

A GROUNDED THEORY EXAMINATION OF RESIDENTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF DISABILITY: A STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION HOUSING PROFESSIONALS AND DISABILITY.

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to provide a better understanding of how housing professionals react to college students with disabilities by examining the attitudes of resident directors on disability. To determine what factors, perspectives, and beliefs at the institutional level impact campus-wide efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, this study uses a grounded theoretical methodology. Filling a significant information gap on higher education, this research analyses the thoughts and conduct of resident directors. It is the responsibility of the resident directors to create communities that are inclusive and inviting. This research sought to understand resident directors' diverse perspectives on disability by conducting semi-structured interviews with them. From these vantage points, we will analyse policies that affect students with disabilities, communication tactics, and support systems. The study also uncovered other institutional mediators that impact the practical implementation of concepts. One possible explanation is the prevalence of administrative assistance and training programs. Staff workers in the housing sector who are knowledgeable about impairments and have a favourable attitude towards them are more likely to be flexible, proactive, and understanding, according to the research. However, depending on the level of institutional understanding and support, adjustments aren't always enough or constant. The authors conclude by arguing that disability awareness should be the primary goal of resident life leadership. They back up their assertions with suggestions for changes to the law and improvements to professional abilities. The interplay between organisational norms, leadership theories, and the real-life experiences of college students with disabilities is better understood thanks to this research. Higher education can do more to promote diversity and inclusion by laying the groundwork for future research and real-world solutions.

Keywords: Resident directors, disability perspectives, higher education housing, inclusive practices, institutional support, professional development.

INTRODUCTION

Accessibility for students with impairments has emerged as a major issue in the fight for inclusion and equality in higher education. University students' social and academic lives are profoundly impacted by the demeanour and actions of housing staff, especially resident directors. As frontline members of domestic life, student directors have direct control over the everyday interactions that students with physical, cognitive, or psychological challenges have and the adjustments that are put in place to help them. While disability rights and inclusion are gaining more and more recognition, there is still a lot of variation in how accommodations are defined and made available in university housing. Although resident directors are tasked with adhering to these principles, little is known about their attitudes due to the majority of the existing research being on institutional policy or student experiences. University housing communities' levels of inclusion or exclusion are significantly impacted by ideas, knowledge, and perspectives about disability. The purpose of this research is to use a grounded theory method to examine the impact of resident directors' disability on the conduct and choices made by housing professionals. This research aims to uncover the enabling and restrictive components impacting inclusive housing policies by analysing the relationships among personal attitudes, organisational norms, and student demands. As institutional support structures that mediate the process of shifting perspectives into equitable outcomes, the article also examines the functions of training, leadership, and resources. Being cognisant of these encounters is crucial for developing policies and training courses that instruct public and housing workers on how to courteously and successfully engage with students with disabilities. By highlighting the ways in which leadership attitudes may enhance or undermine accessibility, this study's findings might guide the construction of more accessible university settings. For the purpose of studying the perspectives and interactions of professionals working in RDs, grounded theory provides a solid methodological framework (Lehrer-Stein, 2023).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to recent research on disability rights in four Asian countries, people with impairments continue to encounter societal, cultural, and physical obstacles. The research found that even in educational settings, structural modifications are needed to foster inclusion (Chou et al., 2024).

Regarding the accessibility of higher education for those with impairments, China provides a unique perspective. Disability in China's higher education system is defined by Confucian norms, state-led reforms, and rapid modernisation. Efforts to integrate students with disabilities into mainstream education have received support from laws pertaining to the education of persons with disabilities as well as from broader Confucian principles that emphasise social harmony. Students with impairments, particularly those residing in residential schools, are at risk of marginalisation due to societal stigmas and the focus on academic achievement.

Rural regions still lag behind urban areas in providing enough assistance for disabled students in higher education, according to the report. The denial of appropriate accommodations and exclusion from mainstream schools are examples of the frequent discrimination against handicapped children and youth in China's educational settings that Human Rights Watch found in 2013. Both the student's overall institutional attitude towards disability and their residential college experience may be shaped by their early educational experiences. Research on RDs in Asia, particularly China, is severely sparse, despite the obvious impact of cultural views on disability on RDs' activities. Findings suggest that collectivist governments, such as China's, place a stronger focus on communal well-being, which may have positive or negative effects on efforts to support individuals with disabilities (Zhang et al., 2023). Disability adds another layer of complexity by interacting with other aspects of identity including gender, race, and socioeconomic status; this calls for more sophisticated methods (Crenshaw, 2022).

Students with disabilities may face significant challenges while attempting to transfer to a four-year institution. Research on registered dietitians' perspectives and understanding of disability as it pertains to their profession is scarce, despite the importance of RDs' work. Housekeepers without proper education, inadequate funding, and outdated or non-existent infrastructure are all examples of such systemic issues. Cultural attitudes and unconscious biases impact people with disabilities, particularly in Asian contexts where disability is commonly seen as a source of shame or bad luck. The emphasis on academic achievement and collectivism in Chinese residential schools' further isolates children with impairments (Wang, 2025).

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

“How do perceptions of disability among resident directors affect the responses and practices of housing professionals in higher education?” The researchers of the study sought to find out the weight resident directors allocate issues related to impairments. The main objective of the research is to determine how consistency, inclusion, and quality of care delivered to students with disabilities influence campus housing services as well as their needs, difficulties, and concessions. This study looks at this relationship to see if resident directors—leadership—are more attentive and focused, therefore improving the helpfulness and student-centeredness of house staff members. The findings of this study will influence training programs, policy changes, and leadership development within university residential life departments as well as provide insightful study of the part attentional aspects play in disability inclusion. These initiatives seek to improve the offers to students with impairments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Even though these historic laws were approved, the early implementation of disability rights was sluggish because of a lack of activity, advocacy organisations, and legal understanding. Because of lawsuits and demonstrations by disability rights organisations, the HEW postponed the publication of the Section 504 regulations until 1978. Higher education became more affordable in subsequent decades as a result of more enforcement, better public awareness, and advocacy, even if these early legislative improvements did not have an immediate effect. More students with disabilities are able to take part in all aspects of school life thanks to these innovations, which will help them become contributing members of society who don't need government handouts. These days, schools are legally obligated to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities so that everyone has an equal chance to study. Rothstein (2009) argues that these fights were crucial, and that recent victories against handicap discrimination and for equal educational opportunity for all students are evidence of that. Several promising policies, initiatives, and plans for the future have emerged from these evaluations as potential means of increasing the supply of accessible housing. Innovations such as smart home technology, experimental devices, smartphone applications, and home adaptations have the potential to substantially improve the standard of living for those with disabilities. These treatments enhance the quality of life for those with disabilities, enabling them to live independently, in addition to physically accessible homes (Lindsay et al., 2024).

More and more students with disabilities are enrolling in four-year universities. Most research has focused on improving teaching methods rather than on students' experiences as a whole. The importance of campus housing in encouraging intellectual and social involvement has not been well studied. Affordable, suitable accommodation that can accommodate a range of needs should be a priority for all institutions. This research aimed to address a lack of information and add to the expanding literature on disability inclusion outside academic settings by investigating RD views on disability on college campuses via the lens of constructivist grounded theory (Toutain, 2022).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How does the level of attention resident directors give to disability-related concerns influence the responses of higher education housing professionals?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH DESIGN

The statistical analysis of the data was done using SPSS version 25. The strength and direction of the statistical connection were determined using an odds ratio and a 95% confidence interval. A statistically significant criterion was set by the researchers at $p < 0.05$. We used descriptive analysis to zero down on the most

crucial parts of the data. When analysing data transformed by statistical analysis software or data collected by polls, questionnaires, or surveys, quantitative approaches are often used.

SAMPLING

Researchers used a final sample of 620 customers to derive results after conducting the survey with 20 Chinese participants. Someone at random was contacted and given 800 surveys. The researcher omitted 180 surveys from the study because they were not completed.

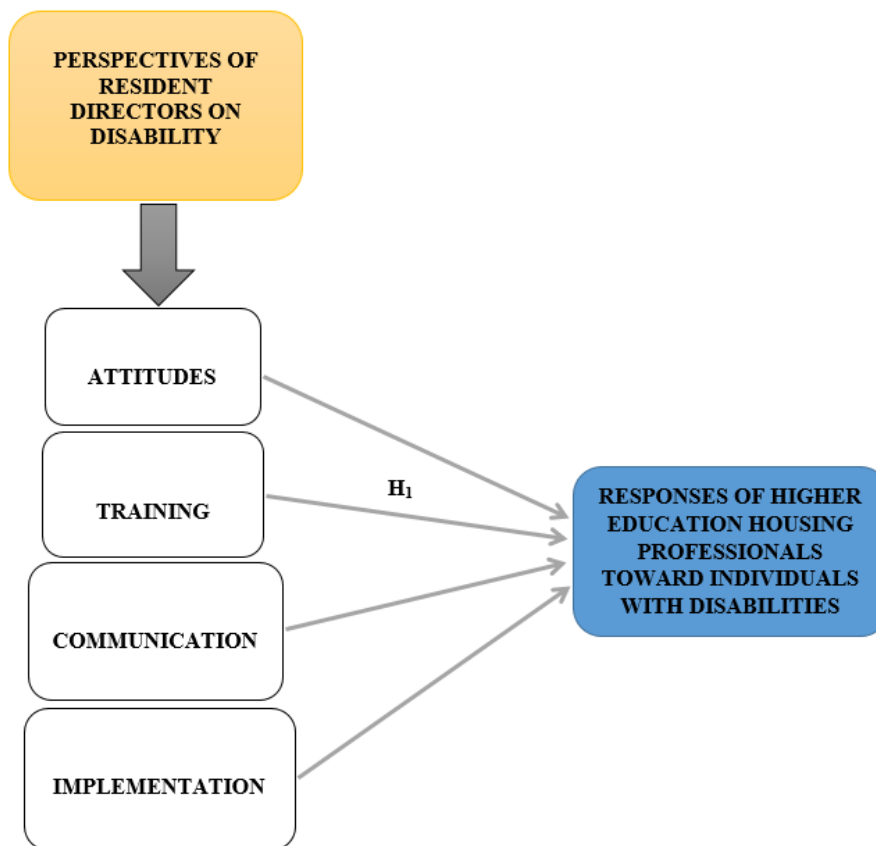
DATA AND MEASUREMENT

A questionnaire survey was the primary method of data collection in the study. After providing some basic demographic information, respondents were asked to score several characteristics of the online and offline channels on a 5-point Likert scale in the second portion of the survey. The secondary data was collected from a wide variety of sources, the majority of which were internet databases.

STATISTICAL SOFTWARE & STATISTICAL TOOLS

The statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS 25 and MS-Excel. To grasp the fundamental character of the data, descriptive analysis was used. The researcher is required to analyse the data using ANOVA.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



RESULT

When validating the underlying component structure of a set of item measurements, Factor Analysis (FA) is often used. Supposedly, unseen factors have a direct effect on the evaluated variables' ratings. Accuracy analysis (FA) based on models is one approach. Finding connections between overt occurrences, their underlying causes, and measurement inaccuracies is the primary goal of this study.

To find out whether the data is good for factor analysis, you may utilise the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Method. The overall models and the sampling sufficiency of each individual variable are assessed. Statistical analysis determines the potential degree of shared variance among many variables. When dealing with data sets that include lower percentages, factor analysis is often the better choice. The output of KMO is an integer between zero and one. Sufficient sampling is defined as a KMO value between 0.8 and 1.

The sample size was too small, and something has to be done about it, if the KMO is less than 0.6. Use your best discretion; nonetheless, some authors use 0.5 as this. The range is 0.5 to 0.6. If KMO is close to 0, partial correlations are higher than overall correlations. Big correlations are a major hurdle for component analysis, I repeat. The standards that Kaiser has established for admission are as follows:

Beginning with a pathetic 0.050 and ending at 0.059. Under-represented by a range of 0.60 to 0.69 SD

Students in middle school often fall between the 0.70 to 0.79 range. Using a scale from 0.80 to 0.89 for quality points. I find the range of 0.90 to 1.00 to be rather astonishing.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.935
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3252.968
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

To further validate the overall relevance of the correlation matrices, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was used. The sample adequacy as measured by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin is 0.935. Using Bartlett's sphericity test, the researchers found a p-value of 0.00. The results of Bartlett's sphericity test were significant, proving that the correlation matrix was not a correlation matrix.

TEST FOR HYPOTHESIS

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Perspectives of resident directors on disability: What follows is a collection of resident directors' thoughts and feelings on disability, including their familiarity with people who have mental health issues, sensory impairments, physical disabilities, or cognitive impairments. These perspectives reflect a synthesis of individual history, social milieu, educational attainment, and societal norms and expectations. From these vantage points, college resident directors make decisions about accommodations for students with disabilities and interpret disability statutes. Having a well-informed and optimistic perspective may result in proactive inclusion, empathy, and helpful conduct. On the other hand, having a narrow or biased perspective might lead to unintentional exclusion, neglect, or discrimination. The role of resident directors is significant in residential life because they ensure that the community is welcoming and accessible to all members. Better campus housing regulations, more disability awareness, and equal opportunity for students from all backgrounds are all possible when we put ourselves in their shoes (Abes & Wallace, 2020).

MEDIATING VARIABLE

Training: “Training” explains integrated educational programs and professional development activities to better educate housing professionals working in higher education, notably resident directors, with the information, resources, and awareness required to help students with disabilities. Such training could include inclusive practices, legal compliance (including the ADA), disability rights, and other pertinent topics. It may be orientations, seminars, online courses, or even a series of lectures. Those who have received great training are better adapted to question assumptions, adapt best practices to match specific circumstances, and become sympathetic by means of real-life occurrences. Regular and comprehensive training leads in more flexible attitudes and conduct, which helps students with disabilities taking courses on university enormously (Tam et al., 2022).

DEPENEDENT VARIABLE

Responses of higher education housing professionals toward individuals with disabilities: In most cases, residential staff workers actively participating in campus life are the ones who react to people with disabilities in higher education housing. Contributing to these solutions are the methods of communication used by experts, the availability of housing, the implementation of inclusive legislation, and the construction of supportive living environments. Attitudes, professional training, institutional regulations, and student expectations all play a role in shaping these feelings. Some positive features include being able to solve problems quickly, being compassionate, and communicating well; some bad traits include being neglectful, misunderstanding others, or not being able to make acceptable concessions. The impact of these encounters on children’s impairment, quality of life, feeling of belonging, and academic achievement is substantial. These comments are crucial for gauging the effectiveness of existing housing rules and for directing initiatives to improve accessibility, justice, and inclusion in university housing communities (Biggs & Rossi, 2021).

Relationship between Training and Responses of higher education housing professionals toward individuals with disabilities: The degree of knowledge in this sector determines how disabled students in university and college residence are treated. Regular, thorough training that offers the skills professionals—especially resident directors—need to interact actively and successfully with people with a range of needs is invaluable. Training helps staff members better grasp how to fulfil legal standards, how to accommodate students with disabilities, how to engage inclusively, and how to give required modifications. The research correlates people who have undergone disability-specific training with a more proactive, courteous, and responsive attitude and behaviour towards residents. Actually, however, sometimes lack of direction results in ambiguity, hesitation, or unintentional exclusion. Apart from advocating equality and accessibility, training may assist to reduce stigma and address personal conflicts, therefore eliminating personal prejudices. Training so quickly and effectively influences professional response;

continuous education is very essential to accomplish consistency, accuracy, and student-centeredness in living environments at universities (Strimel et al., 2023).

On the basis of the above discussion, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis, which was analyse the relationship between training and responses of higher education housing professionals toward individuals with disabilities.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between training and responses of higher education housing professionals toward individuals with disabilities.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between training and responses of higher education housing professionals toward individuals with disabilities.

Table 2: H1 ANOVA Test.

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	39588.620	298	5198.420	967.688	.000
Within Groups	492.770	321	5.372		
Total	40081.390	619			

In this study, the result is significant. The value of F is 967.688, which reaches significance with a p-value of .000 (which is less than the .05 alpha level). This means the **There is a significant relationship between training and responses of higher education housing professionals toward individuals with disabilities.**” is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

DISCUSSION

This research set out to examine how resident directors and housing professionals in higher education perceive and interact with students who have impairments, as well as how these individuals treat these students. The results demonstrate that the views and attitudes of resident directors have a continual and substantial impact on the quality of responses in residential life. A person’s proactive, empathetic, and inclusive behaviour was shaped by their experiences, education, and job. In contrast, assistance for children with impairments was either sluggish, inconsistent, or non-existent, and ignorance or animosity was commonplace. The results show, among other things, that people’s perspectives are not unique. Their effectiveness is highly dependent on factors such as the level of administrative backing, accessibility to disability-specific training, and the culture of the institution. A resident director’s capacity to handle safety and disabilities improved when they began participating in CPD. More appropriate and motivating answers result from opportunities for formal education and lifelong learning, which in turn support the development of healthy attitudes. Moreover, even when institutional norms are followed, resident directors’ views on disability may substantially impact their level

of compliance, according to the results. Laws might inspire and enable youth, according to those with a more empathetic and open perspective. Few took part as most people considered it a necessary evil. The researchers found that the medium of communication had the greatest impact on the transformation of ideas into actions. Proactive educators kept in regular contact with kids who had impairments, in addition to making an effort to be friendlier. This gave every pupil a sense of individual attention and boosted their self-esteem. Based on the results, institutions should prioritise resident life above regulatory compliance in order to foster a values- and compassion-driven culture. Thus, this area of study may provide useful resources for businesses looking to cultivate leaders that are inclusive, fair, and handicapped-aware. The results provide credence to the idea that one's mind set might impact how they act in the workplace. Accommodations for students with disabilities at universities may be much improved if there were concerted efforts to educate resident directors and alter their mind-sets.

CONCLUSION

This research sought to find resident directors' perspectives on disability and how such points of view influence the behaviour of housing staff members tending to college students with impairments. The results showed that their opinions were much connected with the degree of inclusive, consistent, and competent professional behaviour of university housing directors. Anchored in optimism, experience, and empathy, responses mainly helpful, responsive, and student-cantered formed. Conversely, negative or ignorant attitudes can lead to inadequate assistance or poor interaction for children with disabilities. This study underlines how institutional factors like business culture, policy interpretation, and training affect attitudes and conduct. Although the current policies are important, appropriate inclusion mostly rests on the attitudes of the people assigned to apply them on both personal and professional level. Residential directors should be given varied and inclusive points of view high importance by colleges. One may contribute to this by means of inclusive campus environment design, comprehensive disability awareness training, and ongoing professional development. This research underlines the importance of modifying the structural and interpersonal features of on-campus life to improve the experiences of students with disabilities. Institutions might be able to build more equitable and welcoming residential communities if they give attitudes top attention.

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