

Effects of Academic Accommodations on Mental Health in Collegiate Students: A Review of the Literature

Rebekka Luebbers, Mental Health Counseling trainee

Research Mentor and other Collaborators

Patricia Bahr

Objective:

With an increasing number of individuals with a disability attending college, there is increased attention with if and how these students get their accommodation needs met. An individual with a disability faces many barriers while attending college, including the expectation that the student must self-advocate for their right to accommodations, which can be quite a daunting task. Additionally, many who seek academic accommodations face stigma from their professors and classmates. These self-advocacy and stigma concerns can negatively impact the student's mental health and ability to complete their schoolwork. This literature review aims to look at the effects of accommodations on the academic performance and mental health of students with a disability. Limitations of recent literature and suggestions for future research will also be discussed.

Method:

This literature review aims to answer the following questions: How does having a disability in college affect academic success? Does having a disability in college affect mental health? What are common academic accommodations? How do accommodations or a lack thereof influence academic performance? Does a lack of accommodations contribute to poor mental health?

Keywords: disability, collegiate students, academic accommodations, academic performance, mental health

Results:

- Of the students who receive special education services in high school, only 1-3% receive accommodations in college.
- Professors listed consulting with student disability services or the college counseling center regarding a student with a mental health problem, allowing a student extra time to complete an exam, extending a deadline for a student, and allowing a student to use a private testing location to be most effective.
- Students, however, listed counseling meetings, caring people, extra time on tests, alternate testing site, time management instruction, specific subject tutoring, study skills introduction, self-advocacy, assistive technology, early registration, and sense of security to be most helpful.

Conclusions:

When assisting a student with a disability in achieving academic success, it is suggested in much of the literature to take a holistic approach in that all aspects of a person's life (academic and mental health) affect one another. Assisting can include connecting students with resources for success academically

and with mental health, assisting them in making social connections, and supporting them in advocating for themselves. Many studies highlight the importance of social supports for college students with a disability both academically and non-academically, especially in their first year. Further research in the effects of accommodations on students' academic performance and mental health could help eliminate barriers that prevent students with a disability from completing their degrees.