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Accommodation Request Strategies among Employees with Disabilities: Impacts and Associated Factors

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the prevalence of different workplace accommodation request strategies, the effectiveness of different request approaches, and situational and individual factors associated with different request strategies for individuals with disabilities. Common action plans of accommodation requests may vary depending on decisions about mentioning the ADA (or not) and whether a formal (or informal) request is submitted, though past literature has focused primarily on formal accommodation requests made under the auspices of the ADA. Participants (n=408) were recruited from rehabilitation agencies and organizations serving people with disabilities in the United States. The results indicated that informal requests without mentioning the ADA were found most often, followed by formal requests while not mentioning the ADA, formal requests while mentioning the ADA, and informal requests while mentioning the ADA. The odds of acquiring the requested accommodation were significantly higher, relative to other strategies, for requests made informally without mentioning the ADA. A variety of individual attributes capable of discerning when participants chose one strategy over another were observed; these included self-efficacy and outcome expectancy, negative affect, and an array of situational and personal attributes. Implications for research and practice were discussed.

Keyword: accommodations request strategies, employees with disabilities

Accommodation Request Strategies among Employees with Disabilities:

Impacts and Associated Factors

As mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, employers must accommodate qualifying employees with disabilities (EWDs) by providing job-related adjustments that allow EWDs to enjoy equal employment opportunities (Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, 2000). The mandate sets forth the conditions under which employers may approve, negotiate or decline a request. Employers are not required to eliminate an essential function, lower a production standard, provide personal use items, or undergo undue hardship in order to accommodate an employee, nor are employers obligated to consider requests until informed of a disability and, more precisely, of one that causes workplace problems for the EWD. Also, employers are mandated to review requests regardless of how the request is made: both written and verbal requests.

Estimates of just how many EWDs do request accommodations range widely from 12% to 65% (Shur et al., 2014). Not surprisingly, much attention has been focused on the barriers to requesting accommodations. Seemingly, many EWDs fear that disclosing a disability will place them at risk of job loss or stigmatization. EWDs also must face the decision of mentioning the ADA or not doing so when requesting an accommodation, knowing all-too-well that mentioning the ADA may be viewed as a legal attempt to compel an employer to approve a request. The employee must also decide on the benefits and disadvantages of a formal request compared to an informal request. The complexity and fears associated with making these decisions may explain why many employees do not request accommodations.

Much of the extant theory and research on accommodation requesting behavior has been grounded on the desire to understand how to design strategies for motivating EWDs to request

accommodations (e.g., Baldrige & Veiga, 2001; 2006; Dong, Fabian, & Xu, 2016; Hutton, 2006). Research suggests that some EWDs are unwilling to submit requests when faced with highly formalized reporting requirements (Baldrige & Swift, 2011). The reasons for withholding requests might include: not wanting to disclose a disability, not realizing that they have the legal right to employer-provided accommodations, fearing employer resistance, or fear of being seen as weak or unqualified to perform their job (Baldrige & Swift, 2011).

In addition, the operational definition of request intentions and request withholding frequency in most of the previous studies has been guided by the assumption that respondents are responding in terms of requests submitted formally to the human resource department or at least have not allowed EWDs to distinguish between the strategies they are considering when reporting their request likelihood or request withholding frequency. Thus, EWDs' reports of request likelihood and request withholding frequency are confounded by the possible difference in the request strategies respondents have in mind when responding.

For those employees who have made the decision to request an accommodation, training guidebooks are available to help EWDs plan how to request an accommodation in a manner best suited to their individual situation and preferences. A noteworthy example is Roessler and Rumrill's (2014) brochure for employees with Multiple Sclerosis, *The Win-Win Approach to Reasonable Accommodations*, which discusses the advantages and disadvantages of differing strategies for requesting accommodations. Before making a formal request, Roessler and Rumrill (2014) recommend that EWDs try having an informal, friendly conversation with the employer. Doing so would seem to be advantageous to those EWDs who do not want to appear to be confrontational or prefer to disclose little, if any, details about the disability. Being candid may be advantageous in those situations in which other EWDs have received accommodations or

may be disadvantageous when the workplace culture is less supportive of EWDs. EWDs clearly do have rather regular and important decisions when choosing a strategic plan for requesting accommodations.

How closely or loosely employers enforce their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) when deciding to approve or reject a request sets the climate within which EWDs decide how, if at all, to request an accommodation. Employers have the option to set strict and formal procedures to be met before a request is approved (such as demanding specific details about the disability, closely adhering to production standards, or defining personal use accommodations in a restrictive manner). Formalized and restrictive procedures, though structured, leave little room for the employee to influence the employer's decision. For example, when the employer holds firm to their right to be provided requested information about the disability, the employee is faced with limited options.

Conversely, when the employer establishes a minimally restrictive environment for requesting accommodations (such as by minimizing paper work, encouraging the employee and supervisor to collaborate in negotiating an initial decision, and adjusting the essential functions of the job), the EWD is freed to decide between a relatively formal request process or an informal process involving some degree of flexibility (such as consulting face-to-face with a supervisor and not disclosing). The role of direct supervisors and managers is considered by many EWDs to be important in the accommodation requesting process (MacDonald-Wilson, Fabian, & Dong, 2008). Whereas a formal process affords structured options, an informal process affords the EWD more opportunities to self-manage and influence the outcomes of the request process.

Studies of formal and informal requests from the perspective of EWDs have yet to be reported in the literature. Florey and Harrison (2000) studied the effects of managers' psychological reactions to their intention to approve informal requests. Notably, Florey and Harrison (2000) described formal and informal requests. Formal requests were described as those made in accordance with and under the auspices of the ADA (i.e. typically involving written forms, engagement of human services or mentioning the ADA), after which the employer faces the legal obligations to comply with the mandates of the ADA. Informal requests, as described by Florey and Harrison (2000), typically involve casual conversations between EWDs and managers; these conversations may not involve mentioning the ADA.

We subscribe with the Florey and Harrison (2000) delineation between formal and informal accommodation request strategies, with one exception: the decision to mention or not mention the ADA. When EWDs request accommodations, they must convey to the employer that they do have a disability in order to be protected under the ADA. However, the ADA mandates are clear in stating that EWDs are not required to mention the ADA when requesting an accommodation. Thus, an individual may choose to mention or not mention the ADA during formal or informal requests. This study will explore accommodation request strategies from two spectra: mentioning the ADA (or not) and using the formal (or informal) approach.

Researchers have yet to examine different request strategies from the perspectives of EWDs. Theory and research on accommodation requesting (e.g., Baldrige & Veiga, 2001; 2006; Dong, Fabian, & Xu, 2016) and request withholding (Baldrige & Swift, 2011) has attempted to guide employers' efforts to increase EWDs willingness to request accommodations. This body of research has theoretical and practical implications. Baldrige and Veiga (2001, 2006), for instance, framed EWDs' intentions to request accommodations as a function of the

immediate effects of EWDs' formulation of salient beliefs (e. g., anticipated employer compliance), with formulation of salient beliefs also acting to mediate the effects of situational attributes (e. g., accommodation culture) on intentions to request accommodations. Later, Baldrige and Swift (2011) framed request withholding frequency as a direct function of individual attributes (age, gender) as moderated by disability attributes, severity of disability, and age at disability on-set. Dong et al. (2016) extended prior theory-driven research by testing and confirming the postulates of a framework which explained that EWDs' request intentions are functionally dependent on their cognitions (self-efficacy and outcome expectancy) and affect. Specifically, Dong et al. (2016) found that request likelihood varied as a function of EWDs' self-efficacy and outcome expectancy, both of which acted as mediators of the effect of EWDs' negative affect (though not positive affect) on EWDs' motivation to request accommodations. Given that intentions are believed to be proxies for behavior, we believe the cognitive and affective variables from the Dong et al. (2016) model of willingness to request accommodations would play a meaningful role in a model of the strategies for requesting accommodations.

In addition to cognitive and psychological factors, various individual and situational attributes of EWDs have been examined in efforts to identify accommodation requesting decisions, accommodation requesting intentions, and request withholding. Researchers have examined the relations between EWDs' willingness to request or withhold requests for accommodations and such individual and situational attributes as accommodation requestors' age (Williams, Sabata, & Zolna, 2006); disability types (Fesko, 2001; Johnson, Baldwin, & Butler, 1998), types and magnitudes of accommodation requests (Friedman, 1993; Chirikos, 1999), workplace supports and barriers (Gates, 2000; Frank & Bellini, 2005), and knowledge of the ADA and accommodations (Dong, Guerette, Warner, Zalles, & Mamboleo, 2017).

Despite the advancements of past research on accommodation requesting, there is scarce literature comparing the different request strategies in terms of situational and individual factors and outcomes. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of different request strategies, and effectiveness of request strategies on receiving accommodations. This study also explored relationships between accommodation request strategies and EWDs' individual differences in affect (positive and negative) and cognitions (self-efficacy and outcome expectancy) in addition to demographic and contextual factors (i.e. age, gender, education, job level, nature of accommodations requested, nature of disabilities, company size and workplace support, and knowledge of the ADA and accommodations).

The findings of the study may help to understand which request strategies increase the odds of receiving an accommodation. When armed with knowledge of effective strategies for requesting accommodations, EWDs may be less inhibited about requesting accommodations. Additionally, the findings of the study may shed light on theoretical frameworks and practical recommendations on accommodation requests as both may vary depending upon different request strategies.

Method

Participants

Four hundred and eight individuals with disabilities who indicated that they requested workplace accommodations participated in the study. Each participant indicated whether they used a formal or informal way of requesting, and whether they mentioned the ADA or not when requesting accommodations. Among the participants, 283 (69.4%) were female, 118 (28.9%) male, and seven (1.7%) did not report their gender. In terms of age, 94 (23.6%) participants were between the age of 18 to 34; 209 (51.2%) were between the age of 35 to 54; 95 (23.2%) were 55 or older; and 10 participants did not report their age. Seven (1.7%) participants self-

reported as Native American, 13 (3.2%) as Latino, 12 (2.9%) as Asian American, 27 (6.6%) as African American, 328 (80.4%) as Caucasian, 4 as multiracial (.9%), and 17 (4.2%) failed to fill out the information. In terms of education level, 54 (13.2%) reported as high school, 207 (50.8%) 2-year or 4-year college, 113 (27.7%) master's degree, 24 (5.9%) doctoral degree, and 10 participants did not report their education level. Among the participants, 77 (18.9%) checked as deaf/hard of hearing, 82 (20.1%) as blind/visual impairment, 58 (14.2) as psychiatric/mental disability, 65 (15.9%) as cognitive disability, 103 (25.2%) as mobility limitation, 66 (16.2%) as multiple sclerosis, and 61 (15%) as physical disability. In addition, 120 (29.4%) and 272 (66.7%) reported as working part-time and full-time, respectively, while 16 (3.9%) did not fill out the information. Finally, 229 (56.1%) held non-professional positions (i.e. unskilled or semiskilled positions), 152 (39.7%) held professional positions (i.e. technical and professional positions), and 17 (4.2%) failed to fill out the information.

Procedures

This study is a part of a larger study (Dong et al., 2016). Data collection procedures were described in detail in Dong et al. (2016). The first author contacted rehabilitation agencies serving individuals with disabilities across the United States and asked directors of the agencies to distribute an online survey to their constituencies. The survey asked the participants to reflect on a situation where they needed an accommodation in which they either requested or withheld a request in the past three months. For participants who requested accommodations, they were asked if they used a formal strategy (i.e., written form or involving human services) or an informal strategy (i.e., casual conversation or discussion) or mentioned or not mentioned the ADA in the course of requests. Based upon participants' response on whether mentioning ADA or not, or using a formal or informal process, participants were categorized into four groups:

individuals who used an informal process without mentioning the ADA in their request (informal/no mention of ADA), individuals who used an informal process and mentioned the ADA in their request (informal/mentioned ADA), individuals who used a formal process without mentioning the ADA in their request (formal/no mention of ADA), and individuals who used a formal process and mentioned the ADA in their request (formal/mentioned ADA). This study included participants who provided information on their request strategies.

Measures

The online survey included measures on assessing participants' self-efficacy (both accommodation request and goal-setting related), outcome expectations, and affect (positive and negative). All the detailed information of the scales can be found in Dong et al. (2016). We calculated the levels of alpha for the measures of the self-efficacy, outcome expectation, and affect in the current study. The Cronbach's alpha levels for accommodation request self-efficacy and goal setting self-efficacy were .878 and .936, respectively. The Cronbach's alpha levels for the subscales of outcome expectation: compliance from employers, perceived appropriateness of requests, usefulness of accommodations, and non-personal cost were .965, .949, .883, and .717, respectively. The Cronbach's alpha levels of positive affect and negative affect were .826 and .877, respectively.

In addition, the survey included measures of individual and situational factors. The individual factors were comprised of demographic information (age, gender, race, education), job level (professional or nonprofessional), job status (part or full time), job tenure (i.e. number of years of being employed), nature of disability (types, severity, visibility, and level of impact on performing essential functions of the job), nature of accommodation (type, necessity, cost, level of supervision involved), and knowledge of the ADA and accommodations. Participants

were provided a list of disabilities (e.g. physical, cognitive, and hearing) and accommodation requested (e.g. flexible schedule and assistive technology) for them to self-report on the types of their disabilities and accommodations, respectively. The severity and visibility of disabilities, and impact of disability on performing essential functions of their job were all measured on a Likert scale for participants to self-report their perceptions on the severity and visibility of their disabilities, and impact of the disabilities on their job functioning. Participants were provided a list of cost range of accommodations (i.e. no cost involved, less than \$100, \$100-\$300, \$301-\$500, or more than \$500), and asked to estimate the cost of accommodations they requested. Participants provided their perceptions on necessity of the accommodations requested on completing the essential functions of their job and level of supervision required on the accommodations through a 5-point Likert scale (e.g. ranging from “not at all necessary” or “no supervision needed” to “very necessary” or “on-going/extra supervision needed”). Participants also reported their knowledge level on accommodation and ADA on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “not at all knowledgeable (1)” to “very knowledgeable (5).”

The situational factors included size of a company (i.e. number of employees in the workplace), if the person received negative feedback on their job performance prior to requesting accommodations (yes vs. no), and perceived workplace support from supervisors/peers. The perceived workplace supports were assessed through six survey items by asking participants to rate their relationships with and supports from their employers/supervisors and co-workers at the workplace where they requested or considered requesting accommodations. The scale score was calculated by summing the six items together. The scale indicated an acceptable alpha level in a previous study (Dong, 2017). The alpha level of the scale in the current study was .87.

Data Analysis

Prior to doing the analyses, we checked the levels of normality for each scale for skew and kurtosis. Data appeared to be normally distributed based upon the criteria proposed by West, Finch, and Curran (1995), in which a reference of substantial departure from normality is an absolute value for skew > 2.1 , and an absolute value for kurtosis > 7.1 .

To examine the prevalence of different request strategies, frequency counts were used. Chi square tests were applied to examine the relationship between receiving accommodations (yes vs. no) among different request strategies. To explore the relationships between accommodation request strategies and EWDs' individual and situational factors, chi square and ANOVA tests were used respectively depending upon the nature of the situational and individual factors. If a situational or an individual variable is nominal or ordinal in nature (e.g. disability types and company size), then a chi square test was used; if a situational or an individual variable is interval in nature (such as a variable measured on a Likert scale), then an ANOVA test was used. We decided not to use Bonferroni correction based upon the advice from Armstrong (2014). In interpreting the chi square results, the standard residuals (i.e. a measure of how significant a cell is to the chi square p value) was used. If a standard residual is less than -2 or greater than 2, then the observed frequency of a cell is less than or greater than the expected frequency.

Results

Prevalence of Different Request Strategies

Among 408 participants, 215 (52.7%) used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy, 26 (6.4%) used the informal/mentioned ADA strategy, 107 (26.2%) used the formal/no mention of ADA strategy, while 60 (14.7%) used formal/mentioned ADA strategy during the process of requesting accommodations.

Effectiveness of Different Request Strategies on Receiving Accommodations

The results indicated a significant relationship between participants receiving accommodations and request strategies ($X^2 = 21.381$, $df = 3$, $p < .01$). The results of the standard residuals showed that the number of participants who did not receive accommodations was significantly lower than expected among participants who used informal/no mention of the ADA strategy, but was significantly higher than expected among participants who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy. See Table 2 for details.

Situational and Individual Factors Associated with Different Request Strategies

ANOVA results.

Statistically significant differences were found on levels of efficacy in requesting accommodations ($F(3, 404) = 6.196$, $p < .01$) and goal setting ($F(3, 404) = 3.699$, $p < .05$) among the four accommodation request strategies. Participants who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy reported significantly higher levels of self-efficacy in requesting accommodations ($M = 15.83$; $SD = 3.446$) and goal setting ($M = 15.86$; $SD = 3.138$) compared with participants who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy in requesting accommodations ($M = 13.55$; $SD = 3.784$) and goal-setting ($M = 14.08$; $SD = 3.234$), though no significant results were found with those who used the informal/mentioned the ADA and the formal/no mention of ADA strategies.

Participants who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy also reported higher outcome expectation scores. Statistically significant differences were found, among four request strategies, in all the subscales of outcome expectations except usefulness: compliance ($F(3, 402) = 11.762$, $p < .01$), appropriateness ($F(3, 402) = 4.269$, $p < .01$), and non-personal cost ($F(3, 402) = 7.841$, $p < .01$). Participants who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy reported the

highest levels in perceptions of compliance ($M = 12.78$; $SD = 3.139$), appropriateness ($M = 12.64$; $SD = 3.059$), and non-personal cost ($M = 11.90$; $SD = 2.608$), while participants who used the formal request mentioning the ADA strategy reported the lowest levels in perception of compliance ($M = 9.88$; $SD = 4.113$), appropriateness ($M = 10.93$; $SD = 3.970$), and non-personal cost ($M = 9.68$; $SD = 2.569$). In addition, those who used the informal/no mention of the ADA strategy scored significantly higher than those who used the informal/mentioned the ADA and the formal/no mention of ADA strategies in terms of compliance. Furthermore, individuals who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy scored significantly higher than those who used the formal/no mention of ADA strategy in terms of non-personal cost. However, no significant differences were found between those who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy compared to those who used the informal/mentioned ADA and formal/no mention of ADA strategies in terms of appropriateness. No significant differences between individuals who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy and individuals who used the informal/mentioned ADA strategy in terms of non-personal cost were observed.

Participants who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy also indicated lower scores on the negative affect scale, and higher scores on the workplace support measure. A statistically significant difference was found in negative affect ($F(3,399) = 9.851$, $p < .01$) among four request strategies. Participants who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy ($M = 9.81$; $SD = 5.160$), reported significantly lower scores than individuals who used formal strategies no matter whether they mentioned ($M = 13.95$; $SD = 5.785$) or did not mention the ADA ($M = 11.21$; $SD = 5.363$). However, no difference was found between individuals who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy and individuals who used the informal/mentioned ADA ($M = 10.12$; $SD = 4.607$) strategy. Statistically significant differences were found among

the four request strategies on workplace supports ($F(3,392) = 13.305, p < .01$) with the highest score found for those who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy. Participants who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy reported a significantly higher level of workplace supports (i.e. relationships with supervisors and peers) ($M = 24.63; SD = 4.438$) than any of the other three request strategies: formal/mentioned ADA ($M = 20.42; SD = 5.593$), formal/no mention of ADA ($M = 22.42; SD = 5.447$), and informal/mentioned ADA ($M = 21.54; SD = 6.048$).

Statistically significant differences were found among the four request strategies on perceived impact of disability on their functionality ($F(3,391) = 3.855, p < .05$). Individuals who used informal/no mention of ADA strategy reported significantly lower levels on their disability as keeping them from performing major functions at work compared to individuals who used the formal/no mention of ADA strategy ($M = .883; SD = .715$) and those who used the formal/mentioned ADA ($M = 1.16; SD = .848$) strategy. No significant differences were found in terms of functionality between those who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy and those who used the informal/mentioned ADA and formal/no-mention of ADA strategies.

Participants who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy also indicated that level of supervision involved for the accommodation were significantly lower relative to those who used the other strategies. Participants who used the informal/no mention of ADA ($M = 1.32; SD = .607$) strategy reported a significantly lower level of perceptions about supervision for the accommodation than individuals who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy ($M = 1.70; SD = .926$), though not significantly different than the other two request strategies.

Individuals who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy reported a significantly lower level on ADA knowledge in comparison with individuals who used the

informal/mentioned ADA strategy, though no significant differences from individuals who used formal request who either mentioned or did not mention the ADA were found. Statistically significant differences were found, among the four request strategies, in the level of knowledge on ADA when considered for or asking for accommodations ($F(3,396) = 3.962, p < .01$).

Participants who used the informal/no mention of ADA ($M = 3.75; SD = 1.026$) strategy reported significantly lower scores of knowledge on the ADA than participants who used the informal/mentioned ADA ($M = 4.38; SD = .804$) strategy. However, no difference was found for individuals who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy and participants who used either the formal/no mention of ADA ($M = 3.64; SD = 1.001$) or the formal/mentioned ADA ($M = 3.71; SD = .973$) strategies.

The only difference between participants who used the informal/mentioned of ADA strategy and participants who used the formal/no mention of ADA strategy was found to be related to ADA knowledge. Participants who used the informal/mentioned ADA strategy reported significantly higher scores on knowledge of ADA ($M = 4.38; SD = .804$) than those who used the formal/no mention of ADA strategy ($M = 3.64; SD = 1.001$).

Participants who used the informal/mentioned ADA strategy scored higher on non-personal cost and ADA knowledge in comparison with those who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy. Individuals who used informal/mentioned ADA strategy reported significantly higher scores on non-personal cost ($M = 11.85; SD = 2.533$) in contrast to individuals who used formal/mentioned ADA strategy ($M = 9.68; SD = 2.569$). In addition, participants who used informal/mentioned ADA strategy reported significantly higher scores ($M = 4.38; SD = .804$) on ADA knowledge than individuals who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy ($M = 3.71; SD = .973$). On the other hand, individuals who used informal/no mention of ADA strategy reported

significantly lower scores on negative affect ($M = 11.21$; $SD = 5.363$) than individuals who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy ($M = 13.95$; $SD = 5.785$).

Participants who used the formal/no mention of ADA strategy reported significantly higher levels on RA efficacy, all outcome expectation subscales except the subscale of RA usefulness, plus workplace supports. For example, participants who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy reported significantly higher scores on RA efficacy ($M = 15.17$; $SD = 3.837$) in contrast to individuals who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy ($M = 13.55$; $SD = 3.784$). In addition, participants who used the formal/no mention of ADA strategy reported significantly higher scores on workplace supports ($M = 22.42$; $SD = 5.447$) than participants who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy ($M = 20.42$; $SD = 5.593$). In comparison to participants who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy, participants who used the formal/no mention of ADA request strategy reported a significantly lower level on negative affect, disability impact on job functioning, and level of supervision needed to implement the accommodation. See Table 1 for details.

No statistically significant results were found for perceived usefulness (one of the subscales of outcome expectation), positive affect, perceived knowledge on accommodation, disability severity, disability visibility and the necessity of accommodations in completing the essential functions of their job among the four request strategies.

Chi square results.

The chi square results showed a significant relation between receiving negative feedback prior to requesting accommodations among the four request strategies ($X^2 = 18.633$, $df = 3$, $p < .01$). Among participants who reported receiving negative feedback on their job performance prior to request, the standard residuals for individuals who used the informal/no mention of

ADA strategy (-2.0) and formal/mentioned ADA strategy (2.3) revealed that these two groups made a major contribution to the overall significance. The results of standard residuals indicated that the number of participants who reported receiving negative feedback among participants who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy was significantly lower than expected, while the number of receiving negative feedback among participants who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy was significantly higher than the expected value.

The results indicated a significant association between participants' multiple disability status and their request strategies ($X^2 = 8.891$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$). The standard residuals for individuals who reported multiple disabilities while using the formal/mentioned ADA strategy (2.2) showed that this group made a major contribution to the overall significance. The result indicated that the number reporting multiple disabilities among participants who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy was significantly higher than the expected value.

The results showed a significant relationship between participants' job tenure and requesting of accommodations ($X^2 = 20.438$, $df = 9$, $p < .05$). The standard residuals of individuals with less than one year of job tenure while using the formal/no mention of ADA strategy (2.6) demonstrated that this group made a major contribution to the overall significance. The results showed that the number of participants with less than one year of job tenure who used the formal/no mention of ADA strategy was significantly higher than the expected value.

The results indicated significant findings between participants' company size and accommodation request strategies ($X^2 = 48.544$, $df = 15$, $p < .01$). The standard residuals were as follows: individuals working for companies with 15-100 employees who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy (2.3), and who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy

(-2.4); while individuals working with more than 1,000 employees who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy (-2.5), and who used the formal/mentioned ADA (3.7). These four groups made a major contribution to the overall significance. The results revealed that the number of participants working for companies with 15-100 employees while using the informal/no mention of ADA strategy was significantly higher than the expected value, while the number of participants who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy was significantly lower than the expected value. On the other hand, the number of participants working for companies with more than 1,000 employees and using the informal/no mention of ADA strategy was significantly lower than expected, while the number of participants who used the formal/mentioned ADA strategy was significantly higher than expected.

The results showed a significant relation between participants' two specific types of job accommodations among the four request strategies: telework ($X^2 = 10.025$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$) and job reassignment ($X^2 = 11.350$, $df = 3$, $p < .05$).

The chi square results showed a significant relation between accommodation cost among the four request strategies ($X^2 = 34.667$, $df = 12$, $p < .01$). The following groups made major contributions to the overall significance as evidenced by their associated standardized residuals: among accommodations involving no cost, the standard residuals for individuals who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy (2.2); among accommodations cost more than \$500, the standard residuals for individuals who used the informal/no mention of ADA strategy (-2.0); among accommodations cost \$100-\$300, the standard residuals for individuals who used the informal/mention of ADA strategy (2.2). The results of standard residuals indicated that the number of participants who used the informal/no mention of the ADA strategy was significantly higher in the case where accommodations involved no cost, and significantly lower in cases

where accommodations costs more than \$500. In addition, the results of standard residuals revealed that the number of participants who used the informal/mention of the ADA strategy was significantly higher in the case where accommodations cost \$100-\$300.

The results of standard residuals indicated that the numbers of participants who requested telework accommodations and job reassignment through using the formal/mentioned ADA strategy were significantly higher than expected. No significant differences were found for the other types of accommodations participants requested. Finally, no differences between request strategies and work status, job levels, and disability types were observed. See Table 2 for details.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the prevalence of different request strategies, the effectiveness of different request approaches, and situational and individual factors associated with different request strategies for individuals with disabilities. Much of the extant theory and research on accommodation requesting behavior has been focused on a particular strategic action plan for requesting workplace accommodations: formal requests made under the auspices of the ADA. Expanding on the traditional focus of formal requests made while mentioning the ADA, we have examined four strategies which vary depending on whether (or not) EWDs' requests involve mentioning the ADA and whether requests are formal or informal. Specifically, we focused on formal requests with mention of the ADA, formal requests that do not mention the ADA, informal requests with mention of the ADA and informal requests that do not mention the ADA.

How frequently do employees utilize each strategy? Formal request strategies involving mentioning the ADA have been the strategy examined most closely in prior research, yet respondents in our sample reported using the informal/no mention of the ADA strategy more

often than the formal/mentioned ADA strategy. The relatively small proportion of participants who followed the formal/mentioned ADA strategy is noteworthy because prior research has been attempting to enhance our understanding of this approach, and yet has been reporting results for participating EWDs without excluding those who have been utilizing other strategies.

For each of the four strategies, the proportion of participants reportedly using the strategy does appear to be meaningful, suggesting that studies of the effectiveness of the various strategies as well as studies of the factors associated with each strategy may enhance our understanding of the accommodation requesting process. For example, some EWDs may be trying to acquire accommodations informally in the hope of avoiding submission of a formal request. Perhaps some EWDs worry that mentioning the ADA would be considered confrontational and so would lessen the odds of an approval. On the other hand, EWDs lacking the self-efficacy for asking a supervisor for an accommodation may not consider the informal strategy and focus only on the formal strategy. Roessler and Rumrill (2014) have recommended that EWDs do request accommodations during casual conversations with supervisors prior to submitting formal requests. When such requests are successful, the employee can avoid the more formal request process.

How effective are these strategies at increasing the odds of having a request approved? We observed that the strategy with the best odds for acquiring an accommodation, as self-reported by EWDs, was the informal/no mention of ADA strategy (59%) and the one with the lowest odds was the informal/mentioned ADA strategy (5.6%). Eleven percent of the participants followed the formal/mentioned ADA strategy received the accommodations. The significantly higher success rate for the informal/no mention of ADA strategy provides a degree of support for the aforementioned recommendation of Roessler and Rumrill (2014). The relatively small odds of

success for the those following the formal/mentioned ADA strategy seems to say a lot about the need to examine alternative strategies in the search for ways to improve success rates. Once identified, those factors associated with each strategy (such as presented below) may provide valuable insight into which strategies are best suited to an individual EWD.

What are the attributes of individuals who select one strategy over another? We examined a wide array of cognitive, affective, process, knowledge and disability-related and work-related individual differences. We observed significant differences across request strategies for several cognitive attributes (self-efficacy for requesting accommodations, perceived compliance, appropriateness, and non-personal costs), as well as for negative affect, knowledge of the ADA, relations with peers/supervisors, functionality, accommodation cost, and necessity for accommodation supervision. Additionally, we found significant differences across request strategies based on categorical variables such as receiving (or not receiving) negative feedback prior to a request, job tenure, and company size.

Of note are comparisons between the informal/no mention of ADA and formal/mention of ADA request strategies because the formal/mention of ADA strategy has been the apparent strategy of interest in prior research, and the informal/no mention of the ADA strategy was the most frequently followed strategy and the one which yielded the best odds of acquiring an accommodation in this study. Significant differences favoring informal requests made without mention of the ADA, relative to formal/mention of ADA requests, were observed for compliance, nonpersonal costs, negative affect, relationship with peers/supervisors, and accommodation costs. These differences seem to tap the higher degree of interpersonal relationships faced by EWDs when using the informal/no mention of ADA strategy. Relations with peers and supervisors would be more important for this strategy relative to the formal/no mention and formal/mentioned

ADA strategies. It seems that EWDs are more open to informal requests for accommodations involved no cost; they may recognize that their supervisors have limits to discretionary expenditures. Individual differences in cognitions may be more important for informal requests because EWDs with lower cognitive abilities may lack the influence or negotiation skills needed when relations with supervisors are not conducive to the request whereas those with higher cognitive abilities may be better equipped to overcome the challenges of situations that are not so conducive to a successful request. For formal/mentioned ADA requests, such cognitive differences may not matter as much because the request is made under the formal requirements specified in the ADA wherein the advantages of higher cognitive abilities may be dampened. The fact that the employer must consider any request, if known by the requestor, may make EWDs with high and low levels of self-efficacy or compliance expectations, alike, equally amenable to making a request. Moreover, regarding negative affect, those EWDs in a particularly bad mood appear to be more likely to use the formal/mention of ADA strategy. Perhaps high negative affect has resulted from rejections of informal requests. Negative affect may also stem from frustrations from receiving poor performance feedback or other signs that important goals are not likely to be attained.

Limitations

This study includes several limitations: Firstly, the self-reported nature of this survey study may impact the objectivity of the results. Participants might respond to the survey in a socially-desirable manner. Second, the survey study, though efficient in reaching out to a large number of participants, may prevent certain types of participants from participating in the study due to lack of accessibility to the online survey or internet literacy and skills. Third, the majority

of the participants in this study were Caucasian female with relative higher education backgrounds, thus the findings may not be applicable to the general population with disabilities. Future research needs to take efforts to recruit more diverse samples.

Research Implications

Prior studies of accommodation requests and accommodation request intentions (viewed as a proxy for requests) have been conducted under the assumption that when respondents report having made a request or having the intent to do so, they are utilizing a formal request strategy. Without enabling EWDs to indicate the specific strategy they have utilized when requesting accommodations, conclusions drawn from those studies may not be entirely valid.

We believe our research may provide the impetus to either confirm or refine prior research conclusions. Two topics seem to warrant close attention. Firstly, we recommend that researchers attend to potential differences in models of informal and formal requesting. Constructs which impact interpersonal relationships (like upward influence skills, self-efficacy, and affect) may play a differential role in models of informal and formal accommodation requests. For example, consistent with our finding about the importance of interpersonal relations with peers and supervisors, opportunities for exerting upward influence on supervisors may be more important for informal request strategies, relative to formal requests. The upward influence construct, then, may add value to models of informal request strategies, especially where interpersonal communications are strongly needed.

Secondly, we believe attention to additional strategies for acquiring disability and non-disability related resources may add value to our knowledge of the processes important to acquiring additional resources. One such strategy is job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), defined as “the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational

boundaries of their work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 179). After EWDs have acquired the accommodations necessary to performing essential job functions, some may feel confident about pursuing those additional accommodations needed to expand the boundaries of their jobs as they strive to craft their jobs in new and strategic directions.

Practical Implications

Prior studies of accommodation requesting and requesting intentions have addressed practical applications with respect to requests that do not differentiate between request strategies. Attention to the more specific strategical plans, like those studied here, would open the door to identifying practical implications which differ across strategies. Informal requests may enable EWDs to speed up the time needed to acquire an accommodation. Training on how best to seek accommodations from supervisors would seem to be an important practical consideration. Readily attainable self-efficacy training interventions may be particularly useful to motivate informal requests for those who are unwilling to submit formal requests. Additionally, by matching EWDs' cognitive and affective characteristics (among other variables) to specific request strategies, practitioners and EWDs themselves may improve EWDs' odds of successful attainment of accommodations.

Undoubtedly scholars and practitioners will continue to be concerned about underaccommodation into the years ahead; strive to determine the barriers faced by employees with disabilities as they pursue equal employment opportunities; and seek ever improved strategies for helping these employees overcome fears, gain confidence, and cope with other barriers. Gaining an understanding of accommodation request strategies and their associated outcomes and psychosocial factors will assist EWDs and professionals to select and implement

individualized strategies for requesting workplace accommodations and improve employment success for EWDs.

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Table 1

Comparison of Individual and Situational Factors Across Accommodation Request Strategies

	Informal/ No ADA Mean (SD) n	Informal/ ADA Mean (SD) n	Formal/ No ADA Mean (SD) n	Formal/ ADA Mean (SD) n	F(df), p-value
Accom_Efficacy*	15.83 ^a (3.446) n=215	15.15 ^{a,b} (3.987) n=26	15.17 ^a (3.837) n=107	13.55 ^b (3.784) n=60	F (3, 404) =6.196, p=.000
Goal-Efficacy	15.86 ^a (3.138) n=215	14.62 ^{a,b} (2.959) n=26	15.21 ^{a,b} (3.803) n=107	14.08 ^b (3.234) n=60	F (3,404)=3.699, p=0.12
Compliance*	12.78 ^a (3.139) n=213	11.15 ^{b,c} (4.549) n=26	11.25 ^b (4.021) n=107	9.88 ^c (4.113) n=60	F (3,402)=11.762, p=.000
Appropriateness*	12.64 ^a (3.059) n=213	12.04 ^{a,b} (3.810) n=26	12.04 ^{a,b} (3.279) n=107	10.93 ^{b,d} (3.970) n=60	F (3, 402) = 4.269, p=.006
Usefulness	13.64 (3.212) n=414	13.04 (3.574) n=1765	13.52 (3.057) n=48	12.90 (3.306) n=198	F (3, 402)=1.899, p=.129
NonpersonalCost*	11.90 ^a (2.608) n=213	11.85 ^{a,b} (2.533) n=26	11.14 ^b (2.804) n=107	9.68 ^c (2.569) n=60	F (3,402)=7,841, p = .000
Positive affect	16.05 (5.110) n=399	16.73 (4.238) n=1672	16.74 (5.140) n=44	16,68 (4.083) n=180	F(3,399) = 0.619, p = .603
Negative affect*	9.81 ^a (5.160) n=213	10.12 ^{a,b} (4.607) n=26	11.21 ^b (5.363) n=105	13.95 ^c (5.785) n=59	F(3,399) = 9.851, p=.000
Know_ADA*	3.75 ^a (1.026) n=211	4.38 ^b (.804) n=26	3.64 ^a (1.001) n=105	3.71 ^a (.973) n=58	F (3, 396) =3.962, p=.008
Know_Accom	3.50 (1.133) n=212	3.73 (1.079) n=26	3.42 (1.081) n=105	3.47 (1.143) n=58	F (3,397)=.558, p=.643
Workplace supports*	24.63 ^a (4.438) n=208	21.54 ^{b,c} (6.048) n=26	22.42 ^b (5.447) n=105	20.42 ^c (5.593) n=57	F(3,392) = 13.305, p=.000
Disability severity	1.61 (.830) n=210	1.88 (.864) n=26	1.75 (.894) n=103	1.74 (.745) n=57	F (3, 392)=1.323, p=.267

Functionality**	0.80 ^a (.692) n=209	1.00 ^{a,b,c} (.800) n=26	0.88 ^{a,b} (.715) n=104	1.16 ^c (.848) n=56	F (3,391)=3.855, p = .010
Visibility	2.29 (.105) n=212	2.46 (.289) n=26	2.22 (.132) n=104	2.05 (.168) n=58	F (3,396)=.621, p = .602
Accom_ necessity	3.34 (.660) n=212	3.58 (.643) n=26	3.45 (.634) n=106	3.48 (.725) n=60	F(3,400) = 1.637, p = .180
Accom_ supervision*	1.32 ^a (.607) n=215	1.50 ^{a,b} (.990) n=26	1.45 ^a (.690) n=107	1.70 ^b (.926) n=60	F (3, 404) =4.656, p=.003

* Mean scores that do not share superscripts differ at $p < .01$.

** Mean scores that do not share superscripts differ at $p < .05$.

Accom: Accommodation; Know: Knowledge

Table 2

Chi Square Comparison among Different Request Strategies

		Request Strategy								df	X2	p-value
		InformalNoADA		InformalADA		FormalNoADA		FormalADA				
		N/%	standard residual	N/%	standard residual	N/%	standard residual	N/%	standard residual			
Negative Feedback	No	178/58	1.1	22/7.2	.7	72/23.5	-1.0	35/11.4	-1.3	3	18.633	.000
	Yes	36/37.9	-2.0*	3/3.2	-1.2	34/35.8	1.8	22/23.2	2.3*			
Multiple Disability	No	171/54.8	.5	23/7.4	.6	80/25.6	-.1	38/12.2	-1.2	3	8.891	.031
	Yes	41/46.1	-.9	3/3.4	-1.2	24/27	.2	21/23.6	2.2.*			
Job level	Non-professional	132/57.6	1.0	11/4.8	-1.0	58/25.3	-.1	28/12.2	-1.1	3	7.819	.051
	Professional	74/45.7	-1.2	14/8.6	1.1	43/26.5	.2	31/19.1	1.3			
Tenure	<1year	39/47.0	-.7	4/4.8	-.6	34/41.0	2.6*	6/7.2	-1.8	9	20.438	.015
	1-3 years	47/48.5	-.5	9/9.3	1.0	22/22.7	-.7	19/19.6	1.3			
	3-5 years	29/52.7	.0	2/3.6	-.8	11/20.0	-.9	13/23.6	1.7			
	>5 years	92/57.1	.9	11/6.8	.1	38/23.6	-.7	20/12.4	-.7			
Work status	Part time	73/60.8	1.3	9/7.5	.4	24/20.0	-1.3	14/11.7	-.9	3	6.007	.111
	Full time	133/48.9	-.8	17/6.3	-.2	78/28.7	.9	44/16.2	.6			
Company size	<14	47/61.8	1.1	5/6.6	.0	18/23.7	-.4	6/7.9	-1.5	12	48.544	.000
	15-100	79/68.1	2.3*	4/3.4	-1.3	26/22.4	-.8	7/6.0	-2.4*			
	101-500	26/47.3	-.5	5/9.1	.7	15/27.3	.1	9/16.4	.3			
	501-1000	11/33.3	-1.5	2/6.1	-.1	11/33.3	.8	9/37.3	1.9			
	>1000	29/33.0	-2.5*	7/8.0	.5	26/29.5	.6	26/29.5	3.7*			
Accom_type	Restructure	27/46.6	-.6	3/5.2	-.4	14/24.1	-.3	14/24.1	1.9	3	4.840	.184
	AT	71/45.2	-1.3	12/7.6	.6	48/30.6	1.1	26/16.6	.6	3	5.788	.122
	Flexsched	72/49.7	-.5	13/9.0	1.2	33/22.8	-.8	27/18.6	1.2	3	6.143	.105
	Tele work	17/40.5	-1.1	2/4.8	-.4	10/23.8	-.3	13/31.0	2.7*	3	10.025	.018
	Reassign	9/36.0	-1.1	0/0	-1.3	7/28.0	.2	9/36.0	2.8*	3	11.350	.010
	PhysiAlter	37/49.3	-.4	6/8.0	.6	21	.3	11/14.7	0	3	.690	.876
	Assistance	41/45.6	-.9	7/7.8	.5	28/31.1	.9	14/15.6	.2	3	2.583	.461
Accom_cost	No cost	114/64.8	2.2*	9/5.1	-.9	33/18.8	-1.9	20/11.4	-1.1	12	34.667	.001
	<\$100	26/55.3	.2	5/10.6	1.4	9/19.1	-.9	7/14.9	.1			
	\$100-\$300	17/40.5	-1.1	3/7.1	.1	18/42.9	2.2*	4/9.5	-.8			
	\$301-\$500	11/32.4	-1.6	4/8.8	.4	11/32.4	.7	9/26.5	1.9			
	>\$500	15/31.3	-2.0*	4/8.3	.4	19/39.6	1.9	10/20.8	1.2			
Disability type	Hearing	32/41.6	-1.3	6/7.8	.5	28/36.4	1.7	11/14.3	-.1	3	6.266	.099
	Visual	40/48.8	-.5	5/6.1	-.1	25/30.5	.8	12/14.6	.0	3	1.022	.796
	Psychiatric	29/50.0	-.3	0/0	-1.9	15/25.9	-.1	14/24.1	1.9	3	8.495	.057
	Cognitive	36/55.4	.3	3/4.6	-.6	14/21.5	-.7	12/18.5	.8	3	1.870	.600
	Mobility	57/55.3	.4	11/10.7	1.7	22/21.4	-1.0	13/12.6	-.6	3	5.845	.119
	MS	38/57.6	.5	6/9.1	.9	14/21.2	-.8	8/12.1	-.5	3	2.381	.497
	Physical	34/55.7	.3	2/3.3	-1.0	14/23.0	-.5	11/18.0	.7	3	2.036	.565
Accom_receiving	No	37/34.6	-2.6*	9/8.4	.8	35/32.7	1.3	26/24.3	2.6*	3	21.381	.000
	Yes	178/59.1	1.5	17/5.6	-.5	72/23.9	-.8	34/11.3	-1.5			

*A cell with a standard residual of 1.96 (absolute value) or more is considered a major contributor to the significant results.

Restructure: Job restructure; FlexSched: Flexible schedule; Reassign: Reassignment to another job; PhysiAlter: Physical alteration to office; Assistance: Assistance by others
Accom: Accommodation