Conceptualizing and Measuring Workplace Accommodations

State-of-the-Science Conference: Advancing Evidence-Based Practices and Policies to Close the Employment Gap
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Overview

• Introduction
• History of workplace accommodations
• What is an accommodation?
• Methodology
• Accommodations in the literature
• In depth interviews
• Conceptualizing accommodations
• Challenges in measuring accommodations
Workplace Accommodations

- Evidence based practice
- Cost effective
- Impact on labor force participation
- Unique to each individual and his/her job
- No consensus on what constitutes workplace accommodations
- Lack of national data on workplace accommodations

**Purpose:** To identify current conceptualizations of workplace accommodations and challenges in measuring workplace accommodations

**Long term goal:** Create and test a survey instrument to measure workplace accommodations
History of Workplace Accommodations

- 1950s and 60s: promoting employment for PWD
- Worker’s compensation Act
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Creation of the Job Accommodation Network (1984)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)
- Workforce Investment Act (1998)
- New Freedom Initiative/Executive Order (EO) 13217
- Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (2008)
- The role of EEOC
What is Workplace Accommodation?

- Oxford dictionary defines the word “accommodation” as “a convenient arrangement; a settlement or compromise” or “the process of adapting or adjusting to someone or something”.

- “Reasonable accommodation” means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms (UN Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities)
What is Workplace Accommodation?

• ADA qualifies *reasonable accommodations* as something that is necessary to perform (1) essential job functions (as opposed to marginal job functions) and that (2) provision of such accommodation should not cause “undue hardship” to the employer.

• But not all accommodations provided in the workplace are under the purview of the ADA (reasonable accommodations)
Methodology

• **Phase I**
  - Review of research literature between 1990-2013
    - “job accommodation”, “employment of the disabled”, “assistive technology”, “supported employment”, “architectural accessibility” and “legislation”
    - EBSCOhost, Medline, CINAHL, Google scholar

• **Phase II**
  - 38 In-depth interviews of employees with disabilities and/or family members
  - Semi-structured questionnaire
  - Qualitative analysis
Search Strategy

Accommodation as a central theme

N = 63

English language, US based

N = 569

2001-2013

N = 932

Job accommodation, employment of the disabled, assistive technology, supported employment, architectural accessibility & legislation

N = 1656

Research & review articles
Accommodations in the literature

Physical needs
- Architectural barriers
- Product or equipment
- Personal Assistant Services

Social & Behavioral needs
- Job coaches
- Extra training/supervision on the job
- Supports existing within job
- Signals & cues in the workplace

Cognitive needs
- Assistive technology
- Job restructuring

Sensory needs
- Reading Aids
- Restructuring the work environment
- Hearing devices & closed captioning

Accommodations & Supports
Phase II: In-Depth Interviews

- IRB approval
- Semi-structured interviews, 1-3 hours
- Conducted at home or in the workplace
- Participants
  - Employees with a disability
  - Proxy respondents
    - Family members
    - Job coach
### Participant Characteristics

<table>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<td>Cognitive</td>
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<td>Sensory</td>
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<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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<td>HS completed</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
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<td>Bachelors</td>
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<td>Masters or above</td>
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<td>Full time</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td><strong>Proxy Respondent</strong></td>
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Types of Accommodations

• In addition to reasonable accommodations, respondents used
  – Job coaches for hiring and placement
  – Creative strategies at work
  – Assistance from co-workers
  – Assistance from job coach
  – Existing features in the building/equipment
  – Personal assistive devices and
  – Swapped job tasks

• Employers and supervisors were generally supportive of their employee’s needs
  – Passive accommodations
Conceptualizing Workplace Accommodations and Supports

Supported employment/Customized employment & Natural Supports

Reasonable accommodation

Workplace policies
- Leave
- Restructuring the job
- Flex time

Social environment
- Quieter workspace
- Supervisory practices

Physical environment
- Assistive devices
- Modifications to built environment

Hiring
- Personal Assistive Devices or Strategies

Self-disclosure

Passive Accommodations

Non-disclosure

Universal Design Principles
Framework to Measure Accommodations

**Screening**
- Disability
- Current employment status
- Cognitive & communication difficulties

**Stemming pattern**
- Difficulties
- Job tasks

**Accommodation modules**
- Physical
- Cognitive
- Vision
- Hearing
- Social & Behavioral (?)
Challenges in Measuring Accommodations

• Accommodations are unique to each individual & their job

• Respondent’s awareness
  – Workplace policies
  – Social and behavioral accommodations

• Proxy respondents
  – Family members vs staff person
  – Reliability
  – Access to proxy respondents
Questions & Comments

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