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Self-Efficacy of College Students with a Learning Disability During Freshman Year

Nicole Renee Adams
Walden University

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Walden University

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Nicole R. Adams

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University
2021

Abstract

Self-Efficacy of College Students With a Learning Disability During Freshman Year

by

Nicole R. Adams

M.Ed, Regent University 2005

BA, York College, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

August 2021

Abstract

The current study sought to understand the phenomena of educational programming and academic self-efficacy. The conceptual framework for this study was based on social cognitive theories of academic self-efficacy and motivation. This qualitative study used interpretive phenomenological analysis to gain a broader understanding of experiences of academic self-efficacy and motivation in college students diagnosed with a specific learning disability. Ten participants were recruited with snowball sampling and semi-structured interviews were conducted to guide this research study. Results of this research support additional analysis as necessary to close the gaps presented in the college transition and campus life of students with a learning disability who have experienced academic self-efficacy and positive student attainment. The self-efficacy of students with a learning disability is manifested in their awareness of their disability and motivation to succeed as college level students. Fifty percent of the participants shared feelings of isolation and limited support to campus life. Participants also shared a commitment to being part of a campus life and working to meet the rigor required of college-level students. Students who pursued accommodations and campus support reported a reduction in stress and pressure. The research findings support the need for increased understanding of learning-disabled student embarrassment and relevance to stigma and labeling research. This understanding will inform special programs as they monitor and assist college students with a learning disability, who are striving for academic self efficacy, and career goal attainment leading to positive social change.

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Dedication

This research study is dedicated to my family, my mother Lorri Smith-Napier who has been my cheerleader from the beginning of this degree, instilling diligence and determination to finish what I started. My husband Kenyatta, I love you for your support in your own way, “my midnight company”, the quietest time in our house when reading the articles seemed to never end. My loving children, Christopher, Kiara, Alyssa and Madison Adams, your encouragement will always be remembered. I am looking forward to the day, I no longer need to lead my conversations with, “I have to work on my dissertation.”

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This journey has been an emotional one, but one I am thankful for; each phase I have grown and developed into the educator I am today. For that, I give thanks to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His guidance, protection and constantly reminding me, *“I can do all things through Christ who Strengthens Me”* Philippians 4:13

I would like to acknowledge the 10 students who shared their stories of college life and allowed me into their universe in an effort to help other LD students navigate the academic world as a Freshman. Your lived experiences will positively add to the research as faculty, parents and board members work to make college accessible for everyone.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the United States, there has been an increase in learning disabled (LD) young adults seeking a postsecondary degree, and in the last 10 years, the number of students with learning disabilities entering institutions of higher learning has increased from 6% to 11% (Zeng et al., 2018; DuPaul & Weyandt, 2009). Reed et al. (2015) report that many LD learners have been unsuccessful at the college level and are not able to achieve at the same level as their nondisabled peers. This chapter will provide a brief description of the gap in the literature surrounding LD college freshman and how self-efficacy is experienced during their educational program. Self-efficacy influences life choices and the inner self to promote perseverance when faced with adversities (Wibrowski et al., 2016). Some students classified with a learning disability have been offered services at the high school level and many graduate and progress to postsecondary education. Many students continue to require transitional services and/or accommodations at the college level to keep up with the rigor of higher-level critical thinking that is required in a postsecondary environment (Kane et al., 2011). This research study will address the question of what the lived experience of LD college students with self-efficacy during their freshman year of college is, specifically regarding academic success and challenges.

According to Zeng et al. (2018), LD college student enrollment has increased to 31% within the last decade. Educational programming has leveled the playing field to assist students as they learn and maintain progress at the college level (Orr & Hammig, 2009). Very little research has explored the experience of college freshmen diagnosed

with a learning disability who, despite their learning challenges, have overcome difficulties to progress through to a higher level of academic student success.

Background of the Study

According to Gormley et al. (2017), young and older adult LD college student enrollment has increased since the early 21st century, currently representing 41% of the college student population. Gormley et al. (2017) investigated the support services provide by higher education institutions with a goal of measuring the success factors of services provided to LD students. Although the services and accommodations varied from one school to another, the lower academic success and lower self-efficacy of LD students suggests the need to support students with LD in their higher educational pursuits with additional resources to improve student success and retention.

Farmer et al. (2015) conducted an 8-week study to test the outcomes measure of LD students and motivation. The program was developed to assess the model by which LD students succeeded at the college level and what instructional strategies if any aided them to face the challenges of a college student. The personal strengths program (PSP) included self-determination levels of the college students with learning disabilities. The program participants reported the program was found to be helpful to aid in meeting both academic and personal goals. The authors reported there is still more research needed to examine the effects of this program in the area of self-determination.

Early studies show its focus was also on the negative aspects of human behavior. Nondisabled college students may face obstacles similar to LD students when they transition from secondary education to postsecondary education (Gormley et al., 2017).

The most current focus on motivation in LD students is on their strengths and skillset or talents as opposed to their weaknesses and this mindset helps students flourish in a college setting (Gormley et al., 2017). This incorporation of motivation is essential to improving academic self-efficacy for learning-disabled college students (Costello & Stone, 2012).

Hen and Goroshit (2012) explained how LD related behaviors, information processing, and other factors are relevant to the disability. Students with LD who are pursuing a degree program have greater risk for academic failure than success due to their disability. DuPaul and Weyandt (2009) illustrate challenges encountered as a result of having a disability and how those challenges can be lessened. Cowden (2010) identifies strategies that can be applied so that risky situations faced by learners, such as inability to be attentive, are controlled. According to Norwalk et al. (2009), there are optimal learning methods for people with LD characteristics and teaching methods relevant to students with similar disabilities. In addition, Kane et al. (2011) illustrated a range of interventions that can be carried out within schools so that students with learning disabilities can be empowered to improve their academic capabilities and outcomes.

Many LD students with a specific learning disability (SLD) or similar characteristics have attempted to pursue a college degree, which resulted in academic probation or failure to complete their first year with positive academic outcomes (DuPaul et al., 2015). According to King (2009), awareness of self-efficacy has aided student academic success and identified student limitations so that a decision can be made with the aim of assisting such people to overcome their challenges. In comparison to their

nondisabled peers, 41% of LD students fail to have positive academic outcomes. Advokat et al. (2011) argue the academic failure of LD students is due to lack of college preparation. Alivernini and Ludici (2011) delineate the connection between social context, the degree of self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and role motivation on academic achievement.

A longitudinal study conducted by Alivernini and Ludici (2011) refers also to the maximally negative influence of the retention factors that may subsequently lead to the decision to leave college and the educational establishment. Gao et al. (2011) also support the stance that self-efficacy is a predetermining factor in academic performance, specifically related to in-class activity and learning processes of students with a learning disability. Bergen (2013) reported a significant impact of self-efficacy on “content-specific and general academic achievement, effort and preparedness” when comparing LD students with student without a learning disability (p.7).

Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) contribute to the discussion of the role of motivation in education and enhancement of performance of LD students, suggesting that LD students may achieve more if they are provided proper approaches to the course of study. Wright (2004) outlines the key ideas, directions, and guidelines acknowledged in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Understanding the background for student comprehension of educational programs, their potential, and limitations in the context of academic performance of the LD college students is important. Wright (2004) addresses state responsibilities and their function in terms of promotion of academic excellence in LD students. Learning evaluations and key educational programs can be

targeted to improve LD students learning potential and provide procedural safeguards (Wright, 2004). Wright (2004) underlines the rights of the parents and the directions of obligatory educational programs in educational establishments that include LD students. It is of vital importance to compare the original IDEA act with the 2004 IDEA act, as this demonstrates the progress in the field of concern as well as detects remaining drawbacks that are to be solved locally (IDEA, 2004). There is a significant volume of research that suggests a significant increase in the number of students with LD who pursue a postsecondary education. Limited research is available on how LD freshman students experience positive academic success through self-efficacy (DuPaul et al., 2015).

Problem Statement

Learning disability may include language comprehension and production issues with onset between birth and age 18, and may include deficits in attention, concentration, reading, writing, and use of language (Weis et al., 2014). Weis et al. (2014) suggest that young LD students, who are diagnosed using alternative measuring tools for the SLD classification, present low average achievement upon college entry and tend to struggle with college. Observations by Hen and Goroshit (2012) show that the problems faced by LD students have also been worsened by traditional school practices, which have not been effective in helping students achieve their academic goals. Students with learning disabilities have been observed to have lower performance than non-LD students in the areas of decision-making ability, spelling, math, and sciences. According to Goroshit and Hen (2012), LD-related behaviors include academic procrastination, learned helplessness,

and low expectations. LD students fail to succeed in postsecondary education due to the inability to problem solve and prioritize at the college level (Goroshit & Hen, 2012).

Weis et al. (2014) report that students diagnosed with a SLD demonstrate areas of deficiency in their academics, work experience, and social factors. Cowden (2010) explained that this has been associated with visual-motor deficits, and difficulties with reasoning, mathematical reasoning, reading, and writing due to problems with information-processing in the central nervous systems. LD students have a discrepancy between their ability and their intelligence (Kane et al., 2011). Due to their average intelligence level, they should be able to perform certain skills, but due to the discrepancy, there is limited functioning in working memory (Kane et al., 2011).

Kane et al. (2011) explain that this difficulty with educational programs exists because such students do not have information processing capabilities similar to other people, and they also lack metacognitive skills required to process and evaluate the information and write down what they have been taught within seconds. This can affect the performance of such a student significantly (Sollman et al., 2010). There are particular forms of self-efficacy that have been identified to enable these students to overcome the problems they experience as a result of LD characteristics (King, 2009). These include the role of motivation aimed at improving self-esteem, self-concept and self-efficacy among students.

According to King (2009), the main goal of self-efficacy intervention is to ensure that students develop a positive attitude towards learning and consequently become attentive to what is being taught. Healthy motivation encourages students to develop

effective learning styles in college so that they can improve their academic competencies (Doiron et al., 2018; Hen & Goroshit, 2012). Improved academic competencies will assist in cultivating attributes such as hope, optimism, and optimal human performance (Hen & Goroshit, 2012).

Few studies have been conducted to determine the lived experience of self-efficacy on addressing the challenges experienced by students who have learning disabilities, and especially students who have a feeling of not belonging (Reed et al., 2015; Cowden, 2010). To bridge this gap, this qualitative, phenomenological research is aimed at describing the perception and lived experience of college students regarding self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and motivation during their freshman year in response to precollege and college-level educational programs. Through giving voice to the lived experience of LD college students, gained insights can help school administrators and instructional designers address the unique learning challenges faced by LD students.

Current relevant literature does address the issue of LD symptoms, problems of LD students, their performance, and the primary goals of self-efficacy; however, there are significant gaps that require further investigation. A gap in the literature exists in understanding the lived experience of learning-disabled students, during their freshman year of college, regarding their experience with existing educational programs and learning strategy interventions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to interview LD college students experience during their freshman year of college to understand their lived experience with self-efficacy as they attempt to face the challenges of succeeding in higher educational settings.

Qualitative phenomenological research methods and semistructured interviews will explore the phenomena of self-efficacy in students with a learning disability. Research questions will address LD student experience with educational programs and learning interventions in a freshman college environment. A brief precollege history of their experience with educational programs will also be helpful to understand their experience with transition from secondary to postsecondary educational settings.

Research Questions

Overall Research Question: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students who strive for academic performance self-efficacy?

Research Question 1: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students with regard to academic success and challenges?

Research Question 2: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students regarding their sense of self-efficacy during their high school and college educational programs?

Research Question 3: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students regarding their sense of motivation during their high school and college educational programs?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework underlying this research is social cognitive theory, positive psychology, self-efficacy, and academic self-efficacy of college students related to academic performance, and student motivation. The experience of self-efficacy by LD college students is important in the framework for understanding college student choices in their learning environment as they strive to learn and succeed academically. Self-efficacy was viewed conceptually utilizing Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory as a framework to understand self-efficacy as this research explores individual strategies and programs implemented to improve self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and student success. Self-efficacy can be viewed as a social cognitive construct that is closely related to the self-belief of a person in their ability to successfully perform certain tasks (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is a reliable predictor of task performance and motivation that influences the establishment of personal goals and objectives (Bandura, 1977). According to Bandura (1977), the beliefs of self-efficacy take a central position and influence people's choices, their goals and effort related to the specific task, time needed, stress experienced while performing it, and susceptible degree of depression. Hence, self-efficacy is a core concept in the social cognitive theory developed by Bandura (1977).

Social cognitive theory states that success leads to an increase in self-efficacy, while failures decrease self-efficacy. In addition, self-efficacy plays an essential role in closing the gap between people's thoughts and actions during certain behavioral changes, and people who get positive encouragement show decreased levels of self-doubt and increased self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). King (2009) found that students who exercised

strong self-efficacy were able to get high marks in academic pursuits compared to other students who were not successful in college, supporting the theory that self-efficacy is important in ensuring that students maintain good academic progress.

The concepts and underlying assumptions of motivation have been utilized to provide support to LD students at the college level (Kasler et al., 2017). The focus on the concept of hope conditions the mindset to focus on strengths and talents, and hope can motivate students with LD to achieve college success as they prepare to enter the workplace (Kasler et al., 2017). Research was recently conducted with LD college seniors preparing to transition from their college life to the workplace, and their sense of happiness to set and achieve long term goals was achieved (Kasler et al., 2017).

Nature of the Study

This qualitative research study will focus on increasing understanding of the phenomena of freshman college students who have an identified learning disability and their lived experience with self-efficacy and motivation during their precollege and freshman year of college. College freshmen students with disabilities who will be a part of the participant pool will have received Special Education services or services under a 504 Plan in high school and in college. Participants will be among students who also participated in campus life resources offered for students with disabilities. These students will have completed their freshman year of college and attended 2-year or 4-year university or college in the area surrounding New Castle County of Delaware. Participants will be students who have qualified for the 504 Program Resource Center designed to provide reasonable accommodations for students with a learning disability.

A qualitative phenomenological methodology will be utilized for this study, so participants can share their lived experience about self-efficacy and motivation within their educational programs and services. Through qualitative phenomenological analysis, it will be possible to analyze the lived experience of college students with educational programs, self-efficacy and motivation. In addition, the semistructured interview will be completed with students at the end of their freshman year to determine student experience with specific programs and learning strategies as they face challenges and success in higher educational settings.

A participant sample of 10 college students was proposed, but participant selection continued until saturation occurred. Moustakas (1994) suggests 8-10 participants for a phenomenological research study to achieve rich descriptions of experience. Participants will be identified using snowball sampling and will include a college students 18-25 years of age eligible for supportive services by the college campus resources as having a learning disability and participants who are self-reported and have received support and/or accommodations. Participants will not have other challenges apart from the learning disability but may have different types of learning disabilities. Harrison et al. (2010) report an increase in the number of students enrolled for college education after completing high school who experience a learning disorder. Young and Gross (2011) report the publication of very few studies that determine the most effective method of coping with LD characteristics.

Operational Definitions

For the purposes of this research study the terms below have been used throughout the research:

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): The ADA was passed in 1999 and is similar to Section 504 however it reaches areas past those organizations who receive federal funds to ensure students with disabilities are provided education appropriate for them (NASSP, 2008).

Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): A brain disorder which is affected by hyperactivity, attention, and impulsivity. The condition is prevalent in children but recently found to carry into adulthood (Norwalk et al., 2009).

Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE): Under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act provides an individual education plan to ensure students with disabilities have the right to an education customized for them (Zirkel, 2008).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): 2004: A Federal Law passed in 2004 which ensures that children between the (ages of 3-22) are evaluated for educational services and receive specialized services deemed appropriate at no cost (IDEA, 2004).

Individual Education Plan: Referred to as an IEP, which provides goals and objectives to the educational plan and is used to measure the child's academic progress. There is a yearly meeting held to determine continued services and provides a description of overall educational program (Siegal, 2014).

Self-efficacy: The belief in one's self that a person can accomplish any task, the determination which motivates them to persevere despite all obstacles (Usher & Pajares, 2008).

Section 504 Plan: The Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation act of 1973, which forbid discrimination of public education who received federal funds for operation (NASSP, 2008).

Specific Learning Disability (SLD) Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the diagnosis has deficits in basic psychological processes which affects math calculations and language in the areas which include written and oral communication (Taymans, 2012).

Assumptions

It is assumed that college freshmen students with disabilities who are a part of the participant pool received Special Education services or services under a 504 Plan in high school. This participant pool included self-reported LD students and included students who were diagnosed and eligible for disability services. This information was self-reported by the student. It is also assumed there will be 10 college students with a learning disability to be interviewed and a minimum of 10 students with LD diagnosis prior to entering college. Lastly, students who participate will respond truthfully and their SLD will be discussed during the interviews.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study will comprise LD students in their first year of college who have sought out supportive resources under Section 504 for students. I interviewed

students diagnosed with a learning disability who had completed their freshmen year in college. The learning disability will be in areas that include comprehension, mathematical calculations, and written expression (Fullarton & Duquette, 2016). These students will be among those who have received transition services and educational supportive services prior to entering college. Among these students may be students who are dually diagnosed. Students that have only a self-reported diagnosis will not be interviewed. Those interviewed will be presumed to have had access to educational programs during their secondary academic experience.

Limitations

It may be difficult to establish that individuals participating in the study are representative of similar LD individuals. Additionally, as indicated in the literature review, there are higher educational institutional differences in the factors associated with the educational support experience of having a learning disability. Further, the depth and scope of researcher experience and knowledge may influence the focus of this investigation, which may result in the neglect of relevant areas of the scope of learning disability as experienced by college freshmen. I discuss my potential bias in Chapter 3 to prevent limitations due to researcher experience. Attention will be given to documenting my previous experiences to prevent bias.

Significance of the Study

Through giving voice to the lived experience of LD college students, gained insights can help school administrators and instructional designers address the unique learning challenges faced by LD students. This insight is necessary to improve the

college experience for LD students, and to increase understanding of the transition from secondary to postsecondary educational environments. The results of this research study may improve understanding of how self-efficacy fosters motivation, thus leading to academic success. The study results might also address the resources available to students with disabilities and perception of how they succeeded academically despite their disability.

Self-efficacy is one of several approaches that have been brought forward to assist people with these disorders to improve effective learning (Norwalk et al., 2009). The significance of this research approach is to enhance understanding of how LD students develop motivation to overcome their challenges through being consistent and trying learning strategies that prove favorable for them to succeed during the first year of college. In addition, this research can be significant in achieving the goal of understanding academic success in LD college students. (DuPaul & Weyandt, 2009). According to Zeng et al. (2018), the student-centered approach to learning and interventions coupled with self-regulation and self-efficacy were found to play a major role in academic success of LD college students. Consequently, the goal is for students to become academically competitive and better able to manage learning, career, and life situations after college.

Understanding the challenges in the learning environment for students with LD is important, with the goal of increased understanding the structure of the learning environment. (Norwalk et al., 2009). If students understand approaches that have been utilized successfully in the past to assist similar conditions, they will be inspired to apply

this in their lives as college students. The hope developed from this study may lead to a change of attitude that may assist students as they work to overcome their learning challenges. Ultimately, the student can apply self-efficacy approaches in different college, and postcollege learning environments, which will improve academic achievement and professional success (Zeng et al., 2018; DuPaul & Weyandt, 2009).

Summary and Transition

There is a significant amount of research that supports the increase of students with disabilities entering college, however, there is limited research on the lived experience of LD college students regarding their self-efficacy motivation and academic success (Perelmutter et al., 2017). College students with a learning disability are less likely to graduate from high school, and moreover are 21.2% less likely than their nondisabled peers to seek 4-year postsecondary education (DuPaul, 2017). Those who are able to matriculate have a 41% chance of failing and not completing the degree.

Development of academic self-efficacy is important for many students, who otherwise would fail or be unable to meet the rigor found in the postsecondary higher educational environments. Many articles suggest LD college students have yet to develop the attributes necessary to meet the standards at the college level. In addition, they do seek the resources higher level institutions have to aid them in gaining access to the coursework and leveling the playing field for them to be academically sound (Fleming & Wated, 2016). Learning disability deficits hinders young adults from accessing environmental supports which would allow them to sustain a positive GPA and learn strategies to help them learn (Sniatecki et al., 2015). Positive outcomes for students with

disabilities are possible when accommodations and other interventions are in place to aid in their academic success. However, research supports some LD students do not seek services and are embarrassed by their disability (Weis et al., 2016). This study is based on a conceptual framework of self-efficacy, motivation, and academic self-efficacy with the goal of understanding the perception and experience of LD college freshmen. Chapter 2 includes an extensive review of the literature for LD young adults with academic success and the conceptual framework selected to further the study of self-efficacy, motivation, and academic success in LD college students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of LD college students during their freshman year of college to understand the influence of self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and motivation in response to precollege and college-level educational programs. A brief precollege history of their lived experience with educational programs provided background to identify areas where educational leaders and administrators have provided support to make college accessible for students with disabilities. This chapter reviews the literature on educational programming that impacted postsecondary freshman college students with learning disabilities. College students' educational programming may have provided opportunities to access support to cope with the rigor of the college experience. Several support services could be available in college campus life to aid students with learning disabilities to perform alongside their peers, toward the goal of academic achievement. This study documented student experience with educational program supports related to self-efficacy and motivation intended to maximize the strengths and minimize the barriers experienced by the college freshman with a learning disability. LD college student enrollment in postsecondary education continues to increase, and the rate of those attending community 2-year colleges has doubled while the 4-year college enrollment continues to progress at a slower rate (Rivera et al., 2018; Weis et al., 2014). This suggests that LD students are more likely to have the academic skills for the community college experience rather than the rigor of 4-year university programs.

A major factor that inhibits learning among college students is having a learning disability (West et al., 2016; Orr, 2009). The LD student may be unable to comprehend or effectively communicate verbally or in written form. A learning disability is a psychological diagnosis which shows impairments in written language, listening, reading comprehension, or mathematical reasoning. A learning disability may hamper information processing, perception, and synthesis of information. Learning is a challenge for college students with LD related to difficulty with executive functioning and information processing (Rivera et al., 2018; Orr, 2009).

The level of severity of LD varies from one person to another, but learning disabilities denote a sequence of disorders, which deleteriously influence learning. Students with LD represent 37% of the student body receiving special education services in public school (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). People with learning disabilities have problems acquiring, retaining, or understanding information (Bakken et al., 2013).

A learning disability can also limit a student's social life, discernment, and their general perception of the world. Learning disability commonly lasts throughout an individual's life, resulting in a lifetime of educational underachievement, which can be very discouraging (Rivera et al., 2018; Selikowitz, 2009). A learning disability has been linked to results from hereditary or neurobiological etiology, which may lead to comorbid conditions like ADHD. There are various conditions that may develop with LD, which affect the functioning of the brain, especially the processes involved in learning; these include emotional disorders, attention, and behavioral disorders among others (DuPaul et al., 2015).

Literature Search Strategy

This literature review strategy included the following databases found in Walden University Library: SAGE Premier, EBSCO, ProQuest, PsycArticles, and ERIC with full text. Each search began from keywords used to search such as, *learning-disabled college students* to find key articles. Search words like *college success, self-efficacy, transitional services, learning support, students with learning disabilities, motivational styles, academic self-efficacy, postsecondary college access* were combined and articles linked to these findings were identified.

Conceptual Framework

According to Farrar (2011), students experiencing learning disabilities may have their learning experience greatly improved if the right intervention approach is used, and this can greatly improve their academic performance. It is important to note that LD students need a supportive environment and a different educational approach to help them overcome their challenges and achieve academic success (Farrar, 2011).

According to Farrar (2011), some students have multiple disabilities, for instance, a student may have LD arising from other conditions and also show some characteristics of ADHD (Farrar, 2011). Individual, case by case evaluation is recommended to offer support that is in line with the student's unique needs so individualized training on how they can assist themselves will improve their perception and motivation (Farrar, 2011). Through individual student efforts, self-efficacy is achieved when higher education faculty work together with the support staff to apply the individualized strategy

instruction model as a means of providing a learning environment that is both constructive and challenging to the students (Mizutowicz, 2007).

Another way of promoting self-efficacy among students with LD is by setting suitable and realistic academic goals (Mizutowicz, 2007). Goals decided upon should have some personal importance to the student, and should be short-term, achievable, and very specific in order to be successful (Mizutowicz, 2007). Faculty and peer mentors can use effective coaching strategies that involve having discussions with the students and finding out what is important to them in addition to the necessary steps that can be taken to achieve the set goals (Mizutowicz, 2007). Such an approach leads to a higher level of optimism and satisfaction, which is necessary for the students to succeed personally and professionally.

Baum, Owen, & Baum (2004) observed that presenting clear learning objectives to the students with LD helped assist students in cultivating a positive attitude. This also helped students identify the material they would study, so they have more time to read and understand the materials, which results in better grades. Presenting clear learning objectives may boost student self-esteem, self-efficacy and increase the likelihood of passing tests and assignments, which further increases level of self-efficacy leading to more success (Baum et al., 2004). Coaches and counselors in colleges can help lower the rate of anxiety and frustration among students through systematic demonstrations and explanations regarding the learning strategies to employ, including individualized strategies that address specific needs (Baum et al., 2004). In addition, there should be a conducive environment for the students to approach their instructors with any questions

regarding issues that may cause stress and anxiety. When students are relaxed, their self-efficacy is boosted, and academic performance will improve (Baum et al., 2004).

Kernis (1995) suggests that higher levels of anxiety and depression are linked to lowering self-efficacy. Students normally assess their emotional states in the same manner that they use to assess their intellect, and strong emotional reactions give students signals concerning the success or failure they are expecting (Kernis, 1995). Feeling upset or anxious in a particular situation can make LD students believe that they cannot perform the tasks well, and when the same student feels physically and emotionally well, it gives him/her more confidence to perform the task well (Kernis, 1995). For this reason, when anxiety is avoided, students with LD perform better as their self-efficacy is boosted.

Self-efficacy refers to believing in oneself to the extent that one is able to take the required course of action to deal with various situations/conditions (Kernis, 1995). Self-efficacy helps people feel motivated as they introduce various corrective measures to numerous limitations in their lives. Such people have more power to determine whether or not they succeed in achieving their goals. Self-efficacy can particularly help college students who are dealing with LD challenges (Kernis, 1995).

Many researchers have tried to investigate how self-efficacy can be used to assist college students with LD to improve learning and academic success. Their work has also concentrated on how learning disabilities affect college student's due to the fact that such conditions disrupt one's education. The following section will examine the impact that

educational programs have on self-efficacy in college students with LD, and how it can assist them achieve high academic success and other life's goals.

A study was conducted at Taiwan University, where computer science is a male-dominated major on campus, and results showed that beliefs of self-efficacy and persistence were influential in changing the mindset of women excelling academically in computer science where women are underrepresented (Lin, 2016; Bandura, 1986) reported that self-efficacy beliefs, and sense of responsibility improve motivation, goal setting, and task completion. It was further revealing that self-efficacy doesn't speak to one's ability, rather to their skill set which could be a learned behavior (Bandura, 1986).

Literature Review

Motivation and Self-Efficacy

Success has been linked to academic motivation and positive beliefs (Center for Educational Policy, 2012; Stevens, 1996). Stevens (1996) notes that students with positive self-efficacy towards academics are usually more eager to deal with challenging tasks as opposed to the ones with negative self-efficacy, who may not try at all due to their fear of failure. A rewarding learning experience is the one in which the academic tasks are given in accordance with the student's level of performance (Steven, 1996), and this should be applied in case of people diagnosed with LD in order to reduce the level of anxiety associated with such tasks.

Therefore, faculty and administrators are faced with the task of constructing a learning experience meant to motivate the students and enable them to achieve their fullest potential, realizing that LD students may have varying effects from one individual

to another. Therefore, it is important for the faculties to understand the differences and challenges each individual face, which is crucial for improving their academic self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is important in all areas of life, especially when using it to improve academic achievement (Rief, Hanson, & Cassone, 2008). They argue that it is likely for learners to succeed in one area, for example reading, and still have inadequate self-confidence in others like mathematics. That is why higher education professionals are urged to design individualized learning experience for such LD students, and this may include counselors, disability coordinators, advisers and the support services staff.

Rief et al. (2008) state that most students with LD often associated success with external factors but considered failures as their fault. They normally reason that they fail because they don't have the ability or skill required, and others feel like they have not made enough effort even when they have (Rief et al., 2008). In instances where such negative perceptions are countered, student self-efficacy rises, and better results are obtained, along with a change of attitude, and improved academic performance (Rief et al., 2008). The level of confidence that students have in handling various situations greatly influences how they view particular situations in terms of being a challenge, stress or threat (Rief et al., 2008).

Self-efficacy serves to assist an individual to cultivate a positive attitude, which assists students in developing effective coping strategies, and to have a 'winning attitude' when faced with challenges (Rief et al., 2008). Self-efficacy has been considered very effective in the motivation of college students with LD (Howard, Ferrari, Nota, Solberg,

& Soresi, 2009). Self-efficacy leads to a change of attitude, where affected individuals take a more active role to improve themselves. This increased self-efficacy positively influences academic outcomes in terms of classroom engagement, grades, as well as one's likelihood of having the determination to continue pursuing academic success (Getzel & Thoma, 2008). Boosted student expectations for success and perception about education, as well as their willingness to try various self-regulatory strategies, yield more student academic success and determination (Getzel & Thoma, 2008). Negativity, on the other hand, has been linked to procrastination, anxiety and poor academic performance, and students with negative attitudes may fail to achieve many of their goals (Getzel & Thoma, 2008). The remarkable correlation between self-efficacy and improved academic outcomes demonstrates that the role it plays goes beyond one's skills, knowledge or even intellectual ability (Guan, 2016).

Academic Self-efficacy

Developing academic self-efficacy is a tool that has aided many students in the learning environment. According to Lui and Lu (2014), academic self-efficacy has a direct correlation with an individual's motivation and academic performance outcomes. Self-efficacy intervention can be included in existing practices to help college students with LD to maximize their potential due to the fact that it addresses how one feels, thinks, behaves and individual student patterns of motivation. According to Nadeau (2006), learning or academic self-efficacy is the belief that a student has abilities to employ the learning strategies to deal with the various difficult learning conditions. Student's previous experience serve as the strongest indicators of how self-efficacy is perceived. of

students are the strongest determinants of how academic self-efficacy is perceived (Lyle, 1998). It is caused by the fact that students examine their results after completing an academic task and equate the self-perception with their performance. The way one is able to interpret such performances greatly influences his/her personal beliefs, which leads to a change in their future actions.

According to Loe and Cuttino (2008), a repeated cycle of academic failures can make students have less belief in their abilities, which can reduce the expectations students have for their future. Therefore, based on the researcher's experience, the relationships existing between the previous academic performance and the type of beliefs related to self-efficacy are reciprocal. It means that previous success leads to greater self-efficacy beliefs, which translate to greater future academic performance (Saricoban & Mohammadi, 2016).

Motivation and Academic Achievement

Many students struggle with the limitations as a result of their learning disability, however there is evidence that suggests academic achievement is connected to motivation (LD Online, 2019). Student motivation can be based on internalized thoughts and feeling, which is intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation originates outside the individual, and is driven by external rewards, such as food, money, grades or praise. The reward or disappointment connected to a student's academic performance can determine if one is learning to find self-affirmation or the joy felt when a parent or caregiver is pleased at a positive outcome (LD Online, 2019). Pintrich (2002) suggests motivation plays a major role in positive student outcomes and academic achievement. He asserts motivation

enables the LD student to succeed academically. Academic self-efficacy coupled with motivation leads to a strong sense of self-awareness, and this has a positive impact on achievement of student goals. When students set goals and have good feelings about learning, they tend to display a higher level of motivation, and this correlates directly with academic success (Pintrich, 2002).

According to a study conducted by Pintrich, Anderman, & Klobucar (1994), motivation has been linked to learning disabilities in several stages of life including those in the primary educational years. A comparison study of 40 male and female students with and without learning disabilities were tested for levels of motivation. Students without learning disabilities were found to have high levels of motivation, and their reading comprehension was higher when compared to students with LD (Pintrich et al., 1994). However, students with learning disabilities displayed motivation found to be internal motivation which was attributed to self-efficacy (Pintrich et al., 1994). Although the learning disability is the cause of low comprehension or math reasoning skills, these students demonstrated a level of motivation and self-efficacy which assisted the 40 students academically. When compared to those without LD, these students demonstrated higher levels motivation and self-efficacy. While the cognitive skills did not change, the academic potential weighed as high if not higher due to the intrinsic motivation (Pintrich et al., 1994).

Support and Accommodations

Students with LD should continue using the common services and accommodations that are offered by colleges for students with disabilities. Examples of

such services may include additional time given to complete tests and assignments while being supplied with copies of the lecture notes due to the fact that students may have difficulties with processing and taking notes during the lectures (Loe and Cuttino, 2008). In addition, such students can benefit from tape recording in addition to being given alternate formats regarding assignments and assessments, e.g., choosing an oral as opposed to written form for tests (Loe and Cuttino, 2008). Mayes, Calhoun & Crowell (2000) suggest that faculty and support staff should complete professional training regularly in order to help students understand their disabilities, which encourages higher levels of interpersonal communication necessary between the students and faculty members, thereby increasing student self-efficacy and academic success.

History of Specific Learning Disability

Specific Learning Disability (2015) asserts that there are 2.4 million youth found eligible for Special Education services with an SLD classification. From this group, boys are overrepresented with the classification, and more boys are found eligible than girls who represent 1/3 of the student LD population. Learning disabilities have varied types of challenges in abilities, ranging from dyslexia difficulties in reading, dysgraphia, challenges in writing, auditory and visual processing disorders, and dyscalculia (Specific Learning Disabilities, 2015).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004) suggests that special education services are found in the Specific Learning Disability category when there is a discrepancy between ability and achievement in the areas of mathematical reasoning and communication both written and oral (McGill, Styck, Palmares, & Hass,

2016). The Individual Education Plan is a support to level the playing field in learning environments with special education services and related services and accommodations to assist individuals academically. In recent years prior to the classification of SLD there are areas around the country that require further interventions outside of the discrepancy model. This ensures that interventions were tried to attempt to provide additional supports to reduce an over identification of the disability (McGill et.al, 2016).

Concealing the Learning Disability

According to Nadeau (2006), significant amount of attention is being given to college students with Learning Disabilities. The number of individuals with such conditions joining higher institutions of learning has tremendously increased. The author goes ahead to explain that undergraduates with the conditions are more likely to be overwhelmed due to many academic demands. Atkins & Huang, (2019) identifies two kinds of stigma hidden and visible. Many students having LD do not like to report their condition in addition to the fact that few authorized processes are available in institutions of higher education for the purpose of identifying such students or helping them (Atkins & Huang, 2019; Taymans, 2012). Therefore, some faculty members have a problem determining if a student is experiencing the conditions; while others do not provide any help at all (Taymans, 2012). Some students may not understand they have a problem, while others may choose to conceal it.

Various institutions have educational programs that are designed to assist LD students with their transition to college. When students hide their disorders, this may adversely affect their education as they might not receive the supportive services. Nadeau

(2006) asserts that students with learning disabilities generally perform more poorly in academics and receive lower grades. They are also at a higher risk of facing academic probation compared to the others, and some propose a forum in which each student can be empowered to create an environment that could assist him/her perform better and achieve the set goals (Nadeau, 2006).

In many ways the LD disability is masked as ADHD due to the similar characteristics; however, ADHD can be treated with medication which will assist with the impulsivity, lack of attention or the inappropriate behavior. Nakaya (2009) describes attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) as a disorder, whereby one cannot control his or her behavior due to challenges in processing neural stimuli, which is accompanied by extremely elevated motor activity.

According to Mayes, Calhoun & Crowell (2000), one of the best ways of knowing if college students can perform well is by looking at their ability to sustain attention. It seems to be a problem in those with ADHD whereas LD exhibits deficits in processing which could mirror ADHD. Loe & Cuttino (2008) observe that during the freshman year of college, it is possible to predict the grade point averages of a student by pairing the response inventory of the student with that of their parent. They further explain that students who have high inattentive levels have a higher chance of receiving lower academic grades on average (Loe & Cuttino, 2008). Apart from the difficulties in processing and functioning that such students experience, they deal with stigmatization issue, as well (Nadeau, 2006).

Lyle (1998) supports the point by saying that the individuals who have not been trained on self-efficacy often doubt their capabilities. Students may try to avoid situations where they perceive failure to be the outcome, and if such students experience several academic failures their self-esteem is bound to reduce significantly (Lyle, 1998). With improved self-efficacy, students with learning disabilities perceive themselves to be in control and are more insistent and persistent in improving themselves (Tabassam & Grainger, 2002). Individual student self-efficacy plays a great role in the environment in which a student views themselves and also how they handle failures (Tabassam & Grainger, 2002). According to Lyle (1998), professionals can continuously strive to improve self-efficacy in LD college students through positively improving their learning environments. In addition, educators should focus on the strengths that such students have alongside counseling to motivate the students to accept and work to improve themselves (Lyle, 1998). Self-efficacy training directly impacts the student success and may boost their confidence and self-efficacy. Students with LD form the largest number of people with disabilities in colleges and may increase up to 29% in some of them (Bakken, Obiakor, & Rotatori, 2013).

Synthesis and Analysis

Self-efficacy has been considered very effective in the motivation of college students with LD (Hen & Gorshit, 2014) the reason for this is that self-efficacy leads to change in attitude, where affected individuals take a more active role to improve themselves. This increased self-efficacy positively influences academic outcomes in terms of classroom engagement, grades, as well as one's likelihood of having the

determination to continue pursuing academic success (Kane, 2009). Boosted student expectations for success and perception about education, as well as their willingness to try various self-regulatory strategies, yield more student academic success and determination (Kane, 2009). Additionally, a positive correlation exists between positive self-efficacy; positive perception towards the school and improved academic performance, and students with negative attitudes may fail to achieve many of their goals (Hen & Gorshit, 2014).

Summary and Conclusions

The literature shows that self-efficacy is very useful among students with LD. It assists such students to understand that academic performance is not solely based on the student's capability but on the level of capability each believes he/she has. Promoting positive self-efficacy among college students with such disabilities helps providing them with more rewarding academic and life experience. It is the responsibility of the higher education professionals to promote a learning environment that can enable such students to receive the best experience at college and continue implementing the same positive self-efficacy later in everyday life.

Through positive self-efficacy, the focus is shifted from the impairments that such students may be having and is directed to their strengths. Many of them have experienced academic disappointments, especially before learning how self-efficacy can be helpful. Practices of self-efficacy are meant to encourage more perseverance, optimism and personal satisfaction. Students facing challenges of LD can improve their academic and other forms of achievements in higher educational institutions through learning how to

reveal their strengths through the use of self-efficacy. Chapter 2 establishes the gap in the literature that although many students with learning disabilities are enrolling in post-secondary education, there is limited research to support the academic success of these LD students or the interventions that contribute to the positive academic outcomes. Peer-reviewed articles published in the last five years were researched to provide a foundation and framework of the need to research the phenomena of their lived experience in the educational environment. The literature on academic self-efficacy and positive psychology also point to the importance of motivation at the post-secondary level of education. Chapter 3 explains the qualitative, phenomenological research design, the rationale for population for the study and method which will be the basis for the research.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Life after high school usually encompasses transitioning to a community college, 2-year or 4-year college environment. LD college students are attending college in large numbers, yet there is minimal research about their academic successes and challenges experienced in a college environment. A phenomenon has been revealed and a qualitative research is the best method for identifying the experience and perception of the challenges and successes faced by LD college freshman and how educational programs have impacted self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and motivation (Creswell, 2009). Shineboune (2011) suggests interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) can be used to identify and interpret the experience of these students. Chapter 3 provides a description of the methodology in this qualitative research and the tools used to compile data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), use of thematic analysis provides several ways to approach a qualitative study in a six-phase plan. The data in this research obtained an understanding of how educational programming impacted LD students. The theoretical framework in this study was social cognitive theory used to uncover concepts for and data explanation.

This chapter begins with the rationale for research, research design, and the role of the researcher was defined. The method of how the data was collected, analyzed, and the justification for saturation during data collection is then clarified. This chapter concludes with a discussion of validity and trustworthiness that were components of qualitative coding.

Research Design and Rationale

This qualitative study provides an understanding of the experience of LD students during their freshman year of college. This research included college-level students diagnosed with a learning disability and an overall as well as three specific research questions guided this phenomenological study:

Research Questions

Overall Research Question: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students who strive for academic performance self-efficacy?

Research Question 1: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students with regard to academic success and challenges?

Research Question 2: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students regarding their sense of self-efficacy during their high school and college educational programs?

Research Question 3: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students regarding their sense of motivation during their high school and college educational programs?

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher for this study was to understand the lived experience of the LD college student regarding self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy and motivation in response to precollege and college-level educational programs. In qualitative research, the researcher must become aware of and bracket personal biases, prejudices, and other hidden factors that could influence research collection and findings. As a tenured special

education teacher, my role was to foster confidence for future LD students through the eyes of those who plan to participate in college life. During my term as a special education teacher, I have heard the stories of LD students who have successfully transitioned to college by using the tools introduced at the high school level, which equipped them to be college ready.

This study was important because I consistently witnessed students at the secondary level with the ability to attain a degree or certificate, but due to their classification of learning disorder, they chose not to apply for admission. I was also privy to the concerns of many parents that saw potential in their students but heard far too few academic success stories of other young people, and therefore didn't push their student to attend college at any level. In qualitative research, a researcher attempts to remove any biases, prejudices, and other hidden factors that may prohibit a valid study and reveal discoveries. I sought to set aside preconceptions and individual sentiments as the researcher understands the phenomena of the students who shared their lived experience about self-efficacy, their college experience, and how education programs have been impacted as a result of self-efficacy. During the coding process, I bracketed personal biases, prejudice, and other hidden factors that could have influenced data collection, results, coding, and analysis.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The participants in this study were comprised of 10 college level students attending both two-year and four-year colleges. The study participants all completed their

freshman year in college. The sample included both male and female students who were diagnosed and self-reported as having a learning disability during their time in college. These students represented African Americans, Caribbean Islanders, and Caucasian ethnicities; they ranged from 18-22 years of age. The population in this study were participants enrolled in college in the Eastern region of the United States in both inner-city and rural communities of Delaware, and New York. Many of the students were selected using snowball sampling. The Specific learning disability areas found included comprehension, mathematic reasoning, processing, and written expression. Research participants reported accessing a variety of campus interventions and resources identified through this study, which confirmed there was no hidden population. The study included participants previously enrolled in secondary educational supportive services and transition services. All of the participants were aware of services and accommodations available to them as a first-year student.

According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation is obtained when there is enough information of the study to imitate, when there are no new themes or coding available in the research. Saturation was obtain using a sample size of 10 participants (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006) and necessary to maintain validity.

Procedures

1. The researcher posted and passed out research study flyers to students and colleagues.
2. Emails were sent to networks providing detailed information about the study and recruitment.

3. Those who interested in participation in the study contacted the researcher directly through email and/or by phone.
4. Prior to beginning the interviews, each participant was asked to complete the Consent Form, emailed to them in response to their interest to participate in the study. The study was described in the consent form along with the information which stated they could decline to continue at any time. Each interview took 60 to 90 minutes. (Appendix C)
5. Participants scheduled face to face semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted at a mutually agreed upon impartial location.
6. Prior to the interviews each participant was asked to submit their consent via email stating “I consent” and complete the Background Questionnaire prior to scheduling the interview. (Appendix D)
7. Once the participation pool established using the predetermined criterion, they were notified by email to confirm study participation.
8. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, then the responses were analyzed and coded by the researcher.
9. The researcher conducted follow-up interviews used to validate responses of the participants. The participant was asked to read and confirm the transcripts from their interview.

Research Approach

Data Collection

The data for this study was gathered from the primary sources directly. McIntosh and Morris (2015) support the semi-structured interview for qualitative research where this was significant information known about the population, but very little about the phenomena. According to McIntosh & Morris (2015) semi-structured interviews (SSI) provided an opportunity for the participants to reply to the open-ended and semi-structured questions. Probes used during the interview allowed further spontaneous dialogue (McIntosh & Morris, 2015).

The interviews were conducted in an area that was quiet and private to protect the participant amenity and confidentiality. The location for the interviews were determined prior to interviews. King and Horrocks (2013) suggested the research participants should feel comfortable with the researcher and was crucial to develop a rapport during the interview. The researcher took the time to establish rapport by getting to know the participant, allowing them to discuss what they desire to share. The initial interview took 45 to 60 minutes and 15 to 30 minutes for the follow up interview which was scheduled for further clarification and discovery.

The semi-structured face-to face interview helped with verbal and body language cues that presented during the interview, which prompted the interviewer to ask additional questions that helped bring to the surface what the cues might indicate. Each interview was taped and transcribed word-by word for accuracy. The interviewer also

used both field notes and reflective journaling in written form and an audio tape to capture the unstructured responses during the interviewees.

Data Analysis

According to Pell (2019) identification, examination, and interpretation of patterns and themes are important steps in qualitative data analysis. This analysis of textual data results in determination of how patterns and themes help answer the research questions (Pell Institute 2019). The data was analyzed using the phenomenological structured techniques for a qualitative study, which include semi-structured interview questions, gathering rich data, and coding. The Pell Institute (2019) provided a six-step approach to data analysis for qualitative research. The first step was to process and record data immediately. During the interview the researcher recorded information provided by the participant while the information was fresh, using both verbal and non-verbal cues and the use of a reflection sheet to capture responses by participant. The second step was to analyze the data during collection. The analysis began following the first data collection. During the third step, the researcher reduced the data by seeking meaningful themes and information addressing what stuck out to the researcher. This process was evaluated simultaneously with the first two steps during the data analysis. Using both content and thematic analysis during the fourth step, the researcher will code and group the themes together by identifying meaningful patterns (Pell Institute, 2019; Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003). The researcher drew conclusions in the fifth step by using data displayed to organize patterns and relationships discovered across the study. Using a visual aid to capture the elements helped to make connections across the

research. The final step of the six-step process according to Pell Institute (2019) was to draw conclusions. This was achieved by reflecting on all the data collected and review of the research questions to determine if the questions were answered through discovery. A coding system will be created to determine reliability. Morse (2015) suggests the best procedure was to ask the questions in the same order and allow them to answer the questions freely without being confined.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility and Member Checking

In this study credibility was achieved by the application of triangulation. The ability to have different experts review the data from the study and gain several different viewpoints ensured triangulation. Credibility was followed by a script in an organized fashion, which certifies there was no bias on the part of the researcher injected into the findings (Morse, 2015). Member checking was executed by allowing the participants to review their transcripts during a follow up interview which diminished the potential biases that could have arose during data research collection.

Transferability

The outcomes provided in this qualitative research provided understanding of the phenomenon and the lived experience of LD students during their freshman year of college. According to Burchett, Dobrow, Lavis, and Mayhew (2013), research repeated in a new study determines validity which is referred to as transferability. Following this conducted research, and the outcomes of the phenomenological study were clarified,

instructors, admission counselors, and Learning Resource Centers benefit from the results which foster student academic success (Burchett, Umoquit, & Dobrow, 2011).

Confirmability

According to Haygood and Skinner (2015) confirmability is the manifestation of the judgments from the participant and the removal of personal preconception. As it relates to the lived experience of the LD college student, with self-efficacy and motivation, confirmability safeguard against any behavioral evidence or personal bias of the researcher.

Ethical Procedures

A flyer with information was posted in public locations. The researcher sought participants identified as having a learning disability. The confidentiality in respected and their responses are kept in a safe place and conducted in a private yet mutually agreed upon location. The participants were treated with dignity and respect during and after the research. Although all participants independently consented to participate in this study. However, should they decide not to participant, their responses would not be included in the study. Their full permission was requested after reading and giving consent. The responses were audio taped and transcribed and follow up interviews were scheduled for the participant to review their responses and provide additional information if warranted.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

After the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB # 02-24-20-0188713) provided consent to move forward to the study, the chosen participants in this research study were provided with a copy of the IRB confirmation number with the

informed consent document, which explained their rights as a research participant. Informed consent was received via email from each participant prior to conducting the research study. Each participant was encouraged to ask additional questions about the study and their rights as participants and express any concerns they might have. The purpose of the study, significance, the rationale and findings from the gaps to pursue such a study was also be shared at the time informed consent is asked for. There were no participants requiring accommodations, and none were received during the study. The informed consent was emailed and asked if they understood what they agreed to participate in.

Member Checks

According to Creswell and Miller (2000), member checks were used in validation checks when conducting qualitative research studies. In this qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were conducted for the research. Member checking was ideal for this type of research because it allowed the interviewee to add, make changes, confirm meanings and their responses did not get lost in transcription (Brit, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter, 2016).

Rich Data

Abrams et al. (2014) suggested rich participant data was collected when using an audio recording device is present. Abrams et al. (2014) report qualitative study is much weaker and leaves room for bias and subjectivity, therefore it is important to ensure the that validity of the research is defined when conducting the analysis of the data by producing research that supports systematic and well-structured confines (Blank, 2004).

In recent time, thanks to technology and the use of software the validity of qualitative research is confirmed. This does not remove the spontaneity; however it ensures a rationale behind the conflict and its resolution without bias emerging in the interview and the concepts are developed throughout with an interpretation of the events (Blank, 2004).

According to Morse (2015), rich data is obtained when spending increased time with the participant. This allows the researcher to get to know the interviewee, which results in a richness of data. Intimacy will produce a vulnerability which in turn will compel the participant to spontaneously share their perception and experience, thus the data would be more reliable and valid (Morse, 2015). Semi-structured interviews (SSI) provided an opportunity for the participants to reply to the open-ended and semi-structured questions. Probes were used during the interview to allow further spontaneous dialogue (McIntosh & Morris, 2015).

Summary

This chapter has provided information on the procedures and the methodology of this study. Phenomena was researched to uncover the lived experience of students during their freshman year in college with LD and the educational programming impact on self-efficacy and motivation. Semi-directed interviews were conducted, and coding and analysis of the data completed. This social change focus was to provide answers and support for college professors, parents, and incoming freshman to improve the retention rates and graduation rates of students with learning disabilities.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore educational programming for college students with a learning disability and their experience with academic performance self-efficacy. The learning experience for LD students during their freshman year was examined to provide a better understanding for faculty, teachers, parents, psychologists, and other college level staff to support students with disabilities, specifically a learning disability. There are several studies that support the idea of LD students succeeding with academic challenges and there is a limited number of LD undergraduate students that succeed although they are admitted to college. Although documentation supports academic challenges for the LD college student, the literature has not studied self-efficacy and motivation elements that contributed to the academic success of LD college students during their freshman year of school.

This research study sought to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of self-efficacy and motivation that led to the success of LD college students during their freshman year in college. The research questions focused on motivational experiences LD students faced during their freshman year of college and how they navigated campus life with their disability. Undergraduates with self-efficacy elements were interviewed, which uncovered motivational patterns apparent in student responses, and self-efficacy themes that were revealed during interviews. LD students shared their experiences academically, socially, and emotionally as they navigated the maze of college life. The challenges and successes in participants stories of freshman year related to academic achievement were

gathered during recruitment, data collected and examined; member checking was used, and themes and patterns were identified.

Setting

Recruitment

The participants in this study were students in colleges and universities in a 200-mile radius of Delaware County. Recruitment efforts began in Wilmington, DE, and extended into Long Island, NY. Although the recruitment efforts were slow in the beginning, they began to pick up in the later part of April 2020 in the New Castle County, DE area. I was able to recruit 10 students in total. There were four participants in the New York area, and six Students in Delaware. Among the six students, two of them were students enrolled in a community college, one student was enrolled in a 4-year college, and the remaining seven students were enrolled at universities. Participants were enrolled in Delaware State University, Delaware Technical Community College, Wesleyan College, University of Delaware, Wilmington University, and Long Island University. The urban colleges were Wilmington University, Delaware Technical Community College and Delaware State University. The University of Delaware, Wesleyan College, Thomasville University, Long Island University in NY were all private institutions. The students were all prepared for an interview, and some shared more information and more personal stories than others.

The interviews were conducted one on one and face to face, with the actual location outlined in my reflection journal collected on each student participant. Students were slow to share, then later loosened up and normal conversation was established prior

to conducting the interviews. The interaction was socially distanced due to the pandemic; however, all participants were rather verbose after they warmed up to me. The process to recruit participants was slow in the beginning in April, participation began steady from May, and July, August of 2020, spanning a 5-month period of time. I used several tools to conduct my research; these included a researcher journal, semistructured interviews and audio recorder, and field notes. The data was collected prior to COVID-specific social distancing restrictions.

Demographics

All students ranged between the ages of 19-22 years of age. Participants verified their current college year by providing student identification. Students' participants included three students that were rising seniors, three students that were rising juniors, two students were sophomores, and two students were freshman. One of the students was graduating in the semester of the interview. The one student that was graduating was from the Long Island University and lived in Delaware County area. The three sophomores also lived locally and were raised in the Delaware County area. The other six students lived on campus and enjoyed campus life and were raised in the New Castle County area. The students were raised in varying income level homes; however, seven of the 10 students were raised in single parent households and were the oldest among their siblings in the house. There was one student who was a twin with whom they did not have a close relationship yet shared the sentiments of other participants brought up in a middle-income level home with resources available for college preparation.

The requirement for this study was a minimum age of 18 and students had to be no older than 25. They were also required to have successfully completed their freshman year in college. All students provided identification prior the interview to verify their age and year in school. While two students were 18, one student was 19, three students were 20, three students were 21, and one was 22 years of age.

This study represented several racial/ethnic groups, which included six young adults who identified as African American, one student identified as Hispanic, one student identified Guyanese, one student Jamaican-Hispanic, and one student identified themselves as Caucasian. Six females and four males contributed to the study. Table 1 encompasses details of student demographics which include college of the student, age, gender, ethnicity, and current year in college.

Table 1*Student Demographics*

Student	College or University	Age	Gender	Year in College	Ethnicity
S1	Long Island University	21	Female	Senior	AA
S2	University of Delaware	20	Male	Junior	AA
S3	Delaware Community College	19	Female	Sophomore	G
S4	Wesley College	22	Male	Senior	AA
S5	Delaware State	20	Female	Junior	AA
S6	Thomasville University	18	Male	Freshman	JH
S7	Delaware Community College	20	Male	Sophomore	AA
S8	Long Island University	21	Female	Senior	W
S9	Delaware State	18	Female	Freshman	H
S10	Wilmington University	21	Female	Junior	AA

Note. Key- AA-African America, G-Guyanese, J-Jamaican, H-Hispanic, W-White.

The type of specific learning disability diagnosis was verified prior to study participation. Students reported the diagnosed or self-reported Specific Learning disability. Table 2 contains the students type of learning disability, grade point average, and participants report of the use of campus disability support services.

Table 2*Specific Learning Disability Data*

Participants	Specific Learning Disability	GPA	Use of Campus Disability Support Services
Student 1	Memory-Processing and Comprehension	3.0	yes
Student 2	Written language	3.0	yes
Student 3	Dyslexia	3.4	no
Student 4	Comprehension	3.5	no
Student 5	Dyscalculia-math	3.2	yes
Student 6	Dyscalculia	2.5	yes
Student 7	Dyslexia	2.6	no
Student 8	Math calculations	3.0	yes
Student 9	Written language	2.8	yes
Student 10	Mathematics	3.0	yes

Data Collection

Following IRB approval number 0188713 to conduct research on February 24, 2020, I started the recruiting process of soliciting 10 students between the age of 18-25 in the Delaware County and New Castle County area in March of 2020 and the recruitment reached the New York into the end of June of 2020. I used snowball sampling to manage the recruitment of college students diagnosed with a Learning Disability. Responses and recruitment efforts continued in Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York until August 2020. There were no participants from colleges or universities in New Jersey or Pennsylvania contained in this recruitment process.

I began with sharing flyers with colleagues and known college students providing additional copies to share throughout the Delaware and New Castle area. Flyers were placed in local businesses and through social media requesting learning-disabled college

students completing their freshman year to contact me, by email or telephone to schedule a meeting. I realized the snowball sampling was the method that brought in LD students and their peers. Five of the students shared they were referred by a peer. Three of the ten students attended universities in NY all private universities and the remaining seven students attended colleges and universities in Delaware.

The recruitment efforts started with initial introduction of flyers posted and followed up with an email introduction (Appendix A) seeking participants interested in participating in the study. Upon response they were contacted by email to review and complete the informed consent form (Appendix C) if they were interested. I added attachments which also included (Appendix D) background questionnaire which further confirmed eligibility. An appointment was scheduled at an agreed location. Consent forms were reviewed prior to interview to ensure participants understood the study was voluntary and they could cancel at any time.

There were two students that were interested although did not meet the eligibility criteria; must be a student between the ages of 18-25, they diagnosed or had a self-reported had to be a student with a learning disability, (Appendix D) and were informed they were ineligible for the research study.

The lived experience of students was shared with a conversational approach which permitted the phenomena to be demonstrated sharing individual stories. The data collection of the 10 participants was conducted as described in Chapter three in the manner predicted. Pseudonyms were added in replace of participant names to ensure confidentiality protocols were followed. The interviews ranged from 21-30 minutes in

length. Consent forms were sent by email and participants responded they consented, and an interview was scheduled. Each participant completed two sessions, one initial and the second follow-up interview, all participants were provided their transcript to review for accuracy and follow up interview completed. Students were given a gift card to say “thank-you” for each interview completed as an incentive for their participation in the research study.

Semistructured Interviews

Interview questions were asked of each participant but informed if they needed questions rephrased or skipped, they should just say so as there was no pressure to answer questions. I probed for response to questions in some cases when participants neglected to answer question. I delved in when needed to provide an understanding or clarification of the question when requested by participant.

Field Notes

I used a field notes to capture the participants details of life shared, which proved to be beneficial in documenting the student verbal statements. Participant’s profile was provided in field notes. Individual student responses were written directly on the interview sheets. During the interview, I was able to turn my gaze to the field notes while participants were providing responses. I spent time just talking to the students initially to lessen their anxiousness or reluctance to share experiences, the reports were written down to ensure even the slightest piece of information freely given was recorded (Morse, 2015).

Reflection Sheets

The research reflection sheets were helpful to log both non-verbal and verbal details which included the scheduled interviews, the type of specific learning disability, interview location and date of initial and follow up interview, key points or phrases were notated. All participants were given a pseudonym to identify and protect the confidentiality of the participant. The reflection sheets were used to capture participant responses to recruitment including location, email responses, college affiliations, non-verbal cues, upon reflection of interviews, notes to ask when following up interview was conducted, and family dynamics shared after the interview.

Data Analysis

The six-step approach of data analysis was used in my research (Pell, 2019). The data analysis began with participant responses that were transcribed shortly following the interviews (Pell, 2019). First, I took notes during the interviews and each interview was audio recorded. Second, I listened the recording through its entirety and assigned a number unique to the student. I then conducted a word-for word transcription of the data from the 23 semi-structured and open-ended interview questions, which were asked in the same order for all participants. The recordings were initially hand-written, then typed verbatim to assist me with data analysis by identifying emerging themes from research questions responses. Third, I coded the data by repeating the recordings and using colored dots in the transcripts to identify discrete commonalities, clustering them together by information that “stuck out”. Fourth, I reviewed the data for reoccurring themes and patterns that arise. The fifth step was to organize the themes by their relationships to each

other and to the experiences of learning-disabled students. I assigned a group label to identify patterns by color related to the unique explanations of the students' experiences. Concluding the approach, for the sixth step, I reviewed the responses to the questions in every interview to be certain the questions were answered. The emerging themes are broken down in the study results section of this research.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I guaranteed there was evidence of trustworthiness by performing various checks and balances related to credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability according to qualitative research best practices. Removing my personal biases was achieved by the use of journaling and bracketing throughout the research process. Overall, qualitative research study standards required by IRB protocols were implemented. The research data was authenticated by a peer review process to assure that researcher bias was not present in the findings. As part of my follow-up interviews, each participant was provided with a copy of a transcript of their interview and read by the participant for accuracy as part of member checking.

Credibility and Member Checking

The member checking process was verified by the research study participants after the transcripts were written from audio recording following the initial interview. During the follow-up interview the data from the transcript was review by the participant to confirm responses were documented with accuracy at the follow up interview in person. All ten participant was requested to review the transcript to validate its accuracy of interpretation of the data. There were no needed changes to the interviews transcribed

found from any of the ten participants. Each participant verified transcriptions depicted their actual view and responses appropriately. Credibility is a criterion in the triangulation which was achieved by completing interviews during various scheduling times, in various locations favored by the participant. Using different times of day and various spaces during data collection with the same researcher is achieved. (Korstjens & Moser, 2018)

Transferability

The students in this study connected with the opportunity to have their stories heard while some in the beginning seemed hesitant to share, they all later were openly transparent about their ability to cope and succeed at the post-secondary level alongside their nondisabled peers. Many under the radar not revealing to the peers they were managing with their learning disability. Transferability was present with the participants sharing their experiences to help other students faced with their same disability. The findings of this research hopefully will benefit college faculty and students.

Dependability & Confirmability

Bracketing was used throughout the research project to deliberately remove my own biases due to my previous employment as a special education teacher, who worked with students with a learning disability. I began each interview using a reflective journal to and jotted down any preconceived assumptions I had about the participant for both the initial and the follow up sessions. Prior to the beginning the research I listed my assumptions about learning disabilities and college students, these were: (1) an over representation of African American males with LD in college. (2) LD students would not

want to share their story due to feeling embarrassed. (3) Freshman year accounts would be challenging for a learning-disabled student to provide. Using the reflective journal prior to the research helped me to suspend my judgement and commit to an unbiased approach. A method of “posit bracketing” (p.5) achieved by (Tufford & Newman, 2016) jotting in my journal before I met with a student to ensure my preconceptions were posted prior to the interview with the participant. Exercising this approach helped me to reject my own lived experiences and be fully present for the reports of the participants. The ability to repeat the study is important in research, therefore I meticulously documented each step and process taken during the project. As themes emerged during my research, I captured them in my field notes and reviewed the data numerous times to ensure the phenomena was evolving in the manner the participants described during the research. An audit trail was conducted to ensure a step-by-step account of the recruitment and research procedures could be duplicated for further study. My reflective journal assisted in capturing observations both nonverbal and verbal as the participants were responding to the research questions.

Study Results

The purpose of this study was to explore learning-disabled college students and how they successfully navigated their freshman year of college with a learning disability. There are nine themes which emerged from the data analysis; the findings of the study are specified in table #3. The emerging themes are described and supported in the interview responses of the student participants transcribed during interviews.

The themes 1-4 are interrelated with RQ1, themes 4-7 are interrelated with RQ2, and themes 8-9 are interrelated with RQ3, which is described in Table 3.

Table 3

Research Themes

Emergent Themes	Participants n.	Number of Interview Transcripts Referenced	Number of references made
Feelings of Isolation	5	5	8
Embarrassed of the Disability	3	3	6
Using Accommodations	10	15	18
Freshman Unpreparedness	3	4	5
Academic Self-Efficacy and Awareness	6	17	24
Family Support	3	11	22
Utilizing Campus Resources	6	10	20
Social Group & Peer Support	4	8	10
Intrinsic & Extrinsic Motivation	5	13	25

Theme 1: Feelings of Isolation and Anxiety (RQ1)

During the interviews, this overwhelming feeling of isolation of due to circumnavigating alone was expressed by five of the ten student participants interviewed. Several shared their experiences as they relate to “going at it alone”. Students shared their sense of knowing they were not alone yet figuring out what they needed without support, while recognizing in order to get the things that were going to help them, they needed to speak up. Student 1 (S1) stated: “Its way different, you are by yourself, in college and there is nobody that’s following you to ask if you need help, it’s a you speak for yourself, or if you don’t speak at all, they just won’t hear you.” Another student, S9 stated: “Um well it was kinda of hard but eventually I had to stop what I was doing at that time and

then get my thoughts together and figure out what needs to be done how I was gonna get done, basically like plan it out on what I was gonna do this day what I was gonna get certain things done to make myself more organized.” Both students expressed difficulties with a sense of solitude but necessary for them to be in control of their own education.

While three of the five participants were able to cope with the stress and deal with living in a new environment functioning independently was new for many students. Participants were asked explain their understanding of anxiety and ways to prevent it. Student 3 stated: “It’s like a meditation a mental thing I just have to like okay its fine you’ll get through this it’s nothing major cause I’m really stressed about my future and like how something can affect if I don’t get this right so like I just tell myself its fine you can redo it’s not a big problem like it’s a small thing in a big (world) I don’t think I really had anyone to help.”

Another participant expressed that although they have a disability coupled with the self-doubt, it requires a balance of the mind to get through. S2 stated: “I would say being a student with a disability brings on anxiety things of that nature sometimes you doubt yourself just sort of a mental balance.” While they each shared their own method of coping, dealing with isolation and the opportunity to choose their method that worked for them it seemed to be the majority of student positions while accepting their place on their own terms. S3: “Um I usually go outside I like to walk around and look at the trees and things like that it clears my head out, they have like games on your phone where you can put questions in, I think it’s like quizlet you could put questions in and mismatch them it usually do that.”

S8: “Instead of trying to do it all at one time I kind of break it up a little bit do more than one day if I have to memorize something that I would make sure like I don’t leave it until the last would make sure like I don’t leave it until the last minute. I would start right away to make sure I got it.” Even though all five of the participants were no longer freshman they recalled the experiences of frustration yet planning helped them be accountable for the days that lie ahead as a student.

Theme 2: Embarrassed by Disability (RQ1)

Participants were asked if they identified themselves as a student with a disability, these three students suggested the stigma of others knowing about their disability was counterproductive. Student S1 stated: “At first when I started college as a freshman, I knew I needed help I wanted to try it by myself, I wanted to try and do it by myself without the help, but then second semester after I got on probation and I either needed to get my grades up or I needed to ask for help so, I soon asked for help and my grades came along.” Student S2 shared: “For one its started out with the self -questioning you know is something wrong with me? You have people from the outside that question you as well, that’s where the strength and the mental balance took off.”

Student 2 also stated: “Prior years I had people who doubted me because of my disability, it’s almost an embarrassment you want to prove people wrong getting a degree is definitely something that will mean a lot to me given my situation.” The college atmosphere provided a new freedom. The alarming sense of embarrassment shared by three of the ten participants did not hinder their academic performance yet they each described their own account of wanting to do college on their own terms. Student S3

shared: “Well like I said before I’m in college right now they do have more resources for people that struggle with the basic tools and that really helped me cause now that part is out of my path so I don’t have to worry about it anymore so that’s good.” 2 out of 3 participants who described feelings of awkwardness were not hindered by their scholastic functioning.

Theme 3: Accommodations Made the Difference (RQ1)

As a student with a learning disability, 100% of students expressed an understanding of the accommodations that were available to them as a student with a disability. Three of the 10 students choose their freshman year to not use the resources available to them under the Individuals with Disability Improvement Act, though many knew their rights under the Law. Two of the 10 students interviewed recalled the accommodations used as a student in high school worked for their years in high school but made an active choice not to use the accommodations on campus.

Four of the 10 students interviewed were aware of the accommodations through the disability support centers on campus and actively engaged in working with campus support team to exercise their right under the law which proved beneficial in making the transition from high school to college. Student 2 shared they were not sure if they could use the same accommodation as in high school, however they noted by saying, Umm I would say one on one sessions with various teacher,” were working. Student S8 stated: “It helped me because I felt with that if I didn’t have the extra help, I would’ve felt like I couldn’t do it like wouldn’t feel like I would be prepared to do college like curriculum but that extra help I

defiantly like um help me feel more prepared.” While student S9 shared: “It prepared me for what I needed to do, so I would be able to at least know some requirements that I needed and at least have going into college.” The campus life was described differently by all 10 participants yet they each knew about the accommodations and each institution introduced them to the student population in various ways. Those described above explained the accommodations made a positive difference academically. S10 noted, “We tried taking, I did take my test outside on many occasions. I also got help from my teacher, I used the calculator too, and I also asked my mom for help. This disability is a math disability, it’s like you have trouble with the basics.”

Theme 4: Freshman Unpreparedness (RQ2)

Several students responded to questions about their freshman year and their feelings of unprepared. They described the last year of high school and the fear of entering college without being ready. One student describes the routine similar to that of high school as a commuter in their freshman year, which didn’t enable them to feel connected to the student’s campus lifestyle. With strong ties in high school and a supportive system, the postsecondary transition left them feeling a sense of not being equipped. Student S5 reported: “More so of like because college my freshman year of high school cause I woke up I drove there I went to my classes and I drove back, so it was like finding the balance to where I actually like pushed myself more with like more determination like in high school. High School was like here’s the packet do it college is more like okay here’s this you gotta know it then study then read it back and then go

during office hours, but my friend's and I didn't know what office hours, where I was like okay what are office hours, honestly, we were like a group." I asked the students to share their confidence and rate it from 1 being not able or confident to a 10 being very confident Student S7 indicated: An "8" I wanted confidence I didn't feel like I was gonna fail I might have a lot of errors on my test but I feel like I probably get a C like I would get a C I didn't think I would really fail I would just get a lot of I earn my grade would go up they would be down though I would go with like an 8 I kinda knew how it works. Oh, from freshman year probably came in like a 2 or a 3 but since I got to college it's probably like a 8." Some college participants identified with the same struggles in high school that carried over into their adult life in college, student S9 stated: "Well I would struggle with writing papers or wouldn't get good enough grades in that specific area due to the struggle with writing." All students from this group later expressed feelings of accomplishments as they matriculated through the college years. The level of support provided in college was far different than the support when transitioning to the postsecondary setting.

Theme 5: Academic Self-Efficacy and Awareness (RQ2)

Themes of self-efficacy continued to emerge as questions about self-efficacy and the drive to be a student in good standing. Each of these students, 6 out of 10 students described levels of efficacy traits in their responses. Student 1 stated: "I would have to say that proven other people that has doubted me, throughout the years I have also had that throughout high school, I had teachers that said I have to stay back a grade because I probably didn't have the knowledge to move forward but I have done it I feel like me

going through school and being succeeding and being successful to where I am now have proven that I can it.” Students S5 stated: “Discipline now um I’m old enough to where like alright you gotta do it so like suck it up and do it. That’s honestly it right now, ain’t nobody holding your hand you are paying all this money for school you got to do it.”

“Student S6 described: “It means to keep going no matter what. I’m still in here and I finished my first year.”

Students S7 stated: “Success, it helped me be successful, not overthinking it and asking for help. Not afraid to communicate with people and let them know toy are having trouble and need help.”

Student S8 stated: “I’m a dance major so I knew I would be able to do it, but I just wasn’t 100% confident but I was gonna be able to get through it. I would say I got through it so um better.”

Student S10 stated: “To me that would mean to me you could help yourself, but you could also get help for yourself, but you could also get help for yourself. It helped me because I knew that I couldn’t give up.” As Bandura theorized in the belief in oneself to achieve these students describe enate quest to achieve despite their limitations or disabilities. “S2: “I would say now I have found my strive to academics and on campus life I think I met a good group of friends I feel comfortable, now I feel like I am finding my way as a college student.” Student S3 stated: “Well my support system will be um senior history teacher and friends they really make sure I’m confident he really helped me like write and things like that he was like a creative writing teacher, so he helped me with the foundations.” Student S9 stated: “Well sometimes or a lot of times I would have to

stay up longer or stay after school for a long period of time so I could get the writing done and I would feel confident in it.” Student S10: “A lot of hurdles I went I had to deal was I had to do a lot of tutoring, a lot of tutoring, like I dealt with a lot of tutors sometimes like I had different tutors on different days, and it was like every Monday Wednesday and Friday I had different tutors. Yeah, it did help.” Each described different accounts, but all suggest an instinctive feeling to continue forward and use the supports and resources to get to the end.

Theme 6: Family Support (RQ2)

Family support became an overarching theme when asked to explain the hurdles and challenges necessary to successfully complete the freshman year of school to the current point in school. Student S2 stated: “One thing my mom likes to say a lot is that she knows me so she can see it on my face when something may be wrong with me I would say she is definitely a big help and a big support system.” She keeps me steady and on the right path. Student S4 stated: “I would say I always compare myself to my mom, she has a master’s degree with four kids so I’m just like no excuses, I could at least a bachelors, no excuses.” The drive to measure-up was shared in the interview with Student 4, who believed if his mother could so it so could them. Another student recalls the voice in their head, that has led her through tough times in school, S5 states, “My mother. My mother, really like she’s like older she raised me, so when I mess up she’s in my head so I’m like let me not do that!” Student S10: “Sometimes I get low and I’m like I don’t know if I can do this and I don’t know if I wanna do this but I end up right back up like okay I got this I have the support I have the friends that can help me I have the family

that can help me and I got some teachers and students that's willing to help me." Many students identified the family support through friendships made on campus which became the family needed to hold them accountable for the academic standing. The support provided allowed them to connect to other students.

Theme 7: Utilizing Campus Resources (RQ2)

The campus life and the transition to college provided a level of freedom to each of these participants on their own accord. Student S1 informed: "I would say no students but a support service, she has helped me along the way getting through things, but it was just help with papers. I am a bad writer when it comes to writing papers. I look at it such as what is the maximum amount of pages, I have to write instead of what it is that I am writing instead of that I am all over the place so she use to help me be in order and talk about what it is I need to talk about instead of going from Z directly back to B."

Knowing the resources are there students are able to choose what services they wished to activate and for how long. Student S2 stated : "Yes I would say that the strength to that program is that they make you feel comfortable, they don't put a lot of pressure on you I mean no pressure really they just want you to succeed, they understand your situation so they want you to feel comfortable." The connection to the resources and how comfortable ones feels in accessing them proved to support 60% of the participants interviewed.

Student S3 stated: "For Del tech they do have essay writing and math helping which I go to a lot well I use to go to a lot but now I don't, but it was helpful for me to understand topics and like writing and things like that." S4 stated: "At Wesley, they are very hands-on since it's a small college it's a small setting everybody feels welcome they definitely

do reach out they were sending me emails and everything and I wouldn't respond to it sometimes they let me know if I need help they are always available it was relaxing to knowing that somebody's there." Student S9 stated: "Well on campus they have like some programs sometimes so like on finals and midterms that you can go to and like try to play games and stuff to elevate the stress." S10: "Yes, I met a teacher my freshman year in college I can't remember her name I had class with her, and she was always willing to help me every time cause she know when I needed help ad I wasn't gonna say nothing, so she knew the signs and she always was like "hey --- do you want to talk about this do you want to talk about that. Do you need help on a certain subject, and she was just always around?" The utilization of the campus resources was an emerging theme which was growing as students identified with the LD supportive programs and the resources available to them on campus as a student with a disability.

Theme 8: Social Group Support/ Peer Support (RQ3)

Social Support was an emerging theme in 4 out of the 10 students interviewed. These students reported a sense of connection to their peers and faculty on campus. The encouragement felt assisted when they were ready to give up. One student describes Student S2 stated: "Well personally I would be lying if I didn't say at first, I doubt myself, but I have to build myself back up and on the right path again speaking with other students and my parents just trying to find the extra motivation." The backing by another was the boost needed to get back on track. Student S5 shared: "My mother. My mother, like she's like older she raised me, so when I mess up, she's in my head so I'm like let me not do that." Parents and caregiver's role in the education was a support as well as

accountability to continue to strive to do their best. The student confirms the parental support motivated them to keep trying even when confronted with the challenges of college life. Others surrounded themselves on campus with friends who held them accountable for their academic performance and overall postsecondary achievement. Student S8 stated: “My friends helped motivate me, make sure throughout high school and college they always make sure I always do what I have to do when you are on the right track so that helps motivate me to finish know that there were times that I didn’t want to do it by they were like no you got this you can do it.” Student S9 stated: “when you see that you have people around you that are like also supporting you like my family friends that I met there some of my teachers and then a decrease is sometimes struggling to find resources or struggling to find an efficient way to get something done.” The academic environment could be challenging, however the participants each found the rigor of college coupled with the support from peers and family allowed them to tackle the issues that arose when needed.

Theme 9: Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation (RQ3)

Students were asked to share what increases and decreases their motivation to succeed in college. They were also questioned about resources that facilitated in their success. Five out of 10 described to be extrinsically motivated by others. Their lived experiences were compounded by the desire to change their current existence. Student S1 stated: “I would have to say that proven other people that has doubted me, throughout the years I have also had that throughout high school, I had teachers that said I have to stay back a grade because I probably didn’t have the knowledge to move forward but I have

done it I feel like me going through school and being succeeding and being successful to where I am now have proven that I can it.”

While student S2 described: “I would say the main the main thing is just reaching out to other people who have been to college and just trying to learn from their experiences things I should do shouldn’t do you know prepare myself for any situation.” Student S3 stated: “Well my motivation would be money so I just want to keep pushing through like even if I don’t pursue in this career it will be good to have it under my belt and I can use it for a different pathway like maybe I want to become an art teacher and I can just use that.” Student S6 stated: “Like what made me do what I do is my nieces and nephews, I am a first generation to go to college. They see me go to college to be something and make something of myself.” Student S7 stated: My family for college and the feel that I pass it I just want to be the first one to pass college that’s a big motivator and yes college.” Their overall sense of self and wellbeing was necessary to intrinsically change their thinking of those in their environment. They all were motivated extrinsically to succeed academically for example by family, money or their peers.

Summary

Presented in chapter four were the lived experiences described by 10 students with a learning disability during their freshman year of college. The participants involved ranged in age from 18-22 and plan graduating year at the time of the study was different. Each of the students were in an undergraduate program and attended colleges within a 200-mile radius of Delaware County. Many of the students interviewed resided in the New Castle County sector of Delaware and were upperclassmen. Motivation and

academic self-efficacy themes were significant in the results of the study for the LD student accounts for positive academic outcomes. Decision making skills, motivation both intrinsic and extrinsic were identified as key contributors of their overall health and wellbeing. Self-Efficacy is further described for more than half the students by their community support systems, and personal affirmations to defy the odds and seek help when necessary, to accomplish their academic goals.

Chapter Five will provide a comprehensive overview of the interpretive findings and purpose of the research. The results of the research study limitations, recommendations discovered during the semi-structured interviews, will also be provided. The implications of the study, shown from the aspect of the conceptual framework are acknowledged further in this chapter. Included is an in-depth discussion of the results from the research and positive social change implications for future study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the conclusions of the research findings presented in Chapter 4. The nature of the study was to examine the lived experiences of students with a learning disability during their freshman year in college. This research addresses a broader understanding of the research questions, study implications and limitations, a discussion of my reflections, and recommendations are explored. I used IPA to gain an understanding of how self-efficacy and educational programs improved their academic performance while on campus (Tuffour, 2017). According to Farmer (2015), students with learning disabilities are often admitted to public and private postsecondary institutions unprepared to meet the rigor required of a college-level student when compared to their same-aged peers.

There is little research to suggest students with learning disabilities who embark on a postsecondary education are able to manage the challenges associated with campus life to remain in good standing beyond a first year of college (DuPaul et al., 2017). Three central questions guided my research study:

RQ1: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students with regard to academic success and challenges?

RQ2: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students regarding their sense of self-efficacy during their high school and college educational programs?

RQ3: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students regarding their sense of motivation during their high school and college educational programs?”

Creswell (2009) considered use of a phenomena to study a small population of participants who share a liked minded life experiences in qualitative research. This is the method I used to conduct this study. Ten students met the study’s selection criteria and were willing to participate in semistructured interviews (see Appendix). I explored a deeper understanding of this phenomena in self-efficacy and motivation of college students with learning disabilities who demonstrated positive academic outcomes. Academic self-efficacy was apparent for these 10 students demonstrated by their academic performance and GPAs. The reoccurrence of self-efficacy was reported by students engaged in good decision making, high self-confidence, and a sense of community among their peers in campus life as well as motivation to succeed and complete their postsecondary education.

Interpretation of the Findings

The exploration of self-efficacy and motivation of college student experiences were at the root of this research study. I used the outcomes from the research, such as my field notes and journal responses, research question and member checking responses, in the development of the major themes of this study. The results of the 10 interviews of college students with learning disabilities were analyzed and the literature review findings used as the foundation of this study. During the discussions, nine themes materialized during interviews and the data analysis process.

Research Question 1

RQ1: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students about academic success and challenges? Three major themes emerged from the focused research question: (a) feelings of isolation, (b) being embarrassed by the disability, and (c) the difference in accommodations.

Theme 1: Feelings of Isolation and Anxiety

The theme of isolation emerged during the interviews with 50% of the student participants. The data collected validated this theme as being substantial to this study although only half of the participants shared this lack of support or understanding the campus life and where “they fit” in the scheme of things while making the transition during their freshman year of school. Goa et al. (2020) revealed female freshman college students reported high levels of anxiety when compared to their male peers in a Chinese study. The anxiety from the pressure in academics pushed female college students while depression was noted in male freshman students (Goa et al., 2020). In a study conducted by Nelson et al. (2015), LD students reported high levels of anxiety and stress, however my study represents a collective group of participants whose self-efficacy helped in ways to lower anxiety when properly prepared for tests and assignments.

Another study investigated the correlation between anxiety, self-efficacy, and the negative effects of not seeking psychological college help for college students (Nelson et al., 2015). The findings of my study indicated isolation, disability embarrassment, and accommodation differences in 50% of the research participants. There were five participants who experienced self-efficacy in their transition and decreased their anxiety

by seeking support from family, peers, and other campus resources (Nelson et al. 2013). Overall, the students represented in this study demonstrate a lower level of anxiety when prepared for tests and assignments. The students who sought college resources were far less likely to report stress or anxiety. In a study researched by Gibbons et al. (2019), students who represented first generation families in college struggled with the campus life adjustments presented similar findings compared to my current study in that, once they adjusted to the college experience, their anxiety and stress decreased. By accessing the resources available on campus which included peers and developed study skills the academic self-efficacy and college experience improved.

Theme 2: Embarrassed by Disability

During interviews the theme of stigmatization emerged to hinder 30% of the participants. Although participants reported burden by the “label” of having a disability, it didn’t affect their overall academic performance. Research conducted by Easterbrook, Bulk, Ghanouni, Lee, Opini, Roberts, Parhar, and Jarus, (2015) identified college level students wrestling with their disability and not disclosing to others due to the concern of being accepted as legitimate program students. Faced with wanting acceptance much like the participants in this research study, they successfully continued to meet program rigor and maintain academic performance. Several participants shared stories of the challenges faced being identified with a disability and their embarrassment, which presented as a barrier to seek help and resources to acclimate to the freshman environment therefore students declined to divulge the disability (Robbins & Parlavecchio, 2006). According to Grimes, 2020; Akin & Huang, 2019, there is research to support the higher education

academic exploration is hampered by students with non-visible disabilities due to the associated emotional stigma. As a result, support needed to aid in academic positive outcomes is not met at the level required to help students get the supports available to succeed due to the “negative labels” associated with a learning disability. (Grimes, 2020; p.24)

Theme 3: Accommodations Made the Difference

A list of accommodations was available to students under the IDEA 2004, which provide support educationally to assist people classified with a disability in the college environment. Many of the modifications were accessible to them as secondary students. 100% of the participants questioned were familiar with accommodations available to them as a college student. Several shared during their interviews they comprehended that accommodations were there, however they chose not to access them. Instead, they choose to try classes without use of accommodations. A contradiction was found in a study regarding the effectiveness of the use of test accommodations for LD undergraduates (Weis & Beauchemin, 2020). College students accessed accommodations from a list provided and confirmed their effectiveness in positive support academically.

Research Question 2

What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students regarding their sense of self-efficacy during their high school and college educational programs?

Theme 4: Unpreparedness in Freshman Year

An emerging theme of self-efficacy surfaced when students responded to their feelings of entering college and navigating the campus life for the first time, while dealing with all there was to understand during the transition from high school to college. A common pattern described a lack of preparedness originally increased for students in the beginning of their freshman year. In a study conducted by Hallett, Kezar, Perez and Kitchen (2019), colleges are recognizing a need to form a transition program to address the barriers faced by students when transitioning to college. The goal of the program is to create positive student outcomes lessening the barriers for populations who are exploring resources and other campus offerings. Several students mutually recollected trying one way and then another because they had to figure out how to succeed. For two of the ten participants the college life felt like high school with more freedom, yet no one to guide them.

Conner (2012) suggests tips for LD student transition to college. These tips included exploring the services offered on campus, decision making ability practice, and taking courses for college while high school. None of the current research participants mentioned any of the LD tips for students to transition to college. Although college life presented many challenges and the overwhelming feeling shared by these students upon entering their freshman year described as unnerving, it appeared the stories told also revealed a sense of self-efficacy and the fact they entered college so therefore they must succeed at all costs, (Reif, 2011)

Theme 5: Academic Self-Efficacy and Preparedness

Academic self-efficacy, which linked to preparedness became a theme following questioning of 60% of the population involved in this research study. Bandura (1986) describes self-efficacy to be present when people believe in their abilities to complete and succeed regardless of the challenges they face. They are motivated to deliver, meet, and at times surpass their expectations. The stories of the participants suggest a distinctive yearning to excel, although their disability and data contradict academic achievement. Many share the responsibilities to keep going and strategies used to seek out help and campus resources to improve and maintain their academic performance.

For some students, the voice to ask for help was imparted by the internal drive to perform and meet the rigor required of a college level student. In 2018, Manzano-Sanchez, Outley, Gonzalez, Matarrita-Cascante, conducted a study to explore ways academic self-efficacy and academic performance was linked to positive student outcomes. Unlike my participants many of these students were of Latino descent although had varying backgrounds. The commonalities in my study included low-income, family hardships, first generation college student, belief in their own capabilities all were factors used to maintain academic performance beyond their freshman year of college. (Center for Educational Policy, 2012; Farrar, 2011; and Mizutowicz, 2007)

Theme 6: Family Support

Family support was an emerging theme found during the interviews and the recants of the ways and strategies used to allow students despite their disability to continue to meet the expectancies of college level academic performance. A notable

research study found by Jimenez, Pina-Watson and Manzo, (2021) indicates family support as a means to increase the academic performance for Mexican students who are first generation college students. The continuous communication stimulated between the families was noted to assist students with their transition and overall academic experience.

Some of the students interviewed explained that their parents believed in “no excuses” and failure was not an available option. The lack of knowing or understanding was no justification for poor academic performance. Parental encouragement during the college years correlates with academic self-efficacy and student performance. This is also associated with decreasing the stress new student report during their adjustment to college life (Hall, McNallie, Custers, Timmermans, Wilson, Van de Bulck, 2017). My participants indicated family support motivated them to increase their study habits and seek resources to improve achievement.

Theme 7: Utilizing Campus Resources

During the adjustment to campus life more than half experienced a period of discovery. 100% of students confirmed they had knowledge of most of the resources their college offered, and 60% of the participant pool actively engaged the resources which improved their overall campus experience. Some student participants used peer tutoring, the disability support center, and various existing programs to aid the campus population in academic attainment. A research study by Dayne, Jung, Roy, (2021), disclosed the level of campus support necessary for mothers to ensure academic achievement. These mothers faced barriers much like the research participants in this study, which included

low income and other financial burdens, educational challenges. In the current research study, students are not parents and unlike the mothers in this article they have the support of their institution which played a major role in their academic success. Research has provided perceptiveness in the power of student success when environmental resources are utilized to influence academic attainment (Walsh and Kurpius, 2016).

Research Question 3

What is the lived experience learning-disabled freshman college students regarding their sense of motivation during their high school and college educational programs?

Theme 8: Social Group Support/ Peer Support

Participants describe a strength in numbers, because of the invaluable help and support of peers which made college a home away from home. This theme emerged after accounts of ways others held students accountable for their success. Patterns of self-efficacy surfaced as stories were shared which enabled three LD students to continue to meet. College life, and their disability challenged their belief if college was the right place for them. Academic self-efficacy became a starting point for academic achievement for freshman college students with reading challenges. The current study supports recent research that compared non-disabled and LD college student skill strategies learned which resulted in positive outcomes (Bergey, Parrila, Laroche, and Deacon, 2019).

Theme 9: Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

The theme of motivation surfaced as the recollections of ways and strategies academic performance was shaped among four of the ten students interviewed. The

identifier which caused or empowered the academic self-efficacy to maintain positive performance both internally and externally was determined. According to Daniel and Croc (2018), learning disabilities did not prevent the activation of intrinsic motivation resulting in high levels of academic improvement. In the current study, the LD students revealed high levels of intrinsic motivation activated by academic success.

Limitations of the Study

There are many influences which contributed to the limitations of this study. One limitation of the study is the recollection of those who were beyond their freshman year of college. Of the current research study, I considered most if not all of the students participating in the study would be in their freshman year of college. I determined later that students represented multiple levels of college and the older students were more amenable to sharing their experiences. Since many of the students interviewed were asked to recall their freshman year experience, more than 50% of the students were upperclassmen therefore it is unclear to whether each participant accurately depicted the freshman year experiences due to the timespan that elapsed since their initial year.

Another limitation of the study was the sample size which consisted of 10 participants, this limitation provided a partial scope of viewpoint. In the future research it would be beneficial to use a larger number of participants, with description of the full four years of the campus life experience as students with a disability. The study reached a small geographic area consisting of New Castle County residence thus limiting the finding explanations. A broader area would provide a wider analysis of the college experience.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis was the research approach to this study to gain a broader understanding of academic self-efficacy and motivation in college students diagnosed with a specific learning disability. My initial biases were recognized, and bracketing was used to identify any bias, and the interviews were conducted removing researcher biases (Tuffour, 2017).

The participants were invited to review the transcriptions as part of the member checking process, and make modifications needed to ensure responses were accurately depicted. Although the GPA's were self-reporting a mixed method approach would broaden the study findings responses to include correlations between academic performance freshman year and current year performance.

Recommendations

The principles of self-efficacy which unfolded in this research endorses a direct relationship between student achievement and self-efficacy beliefs, resulting in positive student learning outcomes. Motivation influenced their decisions both academically and socially, which directly improved their overall likelihood of continued success and could be expanded to explore LD college freshman academic practices by expanding the population studied. Further research could:

1. Examine mentorship opportunities of students transitioning from high school to college with a longitudinal approach of discovery.
2. Explore learning disability students in other locations by broadening the geographical area for the study.

3. Investigate adding a component of disability supports presented by current students in freshman orientation.
4. Explore life after college for students with LD who successfully graduate and enter the workforce.

The discoveries of this research support additional analysis as necessary to close the gaps presented in the college transition and campus life of students with a learning disability who have experienced academic self-efficacy and positive student attainment. A wider view of the experiences geographically will support the interpretations of LD students across the globe who seek a college degree. 50% of the participants represent feelings of isolation and limited support to campus life. A study to examine the college experience would provide a deeper understanding of the freshman approach to academic self-efficacy and the behavioral factors associated with maintaining good academic standing throughout their post-secondary life on campus. Based on this research, students who pursued accommodations and campus support reported a reduction in stress and pressure. A college peer mentor assigned during their college tenure of study is recommended to provide a sponsor for hands-on consistent reinforcement to reduce the pressures experienced of LD students exploring college life for the first time.

Implications of the Study

Positive Social Change

The percentage of college students with a learning disability continues to increase to 21.2%, (Costiella & Horowitz 2014; Sarid et al., 2020). Research continues to suggest many LD students fail to complete a degree and meet the necessary academic standards

to be admitted and finish a degree from both a 2 year and 4-year institution. The current study 100% of the participants were successfully completing their degree and meeting the necessary academic standards. Stakeholders have continued to make strides to bridge the gap and support students with disabilities to matriculate by offering additional colleges with less stringent admission procedures and continuing to support transition teams during the last year of high school (DuPual et al., 2017; Harrison et al., 2013).

The students who participated in this study have shared a commitment to being part of a campus life and working to meet the rigor required of college level students. Their self-efficacy is manifested in their awareness of their disability and motivation to succeed as college level student. Research suggests students are faced with the challenges beyond admission which include academic achievement and the need for supports (DuPaul et al., 2017). Further implications found that, due to embarrassment, LD students consciously preferred not to seek services or support due to the possibility of being labeled. Consequently, the findings suggest the need for further inquiry into the impact of the stigma on their academic performance due to unwanted exposure or stigma of having a disability (Grimes, 2020; Robbins & Parlavecchio, 2006).

Practice Implications

In analysis of this research, there were themes that lent support to continued work beyond just freshman with learning disabilities to include the four-year college journey as a whole. Accounts of these 10 student participants during the sharing of their campus life experience leads to certain implications for college faculty, parents and students.

1. Increase opportunities for students to be mentored by their peers in a non-regulatory way which will help with navigation as students matriculate from one year of college to the next.
2. More focused study of the possible stigma of embarrassment in individuals with LD and the relevance to stigma research.
3. Faculty should be encouraged to take a course or training on how to support a student with LD beyond their freshman year.
4. Parents and students should be welcomed to a transition meeting together when admitted to 2 or 4-year college campuses.
5. Assess the best preparation for evaluation practices for students with LD.

In conclusion my recommendation is to support the continued learning curve of (a) college faculty and administration, (b) college disability support services, (c) and students. The recommendations provided will hopefully improve the likelihood of LD college students gaining access to 2-year and 4-year institutions, resulting in academic success and degree completion.

Conclusion

The research literature considered methodology which offers mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative approach to understanding the experience of college students with learning disabilities, including students who came up short in the area of academic well-roundedness. This researcher sought to explore a new phenomenon which uncovered the lived experiences of students with positive learning outcomes whereas peer reviewed articles supported post-secondary education of students challenged by

academic capability. Through exploration, this researcher identified common patterns and themes that emerged from the interviews. The themes included (a) feelings of isolation and anxiety, (b) embarrassed by the disability, (c) using accommodations, (d) freshman unpreparedness, (e) academic self-efficacy and awareness, (f) motivated by family support, (g) utilizing campus resources, (h) social group and peer support, and (i) intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation. Unlike their same-aged peers, study participants explored the postsecondary education by using behavioral strategies and resources to lengthen their time on campus beyond a freshman year experience.

Students shared their private interpretations of self-efficacy and motivation in the college environment activated to achieve academic success despite their learning challenges. The goal to explore the lived experiences of learning-disabled students were achieved through semistructured interviews. Understanding student decisions, and academic goals is supported by the assumption of social cognitive theory. Through this research that students, school faculty and families will benefit from the shared experiences to provide an increased awareness of best practices and livelihoods to improve self-efficacy among incoming freshman with a learning disability.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

Hello and thank, you for taking the time to interview with me today. Though this research your lived experience and others with similar experience, we can provide support for both faculty staff, students and their families who plan to seek a college degree.

RQ1: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students with regard to academic success and challenges?

1. Prior to attending college what services if any did you receive under IDEA? Do you identify yourself as a student with a disability?
2. How would you describe your high school experience? How would you describe your current progress?
3. What resources have you used on campus to help you improve and meet the rigor required at the college level?
4. Describe the learning support you received prior to college. How has this support carried over into the college environment?
5. What are the consistent challenges you face as a student with a disability?
6. Was the disability self-reported or diagnosed prior to college? Describe your challenges as it relates to your disability and barriers you faced prior to your diagnosis.
7. Describe the type of learning disability you have been diagnosed. Explain if accommodations have aided you in the classroom environment.
8. What academic hurdles have you tackled to maintain good academic standing?

9. When preparing for exams what do you do to cope with stress and test anxiety?
10. What is your understanding of test anxiety and how to prevent it?
11. When preparing for a test, walk me through how you take care of yourself during preparation for an exam.

RQ2: What is the lived experience of learning-disabled freshman college students regarding their sense of self-efficacy during their high school and college educational programs?
12. How would you describe your level of confidence in college?
13. Since on campus, have you met with anyone from the LD program and was this helpful?
14. When you are under increased pressure do your family members recognize certain behaviors that would tell them you need help?
15. When you feel stress and pressure, has the LD program provided help or suggestions?
16. Have you ever experienced stress, or a sense being overwhelmed? How were you able to cope with the stress?
17. Describe your level of feeling like you are going to succeed or fail in college.
18. Have you been able to share your thoughts and feelings with anyone from the LD program?

RQ3: What is the lived experience learning-disabled freshman college students regarding their sense of motivation during their high school and college educational programs?
19. What increases and decreases your motivation to succeed in college?

20. Have the pre-college LD programs given you more motivation as you prepared you for the college rigor academically?
21. How do you respond when you are failing, and you are having difficulty in college?