completion and was best reflected in a quote from Participant 1:

*Also, I think having more flexibility around hours is a big thing, but not in the way people think. I've always felt pretty comfortable in post-secondary education because I know what I have to get done and can pace myself accordingly. So, on bad days, I might not do anything. Then on a good day, I might get LOTS of work done. It always evens out and I get my work done.*

Finally, participants desired the option to adjust their level and type of social interactions as necessary. This is because for the majority of autistic individuals keeping up appearances for the sake of neurotypicals - also known as masking - is extremely exhausting to engage in regularly and contributes to further autistic burnout (Miller et al., 2021; Raymaker et al., 2020). The benefits of the option to remote work on challenging days are best illustrated by Participant 2 who stated:

*Working from home also allowed me to forgo the preparation and energy required to work in a regular office environment, such as appearing and dressing professionally, preparing lunches, and social exchanges. I also had a lot of control over the mediums in which I interacted with people, for example suggesting phone calls over video calls or in-person meetings.*

Taken together, the results presented above indicate that managers and organizations must be willing to engage in a collaborative process to individualize their autistic employees' accommodations. This process was characterized by three features: individualization regarding the structure of the work environment, self-management of workflow, and the level of social interaction.

#### **Theme 4: Clear and Consistent Structure/Communication**

It is no secret that autistic individuals communicate and perceive the world differently from neurotypicals as autistics tend to process information locally (i.e., details) vs globally (i.e., big picture or gestalts) and are more aware of lower level or automatic cognitive processes (Mottron et al., 2006). What this means is that autistic individuals tend to process information in 'bits' while neurotypicals tend to process information as a whole. Furthermore, autistics' increased awareness of automatic cognitive processes (e.g., sight, hearing) allows them to discern more detail but also increases their sensitivity to stimuli impairing their focus (Mottron et al., 2006). The atypical processing observed in autistics results in deficits in communication characterized by an inability to adapt and respond to unfamiliar or unstructured social stimuli (Johnson & Joshi et al., 2014; Mottron et al., 2006; O'Connor, 2012). Thus, it is not surprising the final theme that emerged was *clear and consistent structure/communication* which participants stressed as vital to workplace success.

To achieve this, two defining characteristics were identified from the participants' responses. The first was to provide consistent delivery of job tasks prioritized in order of importance with clear deadlines to meet so they were able to "*pace themselves appropriately*" as Participant 1 stated.

The need for a job structure such as this was best exemplified by Participant 3 who indicated:

*Having a specific to-do list geared towards my tasks that need to be done for the day. I*

*will often start something, forget about it and start something else and come back to the first task wishing I had done it earlier because it might be time-sensitive or something.*

Second, participants reported a desire to have the big picture communicated to them so they can better understand how their role fits into it because as Participant 7 indicated, “If I don’t know why I am doing it I probably won’t do it”. This is not surprising given the atypical processing of autistic individuals as they often need to understand how the pieces fit together to understand the function of their role which helps create motivation (Motttron et al., 2006; Stewart, 1996). Thus, managers must provide clear consistent communication to their autistic employees or they risk them becoming unmotivated.

In sum, it appears managers should be cognisant of their communication style when interacting with their autistic employees due to differences in information processing. Specifically, managers should aim to be consistent in how they deliver job tasks or expect tasks to be completed. They should be sure to emphasize which tasks are time sensitive and should be completed first. Lastly, managers should be sure to communicate the ‘big picture’ to their autistic employees to help them understand the importance of their role.

**Table 2. ASD Disclosure and Support Framework**

Encouraging Disclosure and Accommodation Requests	Supporting Autistic Employees		
	Authentic Culture of Inclusivity and Caring	Strengths Approach	Individualization and Collaboration
Provide psychoeducation to increase and encourage ASD awareness as well as open discussion of mental health	Identify the employees strengths and roles to match these strengths through open, honest communication	Appropriate structure of the work environment (e.g., lighting, personalized organization, background stimuli - music/media, rewards)	Consistent delivery of job instructions/tasks/requirements prioritized in order of importance with clear deadlines
Person-environment fit approach toward all employees to maximize everyone’s strengths	Identify how ASD strengths can be complimented by neurotypical strengths for integration of their role into the big picture	Degree of autonomy to self-manage their work environment (e.g., location, stimuli) plus work rate and schedule/ hours	Communication of the big picture and how the pieces fit into it, in other words why are they performing their role?
When possible have neurodivergent role models in senior positions		Adjusting the level of/type of/medium of social interactions as necessary	

*Note. This table contains four primary themes stratified into 2 main categories encouraging disclosure and accommodation requests and supporting autistic employees. The four primary themes include Authentic Culture of Inclusivity and Caring, Strengths Approach, Individualization and Collaboration, and Clear and Consistent Structure/Communication. Finally, it contains the defining characteristics that correspond to each primary theme.*

## Discussion

According to the framework presented in Table 2, the first step to supporting autistic employees is to encourage disclosure and accommodation requests. To do this, autistic employees wish to see an authentic culture of inclusivity and caring defined by ASD/mental health awareness, a person-environment fit approach, and neurodivergent role models. To create a genuinely authentic culture it is recommended that managers aim to be authentic in their actions meaning that they consider all perspectives, adhere to high moral standards, create relational transparency (i.e., open display of thoughts/feelings to share true self), and demonstrate knowledge of their own as well as their employees' strengths/weaknesses (Parr & Hunter, 2014).

The next step is for employers to adopt a strengths-based approach defined by implementing a person-environment fit strategy when assigning work roles and team members (Van Vianen, 2018). This approach to management has been shown to increase job productivity and satisfaction across several contexts and populations (Andela & van der Doef, 2019; Khalifa et al., 2020; Lai et al., 2020; Peng & Mao, 2015). However, employers need to adopt this approach with their autistic employees; as a deficit-based approach may leave their unique strengths unrecognized and actively suppress them to the point of extinction (Russel et al., 2019; Schall, 2010; Wong et al., 2018).

Individualization and collaboration throughout the accommodation process will help employers to adopt a strength-based approach as it will allow employers to co-learn and bond with their autistic employee(s) as they work together to determine the ideal role and supports (Bowman et al., 2020; Hagner & Cooney, 2005; Nicholas et al., 2018). The need for individualization has been emphasized in previous research demonstrating that a blanket approach to accommodation reduces the efficacy of these efforts (Lindsay et al., 2021; Romualdez et al., 2021b). In comparison, research on individualized/collaborative accommodations has demonstrated they produce more positive employment outcomes such as job satisfaction, engagement, organizational commitment, and well-being (Johnson & Joshi, 2016; Khalifa et al., 2020; Nicholas et al., 2018, 2019).

Lastly, due to perceptual differences, employers must be clear when communicating with their autistic employees (e.g., direct/open, how they fit into big-picture goals; Mottron et al., 2006). In addition, they must be consistent in how they structure their work roles (e.g., routine procedures, or schedule; Nicholas et al., 2018, 2019). Research on communication with autistic employees has demonstrated that when managers adjust their communication style to better suit them, autistic employees' job performance increases, and there is less friction within the relationship (Bowman et al., 2020; Parr & Hunter 2014; Russel et al., 2019). While the present results are promising several limitations must be noted and will be discussed

## Limitations

The framework proposed in the present study suffers from generalizability issues as the relatively mild nature of the participants' autism and/or ADHD may limit the application of the results to this specific subpopulation. This is because it is often recommended that in instances of more severe ASD and/or ADHD more support will be required (Antshel & Russo, 2019; Attwood,

2006; Taurines et al., 2012). Further limiting the generalizability is the qualitative nature of the data and the small sample size. However, smaller sample sizes are recommended for qualitative studies as the goal is to capture and explain individual experiences, not necessarily establish generalizability to a larger population (Howwit, 2010). Thus, the present study achieved its goal of exploring the experiences of successfully employed adult autistics with low support needs. Future research should seek to conduct a more in-depth examination of workplace accommodations among autistic adults using a larger number of perspectives that are more representative of the diversity among autistics to update this framework; this can be done via focus groups. Once refined, qualitative frameworks can be implemented to have their effectiveness measured quantitatively where results can be generalized to larger populations.

Finally, the interviewing was non-exhaustive and done via email, meaning there were a limited number of questions and no chance for a follow-up to ask for any clarification on participants' responses. To address this future research should compile a more exhaustive list of questions before conducting in-person semi-structured interviews or focus groups that will allow for a better exploration of this topic. Despite these limitations, the present framework is lent strength in that it was informed by an autistic perspective at the level of the researcher and participants and provides a practical framework.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the present paper provides a glimpse into the autistic perspective on how to improve employment outcomes among this population. The current framework can help employers to encourage disclosure and accommodation requests from autistic employees by providing a map to the cultivation of a culture of authentic inclusivity and caring. Furthermore, the present framework will help employers and organizations provide more effective support for autistic employees. It achieves this by providing a simple general framework managers can adopt and apply to individual cases. This is of great importance due to the high unemployment rates among the rapidly growing and competent autistic population.

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