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Eunice Tan Meng Yin

Singapore University of Social Sciences, Singapore

A study on the perceptions of parents on savant skills of individuals with ASD

Savant syndrome is an unusual condition. It is a phenomenon whereby individuals with challenging intellectual disabilities, including Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), may demonstrate some areas of talents which are in contrast with their overall low level of general functioning (Bennett & Heaton, 2017; Finocchiaro et al., 2015; Jeon, 2016). One in ten persons with ASD has savant abilities in varying degrees (Finocchiaro et al., 2015; Treffert, 2014). Today, many parents of individuals with ASD are focused on the individual's deficits rather than on his or her strengths. Even when parents recognize and identify their child's savant skill to be valuable, and wish to develop this talent, they face the challenge that there are insufficient programs committed to supporting the development and improvement of such savant skills. By understanding the association between parental perception and its influence on the support for the development of savant skills, the author hopes to promote awareness amongst parents of individuals with ASD about the importance of providing additional impetus for governmental and non-governmental organizations to endorse such awareness. In addition, the author hopes that these organizations will develop and improve curriculums committed to the advancement of savant skills for individuals with ASD. Researchers used to consider savant skills as unimportant. However, the savant syndrome has become an area of research for scientists who are endeavoring to comprehend the intricacies of the human mind. The savant syndrome has been used to describe individuals who have intellectual disabilities and challenges, yet possess extraordinary abilities in reading, arithmetic, calendar calculations, art or music (Finocchiaro et al., 2015; Jeon, 2016). The findings to this study indicate that there may be a larger percentage of individuals with ASD who possess savant skills than established in previous literature. The study also suggests that developmental success of savant skills is highly reliant on parental perceptions and their corresponding support. The high frequency of savant skills amongst individuals with ASD determined in this study lends further support to the theory that there is a close connection between ASD and the occurrence of savant skills (Boso et al., 2010; Clark, 2001). Thus, this study has implications for the way parents and professionals engage with individuals with ASD. In most settings, parents and professionals tend to work on the deficits and shortfalls of individuals with ASD. An alternative approach is to work on the positive traits and strengths of individuals with ASD to enhance their interests and talents. This may involve substantial rethinking of practices concerning individuals with ASD.

Biography

Eunice Tan Meng Yin is working as a Senior Lecturer at SR Nathan School of Human Development (NSHD), Singapore University of Social Sciences, Singapore.

eunicetanmy@suss.edu.sg

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