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How Does Disability Identity Affect University Students ʿ Self-Efficacy?

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The concept of disability identity refers to feelings of solidarity and connection to the disability community of persons with a disability. Disability identity is directly and indirectly associated with a positive individual development, such as managing life challenges, higher levels of educational attainment, labor market success, and well-being. Based on the core idea from Tajfel and Turner's (1986) social identity theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, a strong disability identity development can promote the sense of belonging in a given social context, leading to higher levels of self-beliefs. These processes are of special interest in the university context as university provides an important social and learning environment for students with disability to prepare for integration into society.

So far, no study has used a well-validated measure of disability identity to examine the relation between disability identity, domain-specific self-beliefs, and the sense of belonging among university students with disability. Thus, the present study aims to use a new, well-validated measure—Disability Identity Development Scale (DIDS)—to examine how disability identity is associated with university-related self-efficacy and the sense of belonging to university among university students.

In this study, 211 university students (M = 27.5 years; SD = 10.7) with various disabilities were surveyed regarding their contribution to the disability community in the DIDS, their university-related self-efficacy in academic, social, and roommate domains, and the sense of belonging to university. The results showed that contribution to the disability community is positively related to university-related self-efficacy in all domains and the sense of belonging to university. The sense of belonging to university mediated the relation between contribution to the disability community and self-efficacy in all domains. Findings will be discussed regarding their implications for diversity- and stigma-sensitive support and counseling of students with disabilities at universities.

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