A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING THE GRADUATION AND JOB PLACEMENT OUTCOMES OF COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER: IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the policies, procedures, and programs in place to encourage the graduation and job placement of college students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Data collection took place at Open Enrollment Midwestern University, a pseudonym, through document analysis and interviews. Document analysis focused on the policies relevant to students admitted with disabilities, specifically ASD. Interviews were held with current students with ASD, and administrators, faculty, and staff who directly or indirectly work with students with disabilities, specifically ASD. While most findings included data relevant to college students with disabilities in general, the primary focus was on college students with ASD. Prior studies are few and focus on the increase in the population of college students with ASD paired with the lack of services. A gap in research exists among the policies, procedures, and programs that may or may not be in place to ensure the graduation and job placement of college students with ASD. This study's findings revealed a lack of policies, procedures, and programs that encourage the graduation and job placement of college students with disabilities in general, including ASD. Findings also examine Project Stay, a federally funded program on college campuses that is exceeding their goals of graduating at-risk students, including students with disabilities such as ASD.