

Learning Disability Success in Higher Education



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Research Question

"How does a student navigate and succeed in higher education with a learning disability?"

Research Problem

College Students with a learning disability (LD) have a much lower graduation rate.

Purpose

To help students with disabilities succeed in higher education.

Theoretical Framework

The Human Ecology Theory seeks to understand how development is impacted by environmental factors that surround an individual. As applied to this study, this theory would predict that as long as a student has positive support systems which interact to encourage the student's over all wellbeing, success is attainable.

Bronfenbrenner (1994)

Literature Review

Troiano, Liefeld, & Trachtenberg (2010) found that class attendance was an important factor for success for students with a learning disability.

Parker and Boutelle (2009) discovered many improvements on cognitive skills in students with a learning disability from Executive Function Coaching.

Hong, Haefner, & Slekar (2011) found the importance for faculty to teach self-directed learning skills to students with a learning disability.

Johnson, Zascavage, & Gerber (2008) found that the key factors for success for students with disabilities who thrived in higher education was family support, early identification of the disability, creative academic advising, and positive self-esteem.

Suttichujit (2008) discovered that the most important aspects for a student to graduate was that the student feels comfortable speaking to their college's Disability Support Services and that they have self-determination.



Methods

- Research method: One case study using a semi structured qualitative email interview with six questions.

Sampling type: Snowball and Purposive

- Data analysis: Thematic Analysis and inter-rater reliability.



Interview Questions & Findings:

Q1. What skills are vital for student with a learning disability to be successful in college?

- **Self-Determination, Balance**

Q2. What are the most helpful resources that the Student Disability Services center has provided in order for you to succeed in college courses?

- **Alternative Books, NaturalReader**

Q3. If you have a support network, who or what does your support network include?

- **Support, Encouragement, Family Support**

Q4. Can you recall a way that a professor or faculty member has helped you promote self-directed learning?

- **Accommodating Class work**

Q5. Have you received one-on-one counseling or coaching to help navigate through college with your learning disability?

- **One-on-one Counseling, Caring.**

Implications for Practitioners

It is helpful for a student in higher education with a learning disability to receive specialized support including test accommodation, one-on-one assistance, counseling services, and help in motivation skills.

Implications for Future Research

It would be best to do future research using a larger population for a study using both male and female participants and those with various types of disabilities other than just learning disabilities

Conclusion

• This study provides the lived experience of one resilient and successful student with a Learning Disability in higher education to allow future students in similar situations information on how they can also succeed. The information is also helpful for professionals working with students with learning disabilities to help facilitate success. Quote: *"Going to college with a learning disability can be hard and no one can see from the outside what I have to deal with every day to be successful. Do not let your learning disability stop you from getting a college degree"*