Student Disability: Research Paper

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The topic I chose to research is student disabilities. I chose this topic because it is an extremely important topic that needs more awareness. I also chose this topic because my twin brother has Autism, and I also have two learning disabilities called dyscalculia and dysgraphia. To start off my research, I asked myself a few questions. First, how much do University students know about student disabilities? Second, why should University students and faculty be taught about students with disabilities? And finally, how do Universities support students with disabilities? I went looking for the answers to my questions by examining academic and popular sources to shed light on the topic. I found an article about the unjust actions taken by a Howard University professor: “The complainant alleged her African Studies I professor didn’t allow her to take the final exam in a distraction-reduced setting, an accommodation that had been properly approved”. By showing one side of how some faculty members treated students with disabilities, this source proved to be helpful for my research (Campus Legal Advisor, 2015).

During my research, I found another quote from an academic source that caught my interest: “Persons with disabilities have always been in but not part of society (Rimmerman, A.).” This quote illustrated how people with disabilities have not been treated equally throughout history. This inequality needs to change through awareness and education. I also found some popular sources to help me with my research. I discovered a TED talk by Lexie Garrity. She is a student with a learning disability, similar to mine, and she describes how she was treated poorly in higher education. (Talks T, 2016 December 14). She stated that people would say: “I must have that disorder too,” jokingly in reference to my memory disorder (Lexie Garrity).” This video showed how people treat those with disabilities poorly because they do not know any better. I personally can relate to her story because people have said similar things to me. This video is highly important and helped my research tremendously. I found another video about how students label disabled students, in the video, one participant named Haley asks her peer about what they think of student disabilities. Her question was: “What do you think of when you hear special needs kids?” And the answer was: “I think of disabled people (Kimbrough, H, 2015 May 05).” This video inspired my questions for my research and benefit my research because it showed me how people should treat others with disabilities. All of these sources...
aided in answering my initial questions and allowed me prove that people need to be more educated about student disabilities. University students and faculty also need to be more educated about student disabilities because some students with disabilities feel infantile and want to be treated equally to their peers.

Methods

Methods Design: I designed my methods to be very simple. I wanted my methods to be simple and easy to follow. I used online templates (Google forms and Google docs) for my information and survey. I wanted my methods to be clean and clear so that people could use my methods as a reference for a similar project. My methods are shown below in a step by step process.

Methods: How I made my survey For your first step get a computer and sign in and go online. Then search for a survey template on Google forms. Once you find a template start creating the questions in Google forms and fill in the response section to guide your participants. Then in the response section choose between multiple choice, short answer, or paragraph for the answer you would like to receive. Next, finish making the survey. Make sure to double check the survey to make sure there are no errors. Then you can send the survey to your participants. Make sure that the participants get the survey. For your final step make sure that if the participants didn’t receive the survey, print them out and give them to the participants.

Participants: I asked people that I knew to fill out the survey. I also will give out my survey to people who are willing to fill it out in person.

Materials: I used a Google form to create my survey. I also used a computer and printer to give the survey out in person.

Link to survey: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1YzyYvnzvZ40mTZMr4Aw9P2VzwHMA2F7JFTQiCVN2n3

Methods Design: I designed my methods to be very simple. I used real people and interviews for my information/research. I wanted my methods to be clean and clear so that people could use my methods as a reference for a similar project. My methods are shown below in a step by step process.

Methods: my interviews For the first step, I found people who were willing to talk to me about my topic. I arranged a time and place to meet with the people I was interviewing. I came up with questions about my topic prior to the interview. After that, I went to the designated meeting spots to talk with my participants. I got out my phone and opened the voice memo application. I used the voice memo application to record my interviews. I asked my participants the questions about my student disability topic. Then I finished recording the
interviews. I saved the interviews on my phone under their name and my class name. I also thanked the participants for participating in my interviews. For my last step, I uploaded the interviews into my information/research document on Google docs and on ilearn which is a CSUMB’s homework turn in website. Make sure to have all of your data if not do a quick follow up to the interviews.

Participants: I asked people who I knew were willing to participate in the interviews for this paper. I talked to one student with a disability, one student without a disability, and one person who just finished grad school and knows a bit about the topic.

Materials: I used paper, pens, my phone, a voice memo application, my computer, Google docs, and my binder.

Results

Results: From my survey The results from my survey indicate that people have very similar thought processes when it comes to their knowledge of student disability awareness. I surveyed 10 university students and surveyed people online and in my class. My results show that most people agree that mental illness affects students with disabilities. My results also display that people feel that students with disabilities feel infantilize or babied. Most of my participants also thought that students with disabilities feel that they are not treated equally. My participants think that ADHD is the most common disabilities that students have which is interesting. 9 out of 10 participants answered that ADHD was the most common student disability. My results indicate that 10 out of 10 participants think that student disabilities are an important topic to discuss. My results also show that the participants agree that there is not enough student disability representation and awareness. My results also show that 9 out of 10 university students define disability as “physical or mental conditions that enable people from doing tasks. University students think that this is a very important topic to discuss and spread awareness about because people need to be educated about disabilities. The results indicate that university students are educated but need more education about student disabilities as a topic.

Results: From my Interviews The results from my Interviews show that all three participants have similar views. Even though the participants don’t know each other they all had similar key points that can tie into each others interviews. I interviewed three women that all thought that there needs to be more representation and awareness within university and college campuses. In my first interview, I talked to a university student with a disability. She shared with me that she has cerebral palsy also known as CP and shared that as a student with a disability, she has never felt that there has been enough awareness or representation at schools about student disabilities. She also explained how awareness and representation could help other university students how to
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understand her and act around her. She also explained her struggles and how even though she struggles she doesn't complain because she doesn't want to take the opportunities that she has with her disability for granted. In my next interview, I interviewed an older graduate student who I've known for a while. She also agreed that there is not enough representation or awareness of student disabilities. She thought that this is a very important topic to discuss especially with university students and university faculty. She also mentions her opinion on student disabilities. She feels as if everyone could have a disability because some mental health issues could be considered a disability. She uses anxiety as an example because it prevents people from doing things. She also told me that she worked with students with disabilities. She worked for a nonprofit organization to help students with Autism. She said that people should be more educated because the people who are not educated could offend people with disabilities without realizing it and that if campuses took the time to educate their students then students with disabilities would feel more comfortable on campuses. The last person I interview was a student without a disability. She also thought it was important to educate university students about disabilities because people don’t understand what’s going on in a student with disabilities mind. She also says that people should be more understanding and empathetic towards people with disabilities in general. Another person chimed into the conversation by telling me her input on the question I asked. She said that almost everyone with a disability could have a mental illness because of how society as a whole treats disabled people. She uses improper social cues and social anxiety as an example of how society can affect people with disabilities. She also brought up how students with disabilities parents baby of infantilizing their children and when they try to send them off into the world alone they don’t know how to act or respond to social interaction. I also had to do a follow-up interview with the participants because I forgot to ask them a few questions about faculties knowledge about student disabilities. I asked if they thought that faculty should be educated about students with accommodations and if faculty should have the training to better understand a student with disabilities. My first participant said “I feel like they should be educated and have training because it is more than likely that they are going to have a student with some type of disability in their class one day” Day (12/ 02/ 2018) Personal communication. My second participant said “Yes to both! Especially to know the signs of someone aggressively showing signs of feelings of mental health issues.” Steingart (12/ 02/ 2018) Personal communication. My third participant said “Yes because they should know who has accommodations and who does not” Gomez (12/ 02/ 2018) Personal communication.

Analysis

My results were very surprising and Interesting. For my survey, I was expecting different results. I thought that there would be varying results between the participants. The results showed that most of my participant agreed with each
other which surprised me. I also thought that it was good that most of the university students I surveyed could identify the difference between physical and mental disabilities and that they all agreed with each other. I was very surprised that most of the participants thought that ADHD was the most common student disability. I think that the most common student learning disability is ADHD but I was surprised that none of the participants put a physical disability such as down syndrome. The results in the survey helped my thesis statement because most of the participant agreed with my thoughts without knowing. I'm glad that all of the participants thought that student disabilities is an important topic to discuss. The results from my interviews prove my points on why we should educate university students on the topic of student disabilities. All of the participants of my interviews think that there is not enough representation or awareness among students on university campuses. One of the people I interviewed said that she would take a class to help her better understand and learn about students with disabilities because it could help her with her major since she is a human development/family studies major. I think that from these results it’s important to teach awareness about disabilities. Also, all of my research ties into my thesis because all of my participants think that there should be more education within college and universities to help their students with disabilities feel equal to their peers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, even though most of the students I surveyed and interviewed go to CSUMB the topic of student disabilities should be shared on all campuses. Although the majority of the students I surveyed and interviewed knew quite a bit about my topic there are still students who don’t know anything about this topic. The topic Students with disabilities still needs awareness and attention. The main point of doing this topic for my research paper is to learn more about what my peers think about disabilities as a whole. I wanted to learn if people would oppose my ideas and or agree with my ideas. I want my audience to take away something from this paper. My audience may have different thoughts and opinions about disabilities than I do but I want them to take away that students with disabilities are people too. No matter what kind of disability, whether it may be learning, physical, or both that they can be just as successful and “normal” as an “ordinary” person. Treat people with disabilities with respect, compassion, and listen to what they may or may not need. Don’t infantilize people with disabilities because they are just as capable as doing tasks, it just may take them longer to do them so be patient. In general just treat people how you want to be treated, in the long run, people will respect and thank you for treating them equally.
Works Cited

Day (12/ 02/ 2018) Personal communication.

Gomez (12/ 02/ 2018) Personal communication.

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Steingart (12/ 02/ 2018) Personal communication.