



Advancing Research on Autistic Savants: A Call for Increased Focus and Attention

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The scope of research on topics related to autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is increasing. Similarly interest in savant syndrome is also on the increase. There are several possible reasons for this increase; however, one of the most important reasons is the increase in the amount of related contents delivered through books, mass media, and movies. Another important reason is that many famous savants have conveyed their experiences in various ways. This has significantly contributed in raising public interest in ASD and savant syndrome. However, the rate of research on savants in the academic field has experienced only a mild increase in recent years.

Although autistic savants are one of the entities that clearly exists in the field of ASD, there has been limited practical research on this population. The increase in research interest does not necessarily have to precede public attention; however, if public interest in autistic savants is excessive, only over-packaged content would increase rather than the actual characteristics of ASD and autistic savants.

Why have autistic savants not received much attention in the wide research topic of ASD? In fact, great difficulties arise from how to define savants as a research subject. This is a vital issue that needs to be addressed in future studies on savant syndrome. Due to the unique characteristics of autistic savants, it can be challenging to conduct a comparative study with neurotypical individuals. Several savants do not exhibit high-functioning autism traits. Savants are often found to have a considerable level of ability in certain areas of interest; however, the development of other cognitive areas may be slow. Another concern for researchers may be that it is difficult to gauge how important the study of autistic savants is

in the entire study of ASD. If a greater emphasis is placed on the medical perspective, the primary goal of the study may be to focus on the treatment of patients with certain disorders. This is because such studies are believed to contribute to the patient's healthy life. However, studying savants make it difficult to view research objectives from a medical perspective. Some researchers may also have this concern. "Does studying autistic savants cause people to overestimate the prevalence of hidden talents in ASD? While a more focused therapeutic study could alleviate the burdens experienced by individuals with ASD and their families, my research on autistic savants may be perceived as a study that overlooks a crucial area of research that warrants further investigation."

However, I think this concern highlights the importance of research that paradoxically focuses on an accurate understanding of autistic savants. Not all patients with ASD have special talents. Nevertheless, some studies have shown that savant characteristics are significantly higher in autistic people. In other words, savant characteristics are important features of autistic people, and researchers should not overlook these characteristics. An accurate understanding of autistic savants will eventually broaden our general understanding of ASD. It will also contribute to the development of future therapeutic measures.

It is very meaningful that this issue is concerned with special articles about autistic savants. This is because it makes it possible to assess the extent of research on autistic savants. I hope that these special articles will be of practical help to researchers, clinicians, and anyone who wants to have a comprehensive understanding of ASD.

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