

Importance of Being Before Doing in Occupational Experiences of Undergraduates With Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

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Four key dimensions of occupation include doing, being, becoming and belonging. A qualitative descriptive design using existing data was used to examine occupational experiences of undergraduate students with learning disabilities (LD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Data for this preliminary analysis were transcripts from 7 group meetings held with 14 undergraduates with LD/ADHD who participated in year one of a four-year study to develop holistic campus-based LD/ADHD supports. Participants were recruited through the campus disability office and shared their LD/ADHD-related experiences in monthly group meetings. Data were structurally coded using pre-established codes and definitions of doing (activities participants engaged in), being (participants' sense of self), becoming (participants' professional identity) and belonging (participants' connectedness to others). Process coding was used to explore the interconnection between the dimension of being and other dimensions, considering temporal aspects and sequential occurrences of doing, becoming, and belonging. Constant comparison of codes and representative quotations to conceptualizations, use of multiple coders, and peer debriefing enhanced trustworthiness. Findings indicate that as students better understood their LD/ADHD and accepted its impacts (i.e., being), experiences of doing were described as more positive and/or less frustrating. Improved being also supported abilities to foster relationships that were accepting of the LD/ADHD (i.e., belonging) and improved abilities to envision themselves in their chosen professional trajectory (i.e., becoming). Being before doing can improve the experience of the doing which can also foster the sense of belonging and becoming in college students with LD/ADHD. Findings point to an importance in facilitating patients' positive sense of being before focusing on doing, which should be further investigated.

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