

Stereotypes about Adults with Learning Disabilities: Are Professionals a Cut Above the Rest?

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Description

This 30-page article reports on an experiment that explored the attitudes of 175 professionals and 167 non-professionals in India towards the life success of adults with learning disabilities.

Salient Points

Stereotypes are often attached to perceptions of the mental, emotional, and even physical attributes. Individuals with learning disabilities are commonly subject to countless stereotypes. In this study, the attitudes towards adults with learning disabilities of two groups of participants, professionals and non-professionals (public), were contrasted. The findings revealed similarity of perceptions between the two groups of participants. That is, both groups viewed adult learners with learning disability as likely to have less success in life than their counterparts. Other negative stereotypes included using comparative and contrastive descriptions included *normal vs abnormal*, *attractive vs unattractive*, *fast vs slow*, *intelligent vs dull*, and *successful and unsuccessful*.

These negative perceptions of individuals having disabilities are deeply rooted, making it challenging to counter the stigma attached to individuals with disabilities. It requires a concerted effort among professional groups and the public in general to change attitudes towards individuals with disabilities. Information dissemination and knowledge about learning disabilities must be widely communicated for everyone to get the message of support.

Questions for Reflection

As you explore this document, consider the following questions:

- Learners with disabilities were stereotyped using words such as *abnormal*, *dull*, *unattractive*, *slow*, or *unsuccessful*. As an educator, how do you respond to such stereotyping language when it occurs in the classroom?
- Despite information on inclusion, there are still many who have negative views towards individuals with disabilities. In your own classroom, how do you encourage inclusivity among learners? How do you ensure that learners with disabilities are accepted, involved, and recognized in class?

- Stereotypes are not only spoken but also viewed in textbooks and other resource materials. As an educator, are you able to select classroom materials that are free from stereotypes? What strategies work best in selecting books, magazines, journals that promote diversity among your learners?

Keywords

Stereotypes, biases, learners with learning disability

Reference and Links

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