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13 Disability Category Journal

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Identification of Disability #1: Autism

“...a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category.

Before I started learning more in this course, my view of autism was pretty limited. I mostly thought of it as a condition where kids had trouble with talking or making friends. But now, I understand that autism is actually a broad spectrum, and every person with autism is different. Some students might need more help with daily tasks, while others might be very independent and even excel in certain areas. I used to work with adults with disabilities. I worked with one man who had autism and was very good with numbers and calendar dates. He could tell you the day of the week for any date you asked him, past or future. It was amazing to see how focused and knowledgeable he was about it. That experience stuck with me and helped me see how important it is to recognize individual strengths. This course has also taught me how things like visual schedules, sensory tools, and routine can really help students with autism thrive in the classroom.

Future job implications:

Learning about autism is crucial for my future as a speech-language pathologist. I know that I’ll work with clients on the autism spectrum, and it’s my responsibility to ensure they feel supported in developing their communication skills. Understanding their specific needs will allow me to create therapy plans that are personalized and effective, considering that each individual is different. I’ll need to adjust my approaches, be clear and consistent in my communication, and remain patient, especially when clients face challenges with social interaction or change in routine. Building strong relationships with families and other professionals is also key to ensuring that clients receive comprehensive support. The more I understand autism, the better I’ll be at identifying strengths and providing the resources needed to help each individual thrive. Every client deserves a speech-language pathologist who recognizes their unique abilities and helps them communicate and grow in ways that work for them.

Identification of Disability #2: Deaf-Blindness

“...concomitant [simultaneous] hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

Before diving into this course, I hadn't really considered how complex deaf-blindness could be. I mistakenly thought it only referred to someone who was both deaf and blind, with no other possibilities. But I've learned that deaf-blindness can look different for everyone. Some people may still have partial vision or hearing, and their experience can vary greatly. One key takeaway for me has been understanding the importance of alternative communication methods. Tactile sign language and Braille, for example, can help people with deaf-blindness communicate and engage with others. I haven't worked directly with someone who has this disability, but I now feel much more informed about how much care and understanding this group of individuals needs. The more I learn, the more I realize how important it is to offer tailored support, ensuring that each student has a voice and can fully participate in their education.

Future Job implications:

As I move forward in my career as a speech-language pathologist, learning about deaf-blindness is essential. There is a significant likelihood that I will work with clients who have this dual sensory impairment, and understanding it will allow me to tailor my therapy to meet their unique needs. It's crucial to ensure these individuals have access to the right resources, such as assistive technology, tactile communication systems, and Braille, to help them develop their communication skills. Additionally, knowing how to adjust my approach to therapy in a way that's accessible and effective for them will be key to fostering strong therapeutic relationships. I also recognize the importance of collaborating with other professionals and families to ensure these clients are fully integrated into their communities. With a thorough understanding of deaf-blindness, I can help create a more inclusive environment where these individuals feel supported and engaged. Ultimately, as an SLP, my responsibility is to provide the best care and support, helping clients with deaf-blindness overcome challenges and reach their full potential.

Identification of Disability #3: Deafness

“...a hearing impairment so severe that a child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

Since I'm minoring in Deaf Studies, I already had some foundational knowledge about deafness before this course. However, what I've learned here has expanded and deepened my understanding in ways I hadn't anticipated. I've always known that deafness varies from person to person, but I didn't fully grasp how much it can shape a person's identity and experience of the world. For example, I had a general understanding of American Sign Language (ASL), but learning more about the cultural aspects of the Deaf community has made me appreciate how rich and diverse it is. I also now realize how vital it is to provide accommodations beyond just providing an interpreter or captioning. Things like visual cues in the classroom, understanding the role of technology, and making sure classroom materials are accessible all play a big part in creating an inclusive environment for deaf students. While I've had some experience interacting with the Deaf community through my minor, this course has made me more aware of how to engage with and support students who are deaf in ways that truly honor their language and culture.

Future Job implications:

Understanding deafness is crucial for my future career as an educator, especially with my background in Deaf Studies. Since I will likely encounter deaf or hard-of-hearing students, knowing how to communicate effectively with them and how to make my classroom more accessible will be vital. I now understand that my role as a teacher goes beyond just knowing a language—it's about recognizing the cultural context and ensuring that students feel truly included. By understanding deafness, I can foster an environment that acknowledges the value of Deaf culture while providing the right educational tools. This knowledge will help me design lessons that support all students, ensuring no one is excluded due to their hearing ability. Ultimately, my goal is to create a classroom where every student feels represented, understood, and empowered to succeed.

Identification of Disability #4: Emotional Disturbance

“...a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance: (a) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. (b) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. (c) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. (d) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. (e) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

Before taking this course, I didn’t really understand emotional disturbance. I had a vague idea that it referred to students who struggled with their emotions or behaviors, but I didn’t realize the full extent of what it means for those students and their education. I didn’t know that emotional disturbance is an umbrella term for a wide range of issues like anxiety, depression, and extreme behavioral reactions, which can all affect a student’s ability to focus, socialize, and succeed in school. What surprised me the most is how emotional disturbance isn’t just about being “angry” or “out of control”—it’s often the result of deeper issues like trauma or underlying mental health conditions. I also learned that these students may have difficulty forming relationships with their peers and teachers, which can make school an even more challenging experience for them. Through this course, I’ve come to understand the importance of offering a supportive and structured environment to help these students feel safe and valued. I now realize that emotional disturbance doesn’t just affect behavior, but it can have a huge impact on academic progress and overall well-being.

Future Job implications:

Understanding emotional disturbance is critical for my future career because I will likely encounter students who struggle with it, and knowing how to approach them with the right support can make all the difference. Without this understanding, I could misinterpret a student’s behavior, seeing it as disruptive or intentional when, in fact, they might be dealing with deep emotional challenges. I now see how important it is to create an environment where these students feel secure and understood. By learning how to recognize signs of emotional disturbance, I can adjust my teaching methods to support their emotional needs. Offering clear expectations, emotional support, and involving other specialists when necessary, will help these students thrive. Emotional disturbance isn’t just an issue for behavior management; it affects their overall academic experience. Knowing how to navigate these challenges will ensure that I can help all my students, including those who need extra care, to feel capable and successful in school.

Identification of Disability #5: Hearing Impairment

“...an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance but is not included under the definition of “deafness.””

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

As a Speech Pathology major and a Deaf Studies minor, I’ve already had some exposure to hearing impairments, but this course has helped me refine and deepen my understanding. I knew that hearing impairment could range from mild to profound, but I hadn’t fully grasped the different ways it can affect communication. In my studies, I’ve learned that hearing loss doesn’t always mean someone can’t hear at all; some individuals may experience partial hearing loss or have difficulty hearing certain frequencies. Additionally, I’ve gained a better understanding of how hearing impairment can be caused by a range of factors, from birth conditions to damage from illness or injury. One of the most important things I’ve learned is how crucial it is to provide the right accommodations, such as the use of hearing aids, cochlear implants, or visual cues, to help students communicate more effectively. I also didn’t fully appreciate how essential early intervention is for children with hearing impairments to support their language development. This course has reinforced the importance of a comprehensive approach, addressing both the medical and cultural aspects of hearing impairment, so that I can better serve individuals in the future.

Future Job implications:

Given my background in Speech Pathology and Deaf Studies, understanding hearing impairment is vital for my future career. In Speech Pathology, I’ll be working closely with individuals who have varying degrees of hearing loss, and it’s crucial to understand the specific challenges they face with speech and language development. This knowledge will help me provide more tailored therapy, whether that’s using augmentative communication devices, teaching speech reading, or incorporating sign language when appropriate. Additionally, knowing how to assess hearing loss and collaborate with audiologists will allow me to offer comprehensive care. Since my minor in Deaf Studies has also exposed me to Deaf culture, it’s important for me to recognize that hearing impairment isn’t just a medical condition but an integral part of identity for many individuals. In my future career, I’ll need to be mindful of cultural differences and provide services that are both respectful and effective. Understanding the complexities of hearing impairment will ensure that I can offer the best support and advocacy for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Identification of Disability #6: Intellectual Disability

“...significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently [at the same time] with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

From my experience working with adults who have intellectual disabilities, I already had some understanding of the support they need in daily life, but this course has taught me a lot more about how intellectual disabilities affect students in school. I used to think that intellectual disabilities only meant needing help with basic tasks, but I’ve learned that they can also affect how people learn, think, and solve problems. I didn’t realize that intellectual disabilities can look different in each person. Some people may struggle with abstract thinking or complex tasks, but others may do well with practical or hands-on activities. What I’ve learned from this course is how important it is to start providing help early, especially in childhood, because early support can make a big difference in a student’s ability to succeed in school and later in life. I also didn’t know how much of a role communication skills play, and how some students with intellectual disabilities may find it hard to express themselves or understand others. Through this course, I now have a much clearer understanding of the different ways intellectual disabilities show up in students’ lives and how to approach their education with more empathy and the right tools.

Future Job implications:

Understanding intellectual disability is crucial for my future career as a speech pathologist because many of the clients I work with may have intellectual disabilities that affect their communication skills. Since intellectual disabilities can impact speech and language development, it’s important for me to be able to assess and create therapy plans that are personalized to each individual. I now know that some individuals with intellectual disabilities may struggle with both expressive and receptive language, which will require different approaches in therapy. It’s also important to understand that these clients may have additional challenges with social skills and comprehension, which I will need to address in my treatment plans. By knowing how intellectual disabilities affect communication, I’ll be able to better support my clients and provide them with the right tools to improve their ability to communicate. Additionally, working with a variety of professionals and family members will be crucial to ensure my clients get the full support they need. Overall, understanding intellectual disabilities will allow me to be more effective in helping individuals reach their communication goals and improve their quality of life.

Identification of Disability #7: Multiple Disabilities

“...concomitant [simultaneous] impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. The term does not include deaf-blindness.”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

Before taking this course, I had some understanding of what multiple disabilities might entail, but I didn't fully appreciate the complexity of how different disabilities can interact and impact an individual's daily life. I knew that multiple disabilities referred to the presence of more than one disability, but I didn't realize how the combination of physical, intellectual, and sensory disabilities could present unique challenges in areas like communication, mobility, and self-care. For example, a person with both a hearing impairment and a cognitive disability may face difficulties in processing spoken language and understanding abstract concepts, which can make learning and social interactions more challenging. I also learned how important it is to have individualized support and interventions that address each person's specific combination of needs. The course has deepened my understanding of how individuals with multiple disabilities require a holistic approach to care, one that considers all aspects of their physical, cognitive, and emotional needs. This includes not just medical care, but also educational, social, and emotional support. While I had some prior knowledge, learning about the various strategies and accommodations that can help individuals with multiple disabilities has given me a more nuanced perspective on the importance of a comprehensive support system.

Future Job implications:

Understanding multiple disabilities is crucial for my future career as a speech pathologist because many of the clients I work with will have more than one disability affecting their communication skills and overall functioning. These individuals may have both cognitive and physical challenges, making their therapy needs more complex. For example, a client with both a speech disorder and mobility limitations will require therapy that addresses both their communication and physical needs. The course has helped me understand the importance of a multidisciplinary approach when working with individuals with multiple disabilities, as it's essential to collaborate with other professionals to develop a comprehensive care plan. As a speech pathologist, I will need to be adaptable in my approach to therapy and be prepared to use a range of tools and strategies to support clients with varied needs. This knowledge will help me create personalized treatment plans that target both their communication goals and any other challenges they may face, improving their overall quality of life. Understanding multiple disabilities will allow me to better advocate for my clients and ensure they receive the most effective and inclusive care.

Identification of Disability #8: Orthopedic Impairment

“...a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

Before taking this course, I didn’t know much about orthopedic impairments beyond the fact that they involved physical disabilities affecting movement. I wasn’t fully aware of how diverse these impairments could be, as they can result from birth defects, injuries, or conditions like arthritis. I learned that orthopedic impairments could range from mild to severe, and can affect different areas of life, such as mobility, daily activities, and even social interactions. For example, a person with a congenital condition like clubfoot may face challenges with walking, while someone who has experienced a spinal cord injury may use a wheelchair but have full cognitive abilities. This course also showed me that individuals with orthopedic impairments may face challenges that aren’t immediately visible, such as chronic pain or fatigue, which can affect their quality of life. I hadn’t realized that these impairments can also have a psychological impact, leading to social isolation or emotional stress. Another important lesson was understanding the need for personalized accommodation, such as mobility aids or therapy, to support individuals with orthopedic impairments. Overall, this course has given me a deeper understanding of how orthopedic impairments can affect an individual’s life and how support systems can be tailored to their needs.

Future Job implications:

Understanding orthopedic impairment is important for my future career as a speech pathologist because many individuals with physical disabilities also face communication challenges that are related to their condition. For example, someone with limited hand movement might struggle with writing or using a keyboard, which could affect their ability to express themselves verbally or in writing. As a speech pathologist, I will need to adapt my therapy to help these clients use alternative communication methods, such as speech-generating devices or sign language. This course has taught me that orthopedic impairments can affect not only physical function but also social and emotional well-being, which I will need to consider when working with clients. By understanding how orthopedic impairments can impact communication, I can better support individuals in reaching their goals, whether that’s through improving speech, language, or social interactions. Additionally, learning about orthopedic impairments will help me collaborate with other healthcare professionals, like occupational and physical therapists, to provide comprehensive care. Knowing the challenges these individuals face will help me offer therapy that is not only effective but also empathetic, taking into account both physical and emotional needs.

Identification of Disability #9: Other Health Impairment

“...having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that— (a) is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and (b) adversely affects a child’s educational performance.”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

Before taking this course, I didn't know much about the category of "other health impairment" (OHI) beyond the fact that it could cover a range of chronic or temporary health conditions that affect a person’s daily functioning. I knew that conditions like asthma, diabetes, or epilepsy could fall under this category, but I didn’t realize how broad it actually is. What I’ve learned is that OHI includes a variety of conditions that can interfere with a person’s ability to learn or perform in school. For instance, chronic conditions such as asthma or heart disease can lead to frequent absences, fatigue, or difficulty concentrating. Additionally, I didn’t fully understand that mental health conditions, like ADHD or anxiety disorders, can also fall under this category, which can make it more challenging to get an accurate diagnosis and the support needed in schools. Another important takeaway from this course is the variability of OHI—some students may need only minor adjustments, while others may require significant support. I didn’t realize that managing conditions like diabetes or epilepsy in a school setting could require careful planning and coordination with healthcare professionals. Learning about the impact of OHI on both physical and mental health has given me a broader understanding of how such conditions can affect students’ academic success and overall well-being.

Future Job implications:

As a future speech pathologist, understanding other health impairments is essential because many clients I work with may have conditions that impact their communication or learning abilities. For example, a student with ADHD might have difficulty staying focused, which can affect their ability to participate in therapy or retain information. Additionally, conditions like asthma or diabetes may result in frequent absences or fatigue, making it harder for students to engage consistently in speech therapy. It’s important for me to understand the effects of these conditions so I can adapt my therapy techniques and ensure my clients are still able to meet their goals. This course has shown me the importance of working closely with healthcare providers to create individualized plans for clients with health impairments. I also learned that mental health conditions, such as anxiety, can impact communication and social interaction, which I will need to address in my therapy sessions. Ultimately, by understanding OHI, I will be better equipped to provide personalized, flexible support that considers not just communication challenges but also any related health issues that may arise.

Identification of Disability #10: Specific Learning Disability

“...a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations.”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

Before this course, I had a basic understanding of learning disabilities but didn't fully grasp how specific they can be. I learned that SLD affects specific academic areas, such as reading, writing, or math, without affecting overall intelligence. One key point that stood out to me was how children with SLD can excel in other areas despite struggling in particular subjects. I didn't realize that the challenges students face with SLD are often related to processing information differently, rather than a lack of effort or intelligence. I also learned that early identification and appropriate accommodations are essential to help students with SLD succeed in school. This course highlighted that while some students may have lifelong struggles in certain areas, many can thrive with the right support. Understanding these nuances will help me better support students in overcoming challenges they face in academics.

Future Job implications:

As a future speech pathologist, understanding SLD is vital because students with this condition may also face language and communication difficulties. Speech or language impairments often overlap with SLD, particularly in areas like reading and writing. It's essential to recognize the specific areas where a student struggles, as this will guide how I approach therapy. I also need to be aware of how SLD affects students emotionally and socially, as struggling in academics can lead to frustration or low self-esteem. With this knowledge, I will be able to collaborate with educators to create comprehensive plans that support students both in the classroom and therapy sessions. Recognizing and addressing SLD early on will help ensure that students get the resources and intervention they need. This understanding will allow me to create more targeted and effective therapy plans for students with specific learning disabilities.

Identification of Disability #11: Speech or Language Impairment

“...a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

Given my background as a future speech pathologist, I already have a solid understanding of speech and language impairments. However, this course has expanded my knowledge, particularly in understanding the complexities of different speech and language disorders. For instance, I have a deeper appreciation for how speech sound disorders (such as articulation and phonological disorders) can affect communication development, often leading to social and academic challenges. I also learned more about language impairments like dyslexia, specific language impairment (SLI), and the impact of neurological conditions on language processing. The course reinforced the significance of early intervention and the role of individualized therapy plans, especially in preventing long-term academic and emotional difficulties. Additionally, I gained more insight into the use of alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) systems, which are essential for individuals with severe communication impairments. While I was already familiar with many therapy techniques, the course provided a broader perspective on incorporating multi-disciplinary approaches for treatment, which will be crucial in my future practice.

Future Job implications:

As a speech pathologist, understanding speech or language impairments is crucial because they directly affect a person’s ability to communicate and engage socially. These impairments can significantly impact academic performance, and early identification is key to providing effective intervention. With my background, I know that diagnosing and addressing these issues early can prevent further complications. Understanding different therapy techniques, including articulation therapy and the use of AAC devices, will allow me to tailor interventions to each client. I also need to consider how speech or language impairments may co-occur with other disorders, which can influence treatment plans. Addressing the emotional and social challenges related to communication disorders will be a key part of my approach. Ultimately, this knowledge will help me provide the best possible care and support for individuals with speech or language impairments.

Identification of Disability #12: Traumatic brain injury (TBI)

“...an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

Before this course, I understood that TBI involved a brain injury, but I didn't realize how varied the effects could be. I learned that the severity of TBI can range from mild concussions to more severe brain injuries that affect cognitive functions, physical abilities, and emotional regulation. People with TBI may have trouble with memory, attention, or problem-solving, which can significantly impact their daily life. I also didn't realize that recovery from TBI can be a long process, with some individuals requiring ongoing therapy and support. The course helped me understand that TBI can affect not only physical health but also mental health, causing emotional challenges such as anxiety or depression. Another surprising aspect was learning how environmental modifications and therapy can support individuals in regaining independence. Overall, I now understand that TBI's effects are unique to each individual, requiring personalized care and support.

Future Job implications:

As a future speech pathologist, understanding TBI is important because I may work with clients who have communication challenges because of brain injuries. For example, individuals with TBI may have difficulty with language, memory, or speech clarity, which requires tailored therapy techniques. I need to be aware of how cognitive issues, such as attention deficits or executive functioning problems, can affect a client's ability to participate in therapy. People with TBI may also experience emotional difficulties, which could impact their motivation or engagement in speech therapy. Understanding the complexity of TBI will allow me to adjust my therapy sessions to best meet each individual's needs. I will also need to collaborate with other healthcare providers to create an integrated support plan for clients recovering from TBI. This knowledge will help me provide more effective therapy and support for those dealing with the long-term effects of brain injuries.

Identification of Disability #13: Visual Impairment Including Blindness

“...an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.”

Paragraph explaining personal experience or any new understandings of the disability category:

Before taking this course, I knew visual impairment referred to blindness or partial vision loss, but I didn’t fully understand how diverse the impacts could be. I learned that visual impairments could range from complete blindness to partial vision, and each case requires different support. Individuals with partial vision may struggle with tasks like reading or recognizing faces, which can affect their independence. I didn’t realize how much people with visual impairments rely on tools like braille, screen readers, or guide dogs to navigate the world. Additionally, I learned that visual impairments often affect communication, social interactions, and participation in daily activities. Students with visual impairments may need specialized materials and accommodations to access educational content. This course helped me understand that providing these supports is crucial to ensuring individuals with visual impairments can thrive.

Future Job implications:

As a future speech pathologist, understanding visual impairment is essential because I may work with clients who have vision challenges that affect their communication. I will need to consider tools like braille or audio-based technologies to help these clients engage in therapy. People with visual impairments may also face social isolation, which can affect their emotional and communication skills. I will need to tailor my approach to account for the unique needs of each individual, ensuring they have access to the right resources. Additionally, clients may require assistance in developing alternative communication methods that accommodate their vision loss. Collaborating with other professionals, like orientation and mobility specialists, will also be important in providing comprehensive care. Understanding visual impairment will help me provide more effective, empathetic support to clients with vision challenges.