

Classroom related self-perceptions in college students with developmental learning and attention disorders

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Background

- More than 200,000 or 11% of college students have some sort of developmental or attention disorder¹
- Attending classes and engaging in academic activities can prove very difficult for some with L/AD
- Students who have positive self-perception have higher academic achievement²
- Overall there is a lack of current research into self perceptions of college students with developmental learning and attention disorders and how this affects their academic performance

Purpose

- The purpose of this analysis was to illuminate the lived experience of students in college with developmental learning and attention disorders in regard to their classroom self perceptions

Methods

- Participants: undergraduate students with L/AD
- The undergraduate students were involved in a larger study to develop university supports for students with LD (CS3LD project)
- Data are transcripts from 30 facilitated group discussions with undergraduates over a 4 year period
- Data were first structurally coded in NVivo, then coded using 3 methods (process, values, versus)³
- Codes were sorted into themes by 3 people that then reached one final consensus
- After interpretation, the themes are used thematically to recast portions of the data⁴

Conclusion and Discussion

- Students frequently recalled instances when teachers would make them feel inadequate or wouldn't respect their accommodation letters, which made it difficult to learn
- As this occurred, students said they would feel disrespected and misunderstood which had a negative effect on their self-concept
- This often led to the students having to live with the stigmas of their condition and feel shame for who they inherently were
- The students' inability to work as quickly as other students while simultaneously having to work much harder than others takes a toll on them with some stating that they actually feel and believe that they are "slow and stupid" when compared to others

Results

Emerging Theme	Definition	Representative Quote
Temporal Problems	Having problems related to timing on classroom activities such as exams and assignments	I even had teachers who, I had one teacher who would stand over me while I took test and would literally just be like "hurry up, hurry up" you are going too slow, everybody is finished and you're not.
Feelings of Inadequacy	Having the knowledge that they are smart enough to do their work but having to work harder than others and sometimes getting poor results	It used to kind of make me feel bad and little inferior because I had to try harder than my peers.
Being thought of as "stupid"	The perception that others think they are stupid or slow and the stress this causes	One of my really big stresses is when people think I'm stupid. I've had a lot of TAs who literally just—not in so many words—but they're like, "Why are you so stupid?" I'm like, "Because you're telling me things and I can't process them. That's not my fault.
Struggles of accommodations	The process required to get accommodations and combat stigmas and expectations from professors and other students about students with LD	There's been times where I will meet professors without giving them my accommodation letter and they have a really good vibe towards me. Then afterwards say that if I e-mailed them my accommodation letter for that upcoming semester, it's like they have a different vibe towards me.



Clinical Implications

- Students seek an environment that is inclusive of all learning styles and where they are treated as an individual
- Interventions should address accommodations with students entering college and coping skills/mechanisms students can use in the college environment during their transition
- In order to have the best outcome for students with L/AD positive self-perceptions are necessary

References

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