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Students with disabilities' self-report on perceptions toward disclosing disability and faculty's willingness to provide accommodations.

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Running head: STUDENTS ACCOMMODATIONS

**Students with Disabilities' Self-Report on Perceptions toward Disclosing Disability and
Faculty's Willingness to Provide Accommodations**

Abstract

Perceptions of students with disabilities toward faculty willingness to provide accommodations and students' willingness to disclose a disability were investigated in a sample of undergraduate and graduate students with disabilities ($n=141$) at a large mid-Atlantic university. Results revealed that most students felt their professors were willing to provide accommodations. High levels of students perceived instructors' willingness to provide accommodations were associated with high students' willingness to disclose a disability. However, the students seemed to be unwilling to disclose their disability. Furthermore, rated past student experiences relative to requesting for accommodations was highly correlated with both perceived instructors' willingness to provide accommodations and students' willingness to disclose a disability. Implications for rehabilitation counselors working with students with disabilities and future research are discussed.

Keywords: perceptions, students with disabilities, accommodations, faculty, disability disclosure

Students with Disabilities' Self-Report on Perceptions toward Disclosing Disability and Faculty's Willingness to Provide Accommodations

There is an increasing number of students with disabilities entering higher education (Baker, Boland, & Nowik, 2012; Cook, Rumrill, & Tankersley, 2009). These individuals represent an undergraduate population that has nearly quadrupled over the last several decades (Olney, Kennedy, Brockelman, & Newsome, 2004). Some reasons for the growing numbers of students may include (a) federal legislation calling for more accommodating environments for students (Cook et al., 2009; Kiuvara & Huefner, 2008); (b) the result of reforms on inclusion such as improved academic skills and increased workforce expectations (Cook et al., 2009); and (c) a more educated workforce among people with disabilities (Kiuvara & Huefner, 2008). Estimates of the rate of participation of students with disabilities in higher education are likely to be underestimated, as many students do not disclose their disabilities (Cook et al., 2009), and may be at higher risk for not completing their degrees (Lightner, Kipps-Vaughn, Shultz, & Trice, 2012).

Increasing college attendance is believed to have social and economic benefits, as individuals who graduate from college are two to three times more likely to maintain employment, compared to those who do not obtain a postsecondary degree (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013). Despite increases in participation in higher education, having a disability is a predictor of the degree to which educational and career goals are attained (Carter, Austin, & Trainor, 2012). Students with disabilities still attend college at lower rates and also maintain lower graduation rates than their non-disabled peers (Murray, Goldstein, Nourse, & Edgar, 2000; Wehman, 2005). To be successful in college, students require a smooth transition from high school to postsecondary institutions to prevent unfavorable outcomes experienced by students

with disabilities (Carter, Brock, & Trainor, 2014). This is not an easy process for those who face extra difficulties due to a disability (Patrick & Wessel, 2013). Students who receive special education services in high school have the support of multidisciplinary teams, which help to plan and implement interventions tailored to the students' disabilities. These teams typically include the student, parents, teachers, a school counselor or psychologist, and an administrator (Hadley, 2011). However, the college environment does not provide the same level of support for these students, making the transition to postsecondary education more difficult (Hadley, 2011).

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 included provisions that grant certain rights to students with disabilities who pursue higher education. The ADA of 1990 mandates that reasonable accommodations be made in the areas of academic programming, examinations, recreation, and housing. Even though the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA of 1990 protect students with disabilities, the student is responsible for requesting services and accommodations in higher education institutions. Faculty members are not permitted to ask students about their disability status and cannot offer accommodations until students request them. It is at the students' discretion to choose the classes in which they will use accommodations. Students with disabilities are expected to contact their university's disability office, self-identify as having a disability, and advocate on behalf of themselves (Hadley, 2011).

Self-advocating requires a shift from a more passive and dependent role to more active and independent behavior (Hadley, 2009). Past research has found that a vast majority of students with disabilities are not likely to seek help from their instructors (Trammell & Hathaway, 2007). If students do not disclose their disability or pursue appropriate

accommodations, they may miss out on essential supporting mechanisms for their academic success.

All students, regardless of disability, must not only adjust intellectually and socially to higher education (Tinto, 1993), they must also manage emotional and physical separation from significant social supports while also meeting more rigorous expectations and rules (Hadley, 2011). Adaptation to higher education can be more difficult for students with disabilities who may be unsure of how their disabilities will impact them. These students face different testing situations and classroom formats, unique socialization processes, and higher educational standards as they move out of high school and into college (Milsom & Hartley, 2005).

Individual faculty perceptions of organizational concerns, such as academic integrity and creating unfair advantages, may negatively impact the provision of accommodations for students with disabilities (Barnard-Brak, Lechtenberger, & Lan, 2010). University faculty attitudes and practices are critical for student success in college (Lombardi & Murray, 2011). Although university faculty members in the United States are required to follow disability rights laws, various attitudes and behaviors on the part of some faculty members may contribute to students with disabilities' lack of disclosure of disability and subsequent access to needed accommodations (Quinlan, Bates, & Angell, 2012).

Baker et al. (2012) suggested that how students perceive faculty knowledge of disabilities and willingness to make accommodations may influence their decision to seek out support services. In a study among undergraduate students, these authors found that one-third of students expressed concerns that faculty members would view them differently if they disclosed their disabilities. Therefore, attitudes, knowledge, and willingness of faculty to make accommodations to students with disabilities may be a crucial factor in students' academic progress (Wolman,

Suarez McCrink, Figueroa Rodriguez, & Harris-Looby, 2004). Some research has proposed that faculty members are supportive of students with disabilities (Baker et al., 2012). Despite this reported support and willingness to make accommodations, many faculty members admit they lack knowledge regarding appropriate ways of doing so (Cawthon & Cole, 2010). Other investigations reveal student reports of faculty lacking knowledge about the impact of disabilities in the academic setting, as well as an unwillingness to grant requests for accommodations (Farone, Hall, & Costello, 1998; Houck, Asselin, Troutman, & Arrington, 1992). To that end, only a small percentage of individuals with disabilities disclose their disabilities and, therefore, most do not receive support services (Kurth & Mellard, 2006). Often, students feel incompetent in their ability to reveal their disabilities and discuss their associated needs (Hartman-Hall & Haaga, 2002). Therefore, many students may not ask for accommodation services in time or may not request them at all (Barnard-Brak et al., 2010).

Some studies examining behaviors in the classroom have found that some faculty members make negative comments to students about the nature of their disability or their accommodation requests (Minner & Prater, 1984), while other faculty members question the need for the students' requests (Kurth & Mellard, 2006). It should be noted, however, that the finding of negative comments was published six years before the ADA was passed. Hindes and Mather (2007) found that a number of faculty members maintained less favorable attitudes when providing accommodations for those with attention or psychiatric disorders, as compared to those with physical or intellectual disabilities. In addition, some demonstrated low expectations from students with disabilities, which frequently resulted in poor academic performance (Dorwick, Anderson, Heyer, & Acosta, 2005).

Baker et al. (2012) examined both faculty and student perceptions of the classroom

faculty climate and interestingly found that more than half of the faculty sampled believed the climate to be positive, while less than one-third of students with and without disabilities shared this belief. Students tended to view faculty as less willing to provide accommodations than faculty viewed themselves. Nonetheless, more than half of the students in their study believed the accommodations they received met their needs.

Several factors appear to impact the support of students with disabilities in higher education. These include faculty members' knowledge of disability characteristics, knowledge of disability law, willingness to offer accommodations, useful instructional practices, and overall disability etiquette (Cook et al., 2009). Cook et al. (2009) examined each of these factors and the perceived importance and degree to which needs in each domain were being met. They found that accommodation policy and disability etiquette were believed to be highly important and were addressed effectively overall. Knowledge of disability law, instructional practices, and knowledge of disability characteristics were viewed as important, but were not effectively addressed, while willingness to offer accommodations was not ranked as important and was not effectively addressed. When training about these domains was provided, faculty members generally became more familiar with disability law, increased their awareness about disability issues, and were more willing to make accommodations (Murray, Lombardi, Wren, & Keys, 2009).

Positive interactions between students with disabilities and their instructors can encourage greater intellectual commitment and campus involvement, and the greater involvement in college life, the greater students' realization of knowledge and development of skills (Tinto, 1993). If such participation and commitment do not occur, students are at risk for isolation and withdrawal (Hadley, 2011). This is particularly true for those students with

disabilities who may need additional support for socialization and educational tasks. Historically, disabilities have been seen as negative qualities that are attended to by disability services; however, Weeber (2004) suggested that it may be more productive for these qualities to be seen as positive characteristics of students' identity. These individuals should be encouraged to connect with and develop collegiate communities that foster normalization and support. Such connections can increase student activism, interest in disability-related issues, and the provision of more progressive services (Cory, White, & Stuckey, 2010).

As noted, the classroom climate is heavily impacted by students' willingness to disclose their disabilities and seek support, as well as faculty members' knowledge about disabilities and willingness to provide accommodations. A review of the literature yielded a few studies regarding faculty attitudes toward accommodating students with disabilities. There was a dearth of research regarding students' perception toward disclosing disability and faculty willingness to provide accommodations. Related to this, there were no studies found that compared class level with instructors' willingness to provide accommodation or students' willingness to disclose their disability.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate student perceptions relevant to disclosing their disabilities and seeking accommodations. We sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are students' perceptions of their instructors' willingness to provide accommodations?
2. How willing are students to disclose their own disability?

3. What is the relationship between past students' experience in asking for accommodations and their perceptions of instructors' willingness to provide accommodations, as well as their willingness to disclose their disability?

Methods

Participants

Of the 1,500 students registered with the Office of Disability Services at a large mid-Atlantic university, 483 had requested accommodations for the semester in which the study took place. All 1,500 students were sent an online survey link but only students who indicated that they requested accommodations during the semester the study took place were considered. After eliminating duplicates and responses which indicated a given student did not request accommodations for the current semester, a total of 111 valid survey responses were included in the analyses, for a response rate of 23%.

Out of all included respondents, approximately 36% were males and 64% were females with one participant declining to respond to the gender question. The sample had a larger proportion of females in comparison to the overall gender distribution of students who requested accommodations. There was a nearly equal distribution across class levels, with somewhat fewer juniors and graduate students (Table 1). The frequency of disability types can be found in Table 1.

<Inset Table 1 about here>

Data Collection

A biographical data form was administered. The form solicited information related to age, gender, type of disability, level of education, (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, or graduate level), enrollment type (i.e., on campus or on-line), registration with the Office of

Accessibility Services, and the provision of services through this office. The survey is based on instruments designed by Baker et al. (2012). Two survey instruments were used for the present study: the Willingness to Accommodate Students (WAS) and the Willingness to Disclose Disability (WDD). The original instruments were reworded to reflect the needs of the present study. The instruments' content validity was tested by a panel of experts in disabilities and survey instrument development at a mid-Atlantic university. The experts reviewed the instruments for content, language appropriateness, and survey design principles to provide an impression of the instruments' utility for the study.

The Willingness to Accommodate Students (WAS; Baker, Boland, & Nowik, 2012). The WAS uses a 5-point Likert scale with responses that range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) in relation to faculty members' willingness to provide accommodations for students registered with the Office of Accessibility Services. The authors evaluated content validity using faculty and staff with knowledge in the survey area and revised the instrument accordingly. The original instrument was revised to reflect the needs of the present study. The revised instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .78 (n= 13).

The Willingness to Disclose Disability (WDD; Baker, Boland, & Nowik, 2012). The WDD is also a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Similar to the WAS, the authors evaluated content validity using faculty and staff with knowledge in the survey area and revised the instrument accordingly. For the purpose of the present study, a sixth option (*Not Applicable*) was added to the instrument, in the event that a particular accommodation was irrelevant to a participant. Similar to the WAS above, authors of the original instrument evaluated content validity using experts with knowledge in the survey

area and revised the instrument accordingly. The revised instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .78 ($n = 6$).

Data collection procedure

An online survey was created using Qualtrics software. The first author emailed the survey to staff at the institutional Office of Accessibility Services who then sent it to the students through their listserv, a list containing all registered students with disabilities. The email contained a letter to participants and a link to an IRB-approved consent form and Qualtrics survey. No identifying information, such as name or signature, was required to ensure that the identities of participants were protected. It was explained that participation was voluntary and that participants' responses were anonymous. Participants were informed that their education and related services or grades would not be affected by their participation or non-participation in the study.

Participants were informed that the university's Institutional Review Board approved the study. Participants were invited to enter a drawing for one of two \$25.00 Starbucks gift certificates. To be entered into the drawing, they were asked to provide an email address at the end of the survey. They were informed that their email addresses would not be linked to the survey, that the drawing would be done at the end of the study, and that winners would receive the gift certificate via e-mail through the department's business office. To conceal the identity of the participants, a graduate assistant de-identified the survey responses before providing them to the primary researcher. In a bid to achieve a high response rate, four reminders were sent to participants through listserv emails and a drawing for prizes was offered at the end of the survey (Nulty, 2008).

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations for the overall sample and student sub-groups, were utilized to describe student perceptions. To examine differences across subgroups, univariate ANOVAs were conducted for the two constructs (perceived instructor willingness to provide accommodation and student willingness to disclose a disability). These were examined across academic classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate).

In addition, the responses to the open-ended survey item “*Have you ever requested accommodations from a professor? If yes, please explain how your accommodations needs are being met. If no, what factors are preventing you from requesting accommodations*” were analyzed. These were examined to gauge if students had positive or negative experiences in the past, which may influence their inclination to ask for accommodations in the future. Based on the nature of past experiences, each statement was rated as 1 (*negative experience*), 2 (*neutral experience*), or 3 (*positive experience*). Table 2 provides illustrative excerpts from participant responses for each category.

<Insert Table 2 about here>

Each statement was coded by two graduate students independently. The students had expertise in psychology and rehabilitation counseling, respectively. Utilizing a qualitative method of content analysis, individual statements were examined for references to past experiences in educational settings. A priori coding scheme was utilized, which was comprised of three broad categories. The “negative experiences” code was applied to the text where participants shared examples of their request for accommodations that was not honored, met with resistance, or instructors questioned the need for such accommodations. Other statements that referred to instances where participants did not ask for accommodations or only mentioned

receiving accommodations without further elaboration on the instructors' reaction or support were coded as "neutral experiences." Text that referenced interactions in which the student's request for accommodations was actively supported by the instructor or the instructor went "above and beyond" to ensure the student's success was categorized as "positive experiences." The level of analysis was the individual respondent; thus, the statement of each respondent was analyzed in its totality and each respondent received one code, indicating that they shared a negative, neutral, or positive past experience. An inter-rater reliability analysis using the Kappa statistic was performed to determine consistency between the two raters. The inter-rater reliability for the raters was found to be $Kappa = 0.91$ ($p < .0001$), 95% CI (0.827, 0.983).

Spearman correlation analyses were utilized to determine the relationship between participants' past rated experiences in accommodation request, willingness to disclose a disability, and perceptions of instructor willingness to provide accommodations. To calculate the correlations, values of the open-ended question ratings were utilized with (higher ratings indicating more positive experiences), as well as the values for students' perceptions of instructors' willingness to provide accommodations and students' willingness to disclose a disability, based on the ratings on a 5-point Likert scale provided by the survey respondents. For the two Likert scale variables, higher values indicated more faculty willingness to provide accommodations and higher student willingness to disclose a disability. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Windows Version 21 was utilized for all statistical analyses.

Results

The average score for instructor willingness to provide accommodations, as perceived by students, was 3.63 on a five-point scale ($SD=.77$, $n=110$), indicating that the average was somewhat higher than the scale midpoint of 3. Student responses were also examined across

disability groups. The means and standard deviations for instructor willingness to provide accommodations and student disposition to disclose their disability are listed in Table 3.

Participants in eight of the nine disability groups had relatively positive perceptions of their faculty's willingness to provide accommodations. With one exception, the average score was greater than the scale midpoint of 3 and ranged from 3.47 to 4.05. The mean score for students in the visual impairment category was somewhat lower.

<Insert Table 3 about here>

In order to better understand student perceptions, the differences in perception scores across **academic classification** (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate) were investigated through one-way ANOVAs. The average scores for perceived instructor willingness to provide accommodations and student dispositions relative to disclosing their disability are provided by **class** level (Table 4). The assumption of homogeneity of variances was met for both ANOVAs. In the second ANOVA, the scores for one group (willingness to disclose a disability) deviated from normality, but ANOVA is considered robust despite this violation (Glass, Peckham, & Sanders, 1972; Schmider, Ziegler, Danay, Beyer, & Bühner, 2010).

The average scores for perceived instructor willingness to provide accommodations were relatively high for all participants, with graduate students indicating the most positive perceptions of their instructors ($M = 4.18$, $SD = .56$). Freshmen had the lowest average of all groups ($M = 3.47$, $SD = .73$), but this score was somewhat high considering the scale (1 = *not accommodating at all* to 5 = *very accommodating*). The univariate ANOVA across **academic classification** revealed no significant differences in the students' mean perceptions of instructors' willingness to provide accommodations, $F(1, 105) = 2.294$, $p > .05$.

Regarding students' willingness to disclose, the mean score for the construct (willingness to disclose one's disability) was 3.01 with a standard deviation of .85 ($n = 111$), indicating that the average was right on the scale midpoint. Students seemed to indicate a moderately low willingness to disclose their disability, with most categories falling below the scale midpoint when looking at distribution across disability (see Table 3). The mean scores in only three disability categories (orthopedic or mobility, medical condition, and head injury) reached levels higher than 3. The lowest levels of willingness to disclose a disability were reported by students with visual impairments and those with speech or communication disabilities, and the highest average scores were observed in the orthopedic or mobility category and the medical condition category.

A second one-way ANOVA examined differences in average willingness to disclose one's disability across academic levels. The mean scores for most groups were close to the scale midpoint (Table 4); seniors had the lowest mean score ($M = 2.71$, $SD = .96$), while the highest was reported by graduate students. The analysis did not show any significant differences in the class level means of students' willingness to disclose their disability, $F(4, 106) = 1.723$, $p > .05$.

<Insert Table 4 about here>

A total of 92 students provided responses to the open-ended survey item related to students' past experiences of asking for accommodations. A greater number of students provided positive and neutral experiences in comparison to the number of negative responses (Table 5).

<Insert Table 5 about here>

The relationship between perceived instructor willingness to provide accommodations and student willingness to disclose a disability was examined. The results revealed a significant positive, but moderate, Pearson correlation between the two constructs ($r = .25$, $p < .01$),

indicating that higher levels of perceived instructor willingness to provide accommodations were associated with greater student willingness to disclose a disability, and vice versa.

Spearman correlations of students' past experiences requesting for accommodations, perceived instructors' willingness to provide accommodations, and students' willingness to disclose a disability revealed significant positive correlations (see Table 6). Interestingly, the rated past student experiences had high correlations with both instructors' willingness to provide accommodations and students' willingness to disclose a disability. Instructors' willingness to provide accommodations and students' willingness to disclose a disability were the least correlated. In other words, more positive experiences of asking for accommodations in the past were associated with more willingness to disclose a disability and more positive perceptions of instructor willingness to provide accommodations.

<Insert Table 6 about here>

Discussion

Contrary to the past where older students perceived their instructors as unwilling to provide accommodations (Houck et al., 1992), student perceptions at this institution regarding instructors' willingness to provide accommodations were relatively positive. This may be an indication that instructors at this institution have become or have always been knowledgeable about disability accommodations and are willing to provide the necessary support mechanisms for students to be successful. It may also be that the previous study was conducted shortly after the passage of the ADA, and faculty at that time may not have been as aware of the need to provide accommodations. Baker et al. (2012) suggested that students' perceptions of faculty' knowledge of disabilities and willingness to make accommodations significantly influence student decisions to seek out support services. These findings are similar to those of Cawthon and Cole (2010) who found that faculty members were willing to accommodate postsecondary

students with disabilities, although they reported that they lacked sufficient understanding of specific learning disabilities and the ways of making appropriate accommodations. These findings portend well for students at this institution because the willingness of faculty to offer accommodations has been found to be one of the factors that appear to have important impacts on the support of students with disabilities in higher education (Cook et al., 2009).

On the other hand, findings from the present study indicate that at this institution, despite students' perceptions of instructors' high willingness to provide accommodations, students' own willingness to reveal disabilities are not as high. From a self-advocacy standpoint, if students fail to take the initiative to seek accommodations, which may inevitably require disclosure of disability, they may miss opportunities for a more supportive environment for their college success. Past research has shown that students with learning disabilities feel it is essential to continue using services to integrate into the postsecondary educational environment when transitioning from high school (Hadley, 2005). Even if our participants felt their faculty were willing to meet their accommodations needs, they did not feel as comfortable disclosing their disability. Hartman-Hall and Haaga (2002) found that many students do not feel competent in their ability to communicate about their disabilities and their needs. The apparent low student willingness to disclose their disability may indicate a need for rehabilitation counselors and other stakeholders to work with these students to help them develop self-advocacy skills.

As mentioned earlier, no studies were found in the literature that compared class level with instructors' willingness to provide accommodations or students' willingness to disclose their disability, and we wanted to explore these aspects. However, no significant differences in attitudes across students from different class levels were found. The study did not include

longitudinal data across the class categories that could provide more information of perceptions throughout a student's college life. As a result, we were not able to explain these findings.

Past experiences in asking for accommodations were highly correlated with perceived instructors' willingness to provide accommodations and students' willingness to disclose a disability. In other words, more positive experiences of asking for accommodations in the past were associated with more willingness to disclose a disability and more positive perceptions of instructors' willingness to provide accommodations. These findings support Baker et al. (2012) study that suggested how students perceived faculty knowledge of disabilities and willingness to make accommodations may influence their decision to seek out support services. Because seeking accommodations may at times entail students disclosing their disability, past positive experiences among students might be key to future requests for accommodations from faculty. Faculty attitudes can hinder, encourage, or enhance student's endeavor to have suitable accommodations implemented (Graham & English, 2001). Since past positive experiences with faculty appear to be related to accommodation-seeking behaviors of students with disabilities, it might be necessary to enhance these students' experiences by helping faculty maintain their positive attitudes toward providing accommodations. Cawthon and Cole (2010) found that faculty members were willing to accommodate postsecondary students with disabilities, yet they indicated that they lacked sufficient understanding of specific learning disabilities and the ways of making appropriate accommodations. This might indicate a need for the students' disability services office to continue to assist faculty with meeting the accommodation needs of students with disabilities. To this end, Hartman-Hall and Haaga's (2002) results suggest the creation of academic support units that can assist faculty members with requests for accommodations.

Implications for Practice

Findings from this study have important implications for practice. The main function of campus disability services is to support the attainment of academic success of students with disabilities. Staff at the disability office at this institution appear to have done a good job in ensuring students with disabilities get access to needed accommodations from their instructors. The instructors on their part have been able to satisfy the needs of their students. This trend needs to be sustained to ensure students at this institution attain their educational goals. Furthermore, findings from the study show that students with past positive experiences in accessing their accommodations needs were happy with their instructors. The findings indicate a need for disability services personnel who sometimes include rehabilitation counselors to continue to support faculty in their bid to provide accommodations to students with disabilities.

The results, however, revealed that students at this institution were moderately willing to disclose their disability. Because classroom climate is impacted by students' willingness to disclose their disabilities and seek out accommodations, rehabilitation counselors and other support staff working with this population may need to empower students with disabilities to be proactive in seeking accommodations. The staff may also need to encourage students to discuss their accommodation needs with their professors, which may at times require them to disclose their disabilities.

Implications for Research

The present study was carried out in one educational setting and the finding cannot necessarily be generalized. Therefore, further perception studies at state and national levels are warranted to ascertain whether: (a) students with disabilities are willing to disclose their disabilities as a way of seeking accommodations, (b) whether students with disabilities think their instructors are willing to provide them with accommodations in their pursuit of higher

education, and (c) whether past positive experiences in their quest for accommodations is related to students' positive perceptions of their instructors' willingness to provide accommodations and students' willingness to disclose their disability with instructors. Also, because there were no significant **class** differences observed in average scores for instructor willingness to provide accommodations and student willingness relative to disclosing their disability, further longitudinal research is recommended to ascertain whether there are changes in perceptions related to these constructs among students with disabilities across time.

Limitations

The present study has several limitations that should be considered in the interpretation of the findings. First, because a convenience sample of students with disabilities from one mid-Atlantic University was used, the findings may not be generalizable to other populations. Second, the cross-sectional design utilized in the study means that the findings are limited to the time of the study and the sample studied. Third, the instruments utilized for the study are self-report measures which are susceptible to social desirability and other biases. Finally, the study was limited to students who had received accommodations within the past semester, a situation that may have restricted others who might have completed the survey.

Conclusion

Results of the present study indicate that most student participants felt that their instructors were willing to provide accommodations. The results also indicate that students' positive past experiences in asking for accommodations were related to perceived instructors' willingness to provide accommodations, as well as students' willingness to disclose a disability. These positive experiences may need to be enhanced to ensure students approach their

instructors with their future accommodation needs to enable them to be successful in their education career.

On the other hand, the findings indicated that students at this institution were moderately willing to disclose their disability. Students need to be proactive in seeking accommodations for them to be successful in postsecondary education. There might be a need for students to disclose their disability if that would enable them to receive the needed accommodations.

Findings from the present study also indicate that students with positive past experiences appear to possess better evaluations of their instructors' willingness to provide accommodations. Bad previous experiences with instructors may impede students from seeking accommodations in future. If the first positive experiences are enhanced, it is might be possible for more students to seek accommodations and be willing to disclose their disabilities. Another factor that might impede students from seeking accommodations could be a lack of self-advocacy skills. The students might benefit from increased self-advocacy skills from rehabilitation counselors and other support staff at the students' disability offices to seek academic support through accommodations to enable them to be successful in college.

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Tables

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Variable	<i>n</i>	(%)	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)
Age			22.25	(5.11)
Gender				
Male	40	(36.0)		
Female	71	(64.0)		
Level of Education				
Freshman	23	(20.7)		
Sophomore	25	(22.5)		
Junior	18	(16.2)		
Senior	33	(29.7)		
Graduate	12	(10.8)		
Type of Disability				
ADD/ADHD	38	(34.2)		
Orthopedic/Mobility	11	(9.9)		
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	13	(11.7)		
Visual Impairment	2	(1.8)		
Medical Condition	29	(26.1)		
Head Injury	5	(4.5)		
Emotional/Psychological	28	(25.2)		
Speech/Communication	6	(5.4)		
Learning Disability	21	(18.9)		

Note. *N* = 111.

Table 2

Codes and Illustrative Examples of the Open-Ended Survey Item Responses

Codes	Participant Examples
<p>Negative Experience (Coded as 1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing me to use a laptop in class to take notes, which has been allowed by some, but also still disallowed by others. I am very reluctant to approach any teacher about asking for extra time on assignments because I haven't been taken seriously by them in the past. • Yes I requested lecture notes from a professor and he wouldn't give them to me he said to try and get a student to give them to me. Also many teachers are unprepared for the test accommodations.
<p>Neutral Experience (Coded as 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No because I usually sit near the front of the class and I am usually able to understand and produce the material after I hear it once. • I have requested accommodations from my professors. Most are all willing to accommodate when needed within reason.
<p>Positive Experience (Coded as 3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This semester I have requested accommodations from my math professor. I asked for a ten minute increase to the monitored testing times in the laboratory setting with the rest of the class and the proctors. Professor X was more than helpful when I went to him during the first week of classes. Since then he also reaches out to me during office hours and doesn't mind the extra questions after class time. • Yes, I get extended time when requested and in alternative environments (quiet rooms, outside class). I have never had a problem with any of my professors, they have all been very flexible.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Instructor Willingness to Provide

Accommodations and Personal Willingness to Disclose Disability across Disability Categories

Type of Disability	Perceived Instructor					
	Willingness to Provide Accommodations			Personal Willingness to Disclose Disability		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
ADD/ADHD	38	3.42	0.75	38	2.95	0.83
Orthopedic/Mobility	11	4.05	0.65	11	3.22	0.60
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	13	3.53	0.81	13	2.95	0.97
Visual Impairment	2	2.35	0.27	2	2.00	0.47
Medical Condition	28	3.83	0.76	29	3.17	0.89
Head Injury	5	3.57	0.64	5	3.43	0.86
Emotional/Psychological	28	3.69	0.81	28	2.94	0.92
Speech/Communication	6	3.53	0.89	6	2.50	0.51
Learning Disability	21	3.47	0.62	21	2.71	0.53

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Instructor Willingness to Provide Accommodations and Personal Willingness to Disclose Disability across Class Levels

Class Level	Perceived Instructor Willingness to Provide Accommodations			Personal Willingness to Disclose Disability		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
	Freshman	22	3.47	.73	23	3.11
Sophomore	25	3.65	.86	25	3.06	.79
Junior	18	3.74	.60	18	3.18	.74
Senior	33	3.49	.79	33	2.71	.96
Graduate	12	4.18	.56	12	3.01	.85

Table 5

Student Attitudes toward Asking for Accommodations Based on Open-Ended Responses

Codes	<i>n</i>	%
Negative Experience	13	14.1%
Neutral Experience	53	57.6%
Positive Experience	26	28.3%
Total Responses	92	100%

Table 6

Correlations

	1	2	3
1. Perceived Instructor Willingness to Provide Accommodations	1		
2. Personal Willingness to Disclose Disability	.247*	1	
3. Student Attitudes toward Asking for Accommodations	.372*	.371*	1

Note. * Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).