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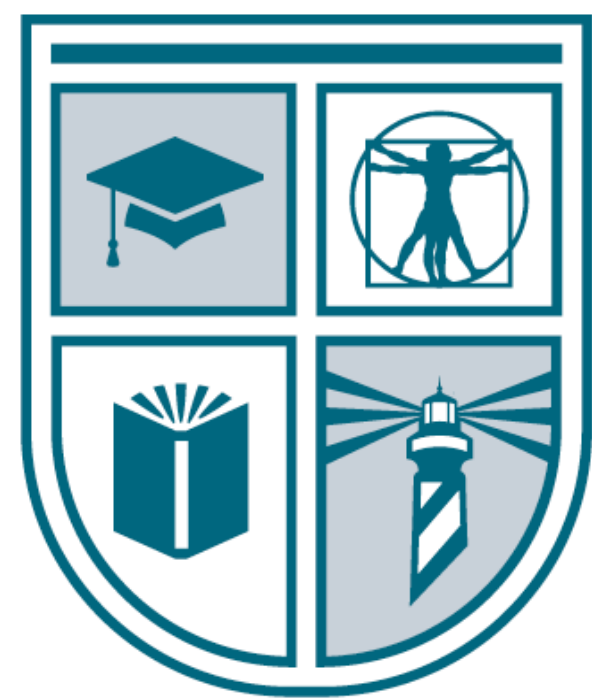
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The Role of Occupational Therapy with Neurodiversity-Inclusive Workplace Design

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BACKGROUND

Approximately 15% to 20% of the population are neurodistinct yet only 1 in 10 organizations have implemented Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives (Russo et al., 2023) with unemployment rates for neurodivergent adults as high as 30%-40% (Carrero, 2021). Even with ADA guidelines in place, many neurodistinct individuals still face barriers during the job application process (Bruyère & Colella, 2022).

SETTINGS



Link Consulting is a consulting service that uses evidence-based scientific frameworks to create a sustainable neuroinclusive workplace that supports employees and their ADL's.



TERI is a nonprofit that serves children and adults with developmental and learning disabilities. Their Vocational Internship Program offers on-site training for adults with special needs to acquire job skills for employment.

PROBLEM

There is a need for occupational therapists to work closely with employers, recruiters, and talent management firms to implement neuroinclusive practices. This collaboration is essential for leveraging the talents of neurodistinct individuals in meaningful employment and providing ongoing support throughout the job process, including hiring, retention, and career growth.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this capstone project is to raise awareness and understanding of neurodiversity to foster neuroinclusive work environments. By addressing employment challenges faced by the neurodiverse community, occupational therapists can support neurodistinct adults who often lack accessible services to navigate the job cycle, promote opportunities for neurodistinct individuals to succeed in the workforce, and educate employers on neuroinclusive design.

METHODS



RESULTS

INTERVIEWS

Neurodistinct clients

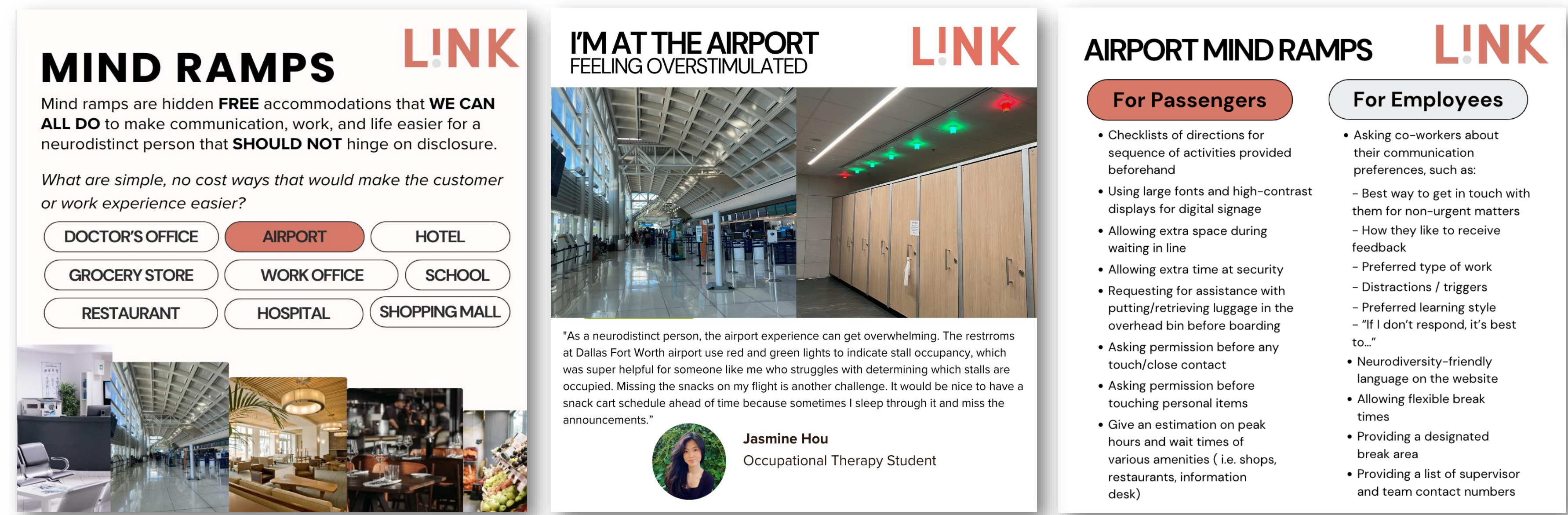
- Understanding how occupational therapy services have helped to navigate different stages of the job cycle
- Insight into individual support needs
- Awareness on various challenges and barriers to employment

Occupational therapists

- Awareness of current challenges as a start-up and independent contractors
- Insights into potential growth as neurodiversity awareness in the workplace increases
- Knowledge on building effective partnerships and awareness of current initiatives from other organizations

MATERIALS CREATED

- Created a revised intake form tailored to hiring adult interns
- Created an infographic on self-regulation through a sensory diet
- A social media post series was created to provide ways to implement simple, free accommodations to neurodistinct customers and employees across various workplaces
- The series is designed to draw attention to practical ways of fostering accessibility, inclusivity, and support for neurodistinct individuals



DISCUSSION

Occupational therapists play a pivotal role in enhancing workplace environments and empowering neurodistinct individuals within organizational settings. Occupational therapist's role involves shifting away from one-time training workshops to integrating systemic changes in the workplace, thereby needing further support and education from occupational therapists. Beyond career goals, occupational therapists assist in supporting self-care routines, sensory processing, activities of daily living, community involvement, and executive functioning to promote mental health and facilitate meaningful participation in employment.

CONCLUSION

The role of occupational therapy in the work industry and mental health are emerging practices that requires ongoing advocacy and support. As these fields evolve, it is crucial for universities to adopt neurodiversity-inclusive principles that benefit both faculty and students. Advocating for these principles ensures that occupational therapy can effectively address the needs of diverse populations in various settings, navigate challenges in modern workplaces, respond to current shifts, support marginalized communities, and promote mental health across the lifespan.

QR CODES

DELIVERABLES



REFERENCES



This project does not involve human subjects and does not require IRB approval

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