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Enhancing educational and career prospects: A comprehensive analysis of institutional support for students with specific learning disabilities

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Abstract

This study employs an integrative review methodology to investigate institutional support mechanisms for students with specific learning disabilities (SLDs), aiming to enhance their educational and career prospects. Extensive analysis of primary sources from databases including Dimension, ERIC, Scopus, Scilit, PubMed, Reference Citation Analysis, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate reveals critical insights. The research reveals that students with SLDs benefit from a spectrum of institutional support measures. These encompass provisions such as extended time allocations, access to study aids, dedicated personnel, financial assistance, and faith-based support. These interventions contribute not only to improved academic performance but also facilitate smoother transitions into the professional sphere. This study emphasizes the pressing need for institutions to fortify their support services dedicated to students with SLDs. It advocates for broader access to such resources, with the ultimate goal of optimizing the academic development and career prospects of this demographic. This approach serves to promote inclusivity and diversity in both educational and occupational domains.

Keywords: career transition, education, faith-based support, Institutional support, social support, specific learning disabilities,

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Introduction

Disabilities affect people of all ages, races, and ethnicities. Approximately 15% of the global population, or over a billion people, have a disability. Around 150 million of these students are disabled, and 80 percent reside in developing nations (World Health Organization, WHO, 2011). Cognitive impairments in people with specific learning disabilities (SLDs) manifest as math, reading, writing, planning, and organizing challenges. SLD makes learning difficult for the student because it is stigmatized after recognition. These students could also experience bullying and prejudice, particularly in social contexts, according to Grant (2022). One of the critical goals of training and teaching persons with SLDs is to prepare them for independence. However, even before their children graduate from high school, parents of students with SLDs are unsure of their futures. According to Sharp (2018), challenges for students with disabilities might result from a lack of transition planning and all-around assistance, poor coordination, and lack of communication within service systems. Those adequately ready in advance will be more prepared for the change from school to employment. This implies that many parents and individuals with special needs, such as SLDs, must cope with the issue of inadequate transitional plans or guidelines from school to employment. A longer life expectancy with dignity and health intact depends on commitments from all parties, including various institutions. Although many children with SLDs can integrate into their families, peer groups, communities, and places of employment, success in such settings is sometimes limited by problematic behaviors and medical issues (Feeley & Jones, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial to have a variety of institutional supports specifically aimed at assisting people in overcoming obstacles in their lives. This is because individuals with specific learning difficulties require extensive support networks. Institutions must thus help and support students with SLDs to complete their education and prepare for life

after graduation. Various organizations offer support services, including NGOs, social institutions, health/medical institutions, educational institutions, and religious institutions, among others, to assist students. Because of this, the current research paper aims to shed light on the institutional support for students with SLDs.

Method

This study used an integrative review technique to perform the literature review. The author of this research paper looked through the literature for publications related to institutional support strategies for the educational and career transitions of students with SLDs. Dimension, ERIC, Scopus, Scilit, PubMed, Reference Citation Analysis, Google Scholar, and ResearchGate were the databases analyzed. These databases contain primary sources for research on various subjects, including career support services for students with SLDs.

Result and Discussion

Conceptualizing institutional support for students with SLDs

Institutions are often organizations that offer public services, education, or care to its members and people in need of its support. Reddy (2022) asserts that institutions may be state-owned, statutory, partially autonomous, or autonomous. Institutions are made up of official rules like statute law, common law, and regulations, as well as informal rules like customs, behavioral norms, self-imposed standards of conduct, and the mechanisms for enforcing them. Institutional support characterizes the commercial and industrial sector's economic climate. It comprises different organizations and agencies whose judgments and vigorous support through laws, rules, monetary assistance, and other forms of assistance lead to a meaningful difference in how people and groups function. The aids provided by organizations or institutions to students with SLDs for career transition includes but is not limited to, training, technological assistance, further learning, and scholarships. For their best potential academic and professional growth, students with SLDs require a wide range of institutional assistance and support because grooming them without the proper assistance, resources, or training might be difficult (Grant, 2022; Yoro et al., 2020). Different institutional supports can be used to create conducive learning atmosphere and foster smooth career and educational transitions. Institutional support for educational and career transitions of students with SLDs encompasses the assistance and support provided by various organizations with the capacity to help these students achieve their educational and professional objectives. It is crucial to understand that institutions require enforcement mechanisms in order to function properly and that these mechanisms are essential to every society's institutional structure. Higher education institution is within reach for students with SLDs, but they will need support from many organizations in order to succeed. The institution is in charge of supporting SLD students and ensuring that they are well-informed about the services that are accessible to them. Various institutions, including those related to social welfare, religion, and non-governmental groups among others, are highlighted in this research paper.

Supporting students with SLDs in educational and career transitions

Education is a lifetime learning process that enables one to acquire the range of skills required to become a self-sufficient, self-aware, and productive member of their community and society (Deginesh & Asrat, 2016). Special education for children with disabilities, such as SLDs, entails enhancing their academic performance, skills, peer acceptability, self-esteem, and social networks with lasting advantages (Meresman & Drake, 2016). There is a lot of educational help provided by many organizations, despite how challenging it may appear to educate and empower children with SLDs in a way that will ultimately meet their requirements in the classroom and workplace. The following are some of the supports:

Provision and proper use of learning aids: To ensure that students with SLDs feel involved in the class and do not miss critical materials, it is crucial to employ various classroom tools. Learning aids can be used to enhance the academic achievement of students with SLDs. The best learning tool should be selected based on each student's unique skills and needs, and its use should be followed by efficient instruction. For instance, a talking word processor may be more complex than a simple sticky note (Manitoba Education, 2010). Learning aids can significantly enhance the learning process for students with SLDs since these devices offer organizing and planning aids like mind mapping and text-to-speech software. Every effort must be made to adjust teaching materials since students with SLDs may learn more with diverse fonts and colors than other students. Prior to a student's arrival, educational institutions must be aware of the requirements of that student's learning difficulties in order to create the appropriate learning aids so that they will be able to start studying right away.

Provision of committed staff: Hiring a learning support assistant is a considerable strategy to enable a classroom instructor to concentrate on other students while SLD student is being helped, regardless of whether they are constantly in the classroom or not. Teachers should be aware of and supportive of the unique

requirements of students with SLDs. Ainscow and Sandill (2010) stated that educators must alter their conduct in order to produce positive outcomes for all students and that staff members must serve as the initial point of contact. This is because they are better able to see what may be accomplished and are more accountable for making it happen. It is doubtful that persons with disabilities, especially those with SLDs, will be wholly accepted if negative attitudes continue. Teaching and non-teaching personnel must develop a supportive approach if they want students with SLDs to flourish in school and the job market. Providing pre-service teacher training, professional staff development, and training programs in higher education can help schools foster positive attitudes and staff commitment toward caring for students with SLDs.

Provision of adequate teaching and learning support: In addition to teaching activities, instructors of students with SLDs may promote their well-being by providing information about their accomplishments, strengths, and progress toward academic and professional objectives. Teachers may cover career development, labor market information and analysis in the classroom. It is essential to consider skill set while deciding on work and professional opportunities for those with SLDs. Additionally, teachers and schools can arrange for the student's transition goals to be achieved through a course of study or by including a study program inside regular schooling. Since most complaints from this group of students are about a lack of course materials, it is acceptable for the teachers to pay attention to them. They should also receive accurate information regarding class events, assessments, and assignments.

Since school administration oversees all choices about financing, student placement, the availability and maintenance of assistive learning devices in schools, and in-service teacher training, students with SLDs rely heavily on them for transitioning from education to careers. In order to assist students with SLDs, it is also critical to consider the role of educators and a school's management team, which includes the principal, vice-principal, department heads, and officials from the education ministry. Szymanski et al. (2013) stated that educational institutions and school administrators are charged with the duty of comprehending how disabilities affect children's language development, academic performance, cognitive development, and family dynamics. It is crucial to educate students with SLDs who come from diverse racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds; create recruitment and retention programs for disabled professionals and support staff from diverse backgrounds; develop a system for monitoring disabled students and students who are at risk of academic and career transition failure; survey and interview graduates with disabilities to see if they are doing well in higher education, employment, and other areas, according to the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) (2020).

Use of flexible teaching and assessment methods: Educational institutions must be adaptable with their teaching and evaluation procedures to guarantee that every student is evaluated relatively. Some SLD students will need more time to finish tests, and they could also need extra help in the form of a scribe or a laptop. Several methods are available to help students with SLDs, depending on the examining body. Students with SLDs can ask for more time and help from their teachers and peers in completing their assignments. More time on teaching and testing is a typical disability accommodation. Students who have trouble learning in conventional settings might ask for note-takers. The note-taking procedures vary at various schools. In specific classrooms, note-takers may be assigned; in others, a teacher may provide notes from their lectures. For students with reading disabilities who struggle to comprehend written material during tests with pre-recorded sections, a reader can read the transcript; someone can also explain the phrasing of the question during an exam. Teachers and professionals should also understand that they should not depend entirely on one tool or technique when evaluating students with disabilities (Maller & Braden, 2011; Wood & Dockrell, 2010). These evaluation supports can improve SLD students' transition to a profession after school.

Offering social assistance: In order to be successful as an employee, coworker, and community member, individuals with SLDs need to develop their social skills (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). The development of robust and healthy adult relationships with family members and peers is supported by social skills. The classroom setting and the learning process rely on social interactions. Families, peer groups, and educational systems are crucial to developing social skills and behavior modification of individuals with SLDs in the classroom and workplace. As a result, schools must offer students with SLDs behavioral and psychological assistances during learning and career transitions. According to Meadan and Monda-Amaya (2008), students with SLDs may exhibit substantial social challenges, such as difficulty making friends or experiencing emotions of loneliness, so teachers should encourage and support social competence and acceptance in the classroom. Programs that create connections, offer academic help (such as tutoring), give access to mental health resources and early transition plans might be beneficial to students with SLDs. Social clubs, peer tutoring, cooperative teaching techniques, and eliminating bullying and discrimination by other students are some of the approaches for enhancing social conduct among students with disabilities in schools and career transition (Smith, 2007).

Financial support: It is crucial that schools support students who require financial aid for out-of-pocket expenses associated with their SLD. In most regions like the United Kingdom, SLD students are eligible for

Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs), including payments for laptops, specialized software, and other learning aids. Institutions should think about defraying this expense to eliminate this barrier. Scholarships should also be offered to students with SLDs in various nations. It is crucial that the institution's staff know the specifications and restrictions of each funding option and help students with their applications (Manitoba Education, 2010).

Family support: Doolabh (2018) argues that it is crucial to consider the interests and abilities of SLD students when planning career transfers. The families of these students should be the best advocates for their interests. Individuals with SLDs can attain post-school goals, including work, further education, community living, and active involvement in their communities if their family provides them with assistance (Lindstrom et al., 2007). As family involvement increases, reading comprehension increases, grades increase, and school engagement increases (Newman, 2005). Parental participation is essential for SLD students' success during the transitional phase. After leaving school, a student's family and other support network members typically serve as their primary sources of aid, guidance and advocacy (Kim & Morningstar, 2005). Concerning the development of specific job objectives, young people with disabilities have talked favorably about the role that their family played in preparing them for successful adult life after high school (Lindstrom et al., 2004). Similarly, Lima et al. (2019) contended that any intervention program for students with disabilities should actively focus on building stronger families as a critical element. Parents and teachers must work together to develop a schedule for daily communication with SLD students. Families with children suffering from SLD can care for their children independently. A disability expert must provide parents with pertinent, trustworthy information suited to their family's requirements. Similarly, parents of children with SLDs are responsible for setting attainable educational and transitional goals. Parents are the only continuous factor as a student transitions from school to work, employer, assistance agency, and professional settings. So parents must actively participate in planning schooling and transition for children with SLDs. Parents' feelings of love and nurturing for their students are the most crucial basis for learning. When children feel safe and secure, they are more likely to actively participate in learning and career activities (Bornman, 2020). When they experience love and success in the home, they will be equipped with positive springboards for experiencing success in the classroom and within society. The finest transition planning, therefore, includes the family and considers cultural values and beliefs (Kim & Morningstar, 2005). Since families have a significant role in academic and postsecondary success, transition specialists and school administration must consider identifying and promoting activities that will increase family involvement at home and school. It is also crucial that all school community members inform parents about these occasions to get involved in their children's education. Working with parent support organizations can also help build stronger relationships with families. Parent liaisons can get in touch with parents and provide them with one-on-one counseling about how to care for their children with SLDs (Morningstar et al., 2012).

School system's support: To prepare children with SLDs for a successful transition into the workforce, special education curricula should contain academic and vocational skills. This will equip students for a successful professional transition after graduation (Abdullah & Yasin, 2014). Students should be taught about the duties of companies and higher education and training institutions. In order to give students with SLDs extensive knowledge about specific vocations, any potential hurdles they may face, and viable solutions to professional issues, educational institutions and the school system, in particular, have a responsibility that must be taken seriously. Transition program must be implemented according to the extant laws of the school administration and country. This is because an employer could discriminate against some students and institutions due to the traits of candidates or the caliber of program studied. Most postsecondary career programs could also be constrained by insufficient resources, a lack of tailored vocational programs, and insufficient company linkages (Seo, 2013). The development of programs that support independence for these SLD students and the development of their social skills—which will enable them to interact with others appropriately in the workplace and society as a whole—is required in transition practices. Through such programs, these students can acquire the bravery and self-assurance necessary to prevail in highly competitive employment marketplaces.

Counseling support: College counselors who specialize in transition assistance can educate students with SLDs and their families about career and educational resources and opportunities available for them. By talking with them and constantly reminding them of the necessity to attain good career outcomes, teachers and counselors provide life-changing advice and counseling to SLD students. In order to build their professional maturity, students must also be helped to get part-time employment or experience (Punch et al., 2016), and the school counselor can assist students with this. Achieving success in career coaching and mentoring with students with SLDs requires that they take part in goal-setting, be shown helpful task-specific strategies, and learn how these strategies are applied. Career coaching should also include providing real-life experiences where students can practice behavioral and thinking skills and interact with one another, particularly by giving and receiving explanations. This is essential because cognitively oriented training emphasizes problem-solving

and other complex thinking skills. Instead of merely learning facts, students create their own knowledge by making sense of what is presented to them (Hutchinson & Freeman, 1994). Students are learning when they actively apply new information to pre-existing notions. By taking into consideration their responses and presenting arguments for their thinking, students learn that there are several ways to arrive at understanding. Furthermore, it is critical in the modern workplace to be able to negotiate meaning, pay attention to others, and come to an agreement. Hutchinson, Freeman, and Fisher (1993) demonstrated considerable progress in self- and career awareness, improved job writing and interview skills, problem-solving, and anger management tactics, particularly in the workplace.

Social support: With students from various cultures, languages, and family structures, school populations have grown increasingly varied over the past two decades. To help students become more socially adept, educators must discuss the many values and social standards students bring to the school environment. According to Hilton (2017), people rely on others to help, encourage, and support them daily at work, home, and leisure activities. Social support is crucial throughout a person's lifetime. Through numerous support programs and mutual understanding, society and the government have a duty in assisting students with SLDs as they transition from school to the workplace. Offering a helping hand and being a willing supporter will be crucial in helping students with SLDs reach their educational and career objectives.

Additionally, many students with SLDs do not have social competence goals in their individualized education programs, so teachers must take responsibility for the students' social competence. This will help students as they transition into different career paths (Meadan & Monda-Amaya, 2008). Individuals with SLDs require social assistance from an early age in order to recognize, control, and comprehend their own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Therefore, providing the right kind of support and assistance is crucial, including community financing, the availability of assistive technology, and changing people's attitudes about SLD people.

Faith-based support: According to Ilechukwu et al. (2015), studies have described religion's roles as changing people's character, discouraging actions deemed harmful to society's functioning, and providing institutions for upholding social order. Students with SLDs who place a high value on spirituality or religion and rely on their religious beliefs to help them overcome challenges, make decisions, understand pain, set goals, and give their lives meaning and purpose are likely to find this support strategy appealing. This kind of approach may include purely religious or spiritual teachings and psychological concepts and therapies from the secular world. This approach may also assist students with SLDs in overcoming barriers related to their career by providing and exposing them to education about the intersection of human and faith development, challenging their preconceived notions, and encouraging group work to help them understand the universality of their experience and to offer examples of how to handle their challenges. In order to achieve this goal and support the demand for justice for persons with disabilities, religious institutions must work more to increase public attention to the needs of those with SLDs.

Religious groups may provide pre-career education at houses of worship, job training programs, and even schools for youngsters with SLDs. Religion can foster a more respectful attitude toward people with SLDs through its numerous organizations since doing so boosts their prospects of achieving social acceptance, happiness, education, and work (Stymeist, 2008). A faith-based strategy can be used to support SLD people in accepting their limitations, gaining independence, and receiving rights on par with those their peers enjoy. Furthermore, this support strategy may minimize the stigmatization of people with SLDs, notably in the workplace and schools.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) support: It makes sense that parents would turn to the government as their first option once a child has been diagnosed with SLDs because local, state and federal governments typically provide several avenues for assistance that people with SLDs and their families can consider. However, governments are not the only organizations with structures, resources, and a motivation to assist people with disabilities, particularly those with SLDs. NGOs, or non-governmental organizations, are nonprofit groups or organizations that are entirely independent of government funding. Most NGOs support SLD students who want to go to postsecondary institutions primarily through scholarship programs, medical care, and helping other community-based charities meet the unique needs of these students in terms of education and transition to the workforce. They achieve this by implementing sizable fundraising strategies, enlisting corporate partners, and requesting private donations on behalf of those with disabilities. NGOs can also assist students with SLDs by encouraging the exchange of accurate information and providing opportunities for their families to connect, access information, and advance their knowledge to advocate for better access to services for their children. In order to promote the effective implementation of career education programs, particularly among students with SLDs, NGOs also offer educational and skill acquisition materials, learning aids, equipment, and gadgets.

Conclusion

Supporting persons with SLDs may significantly impact their ability to succeed in their studies, social lives and employment. This research paper examined various institutional support for students with SLDs transitioning to higher education and careers. Students with special needs, such as SLDs, require ongoing awareness of and attention to their requirements as part of the transition assistance necessary to help them accomplish their intended educational and professional objectives. Students with SLDs can increase and improve their transition to higher education and careers with the help of provisions like extra time, learning aids, dedicated staff, adequate teaching support, flexible assessment methods, social support, financial support, family support, counseling support, faith-based support, and NGO support, among others. Institutions should provide SLD students access to support services focused on strengthening and improving their educational, social, psychological, and economic chances of success and survival.

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