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Successful Life Long Transitions in Life of Learning Disability after High School / College

Lisa Carlock
ljcarlock@siu.edu

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SUCCESSFUL LIFE LONG TRANSITIONS IN LIFE OF LEARNING DISABILITY AFTER
HIGH SCHOOL / COLLEGE

by

Lisa Carlock

B.S., Southern Illinois University, 2013

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Science

Department of Rehabilitation Counseling
in the Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May 2019

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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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Approved by:

Dr. Thomas Upton, Chair

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
March 29, 2019

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HEADING 1

INTRODUCTION

The problem is that many individuals with learning disability (LD) are not able to acquire types of jobs that they are interested in and at the same time be successful in their jobs as they transition in life after high school and college. Many young adults diagnosed with LD often experience difficulty in obtaining gainful employment based on attitudes of employers toward disability specifically LD during the hiring process. Rehabilitation Counseling Services can assist in the life transitions for young adults with LD by providing adequate supports in helping adults with LD to be productive and successful in life after high school. Awareness can increase successful job outcomes for individuals with LD. There are many individuals who are willing to work but need job supports to be successful in their jobs. One available resource to assist both the individual and the employer is Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and is accessible at <https://askjan.org/>. The intention of this paper is to review the current literature in how there is a connection between LD and how it contributes to the successful life transitions in life for individuals with LD after high school or college.

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BACKGROUND

The best ways to help adults with LD to be productive and successful in life may include any of the following: going to college, finding a job they are interested in, or additional training.

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) specific learning disability (SLD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects the person's brain in how they perceive or process information both verbally and nonverbally. Learning disability is commonly referenced as either SLD or LD and will be referred to as LD in this paper. The diagnosis for LD is usually made during the school age years. Common characteristics seen in LD are persistent difficulties learning academic skills as for at least six months during the school developmental years. The main areas affected academically may include any of or a combination in the following areas of reading, reading comprehension, written expression, spelling, and math. This then affects the amount of success they have in job outcomes and productivity within areas of their life. Therefore, adults living life with LD experience difficulty not only in transitioning in life after high school but in job performance if there are no supports in place when transitioning into additional training, post-secondary education, or employment.

There are several aspects to look at in order for life-long transitions to be successful in LD. According to the DSM-5 the diagnosis of LD cannot be a result in the following areas of intellectual disability, global developmental delay, hearing or vision disorders, nor neurological or motor disorders. Global developmental delay is that the child is delayed more than the other children in those developmental stages and continues with noticeable delays that do not improve

with interventions from the school or parents. The assessment methods used in correctly diagnosing LD may be a combination of the following such as observation, clinical interview, school reports, rating scales, and educational or psychological assessments. Usually the diagnosis of LD is confirmed by a professional licensed psychologist. The two most common tests used but not limited to in diagnosing LD are the Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement (WJ) and the Wechsler Individual Achievements Test (WIAT).

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INCREASING AWARENESS

According to Lindstrom and Kahn, because many young adults with disabilities do not have the experience of being in the workforce, it is suggested by the authors that "employers may need specific training to increase disability awareness and address disability discrimination" (p.9). The authors suggest that rehabilitation counselors need to advocate for these individuals both to employers and for the individual trying to obtain work so that they may have better job outcomes as they enter the job market. Along with this, the authors suggest that teaching and training these individuals to self-advocate, have job supports, and to receive training so they have the needed skills to obtain these jobs.

According to Gonzalez and Rosenthal, there's "a discrepancy between the number of adults who have specific learning disabilities and the number who receive vocational rehabilitation services may suggest that there's many who are eligible for vocational services are not receiving them"(p.171). Their findings suggest poor vocational outcomes for this population especially related to "influence of public support and ethnicity/race" (p.171).

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CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

There are negative and positive factors that contribute to participation in work for individuals with LD according to one study. Negative factors identified the most were persistent difficulties in reading or writing and spelling as evidenced by the negative feelings and emotions about the dyslexia or (LD); or difficulty in acquiring a job and, once acquired whether the individual with LD felt like they'd be able to keep the job regardless of whether it was a blue or white collar job (de Beer, 2014). Positive factors identified the most were being creative, problem solving, and the characteristic of being persistent in both achieving and motivation.

According to the DSM-5, "LD commonly co-occurs with neurodevelopmental (e.g., ADHD, communication disorders, developmental coordination disorder, autistic spectrum disorder) or other mental disorders (e.g., anxiety disorders, depressive and bipolar disorders)" (p.74). This complicates successful life outcomes for the individual with LD thus one of the needs is to have adequate supports in place such job support.

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TOOLS TO IMPROVE SUCCESSFUL JOB OUTCOMES

One research study revealed that implementing successful tools to help people with disabilities to participate more productively in the workplace included being persistent and keeping a positive mind, focusing on gaining while learning new skills, active advocacy/awareness, and networking through forming networks, seeking mentors, and mentoring (Kulkarni, 2014). The implications of this study were that there needs to be more awareness and strategies identified so that both parties, whether the employer/employee can put into place tools to help in participating more productively in the workplace. Employers can advocate and provide trainings within their company to bring more awareness and can put into place strategies that may help with providing a more inclusive workplace for all employees to be productive and successful in their jobs (Kulkarni, 2014).

Some of the ways that vocational rehabilitation counseling services can improve in providing services to adults with LD were identified in four areas (Hein, 2005). The findings for the four areas were 1) general counseling skills such as listening, level of understanding, communication, and monitoring progress more effectively, 2) skills in job placement such as providing accurate information, 3) case management such as providing treatment outside of the counseling session, returning phone messages more quickly, keeping their promises, and 4) concerns about receiving appropriate education or employment as part of services received (Hein, 2005).

Career assessments are one of the tools that help in deciding what job would be the most interesting for the individual with LD. Life with LD can have a smoother transition when

knowing what field of work would be of most interest to the individual and then to develop a plan as to how to achieve that goal for that specific job area of interest. Setting some goals as to how this will be achieved is key to discovering the job of interest. The individual with LD needs to decide on how they will meet the requirements for the job of their interest while taking into account will they go to college, enter the workforce immediately after high school, or attain additional training such as an apprenticeship. One of the ways to explore jobs of interest is to take assessment tests that explore career development. Some require a fee such as Becker Work Adjustment Profile, 2nd Edition (BWAP-2), Career Beliefs Inventory (CBI), Career Decision Scale (CDS), and Job Search Attitude Survey (JSAI). These career assessments may evaluate attitudes, job readiness skills, beliefs and obstacles that may hinder job development depending on which career assessment is taken (Trainor, 2012).

Informal assessments such as interviews, observations, and inventories are simple and can be individualized according to the level of functioning for the individual with LD. "Analyzing the work environment involves exploring the job site and work environment of interest to individual with LD and comparing the results to the preferences, strengths, and needs to determine the degree to which these match" (Sitlington, 2007).

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CONCLUSION

Many young adults with LD desire to enter the workforce after high school. In order for them to be successful in this transitioning period they may need job supports or accommodations to help them when choosing to attain additional training, go to college, or simply enter into the job of interest to them. In doing this, they will make decisions as to what job will bring the most job satisfaction while being productive in the job of their choice. Exploring jobs that may be right for them can be done through career assessments, career job development, job shadowing, and with the use of vocational rehabilitation counseling services to help make the transition smoother for the individual with LD. It is possible with adequate supports in place to assist the adult with LD to have successful life-long transition in the career of their choice while having job satisfaction and being productive. By setting goals, knowing their strengths and challenges, and what job supports are needed, life with LD can be successful.

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VITA

Graduate School
Southern Illinois University

Lisa J. Carlock

66lisacarlock@gmail.com

Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Bachelor of Science, Communication Disorders & Science, May 2013

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Major Professor: Thomas Upton