

A Model of Self-Advocacy Decision-Making for Undergraduates With Learning Disabilities & Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

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This research 1) explicates the non-academic accommodation self-advocacy (N-ASA) decision-making process within interpersonal interactions of undergraduates with learning disabilities (LD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) across social roles and contexts; and 2) identifies key N-ASA behaviors. The existing self-advocacy literature focuses on obtaining academic accommodations for college students with disabilities but fails to address the decision-making process central to self-advocacy across contexts. Study design was grounded theory. Data were originally collected as part of a larger study that developed holistic supports for undergraduates with LD/ADHD at a large public university; participants (N = 52) were undergraduates eligible to receive academic accommodations for LD/ADHD and recruited through the campus disability office. Data were meeting-specific files (N = 30) comprised of transcripts and written responses to focused questions asked during psychoeducational group meetings with undergraduates. Structural coding was used to identify text related to N-ASA behaviors and decision-making experiences. Values, process, and focused coding were used to classify the N-ASA behaviors. Axial and selective coding was used to describe the N-ASA decision-making process. Multiple coders, peer debriefing, and constant comparison were used to ensure trustworthiness. Four purposes (i.e., themes) of N-ASA behaviors emerged: 1) Set Boundaries with Others, 2) Mitigate Disability-related Challenges, 3) Protect Time and Schedules, and 4) Garner Help from Others. Thirteen N-ASA behaviors were identified and categorized according to their purposes. A model depicting factors that influence undergraduates' self-advocacy and four decision-making points that elucidate potential outcomes of self-advocacy was developed. Findings inform practice and research in fostering self-advocacy across college and young adult contexts.

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