

INTRODUCTION

- Recently, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5, 2013) has amended their information regarding the diagnosis of a Learning Disability (LD).
- Students’ perception of their own disability can impact their self-concept/self-efficacy in an education setting (Denhart, 2008).
- Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine: (a) how students perceive their own diagnosis of LD and (b) their causal attributions for their school performance (based on the perceived severity of their LD).

METHOD

- 52 high school students who self-identified as having a LD completed our questionnaire.
- Students responded to:
 - “What does it mean TO YOU to have a learning disability?” (free response)
 - The Multidimensional-Multiattributinal Causality Scale (MMSC; Lefcourt, et. al., 1979), with subscales: ability, effort, context and luck (scale: 0= disagree to 4= agree).
 - “How would you rate the severity of your LD?” (scale: 1= very mild to 7= very severe).

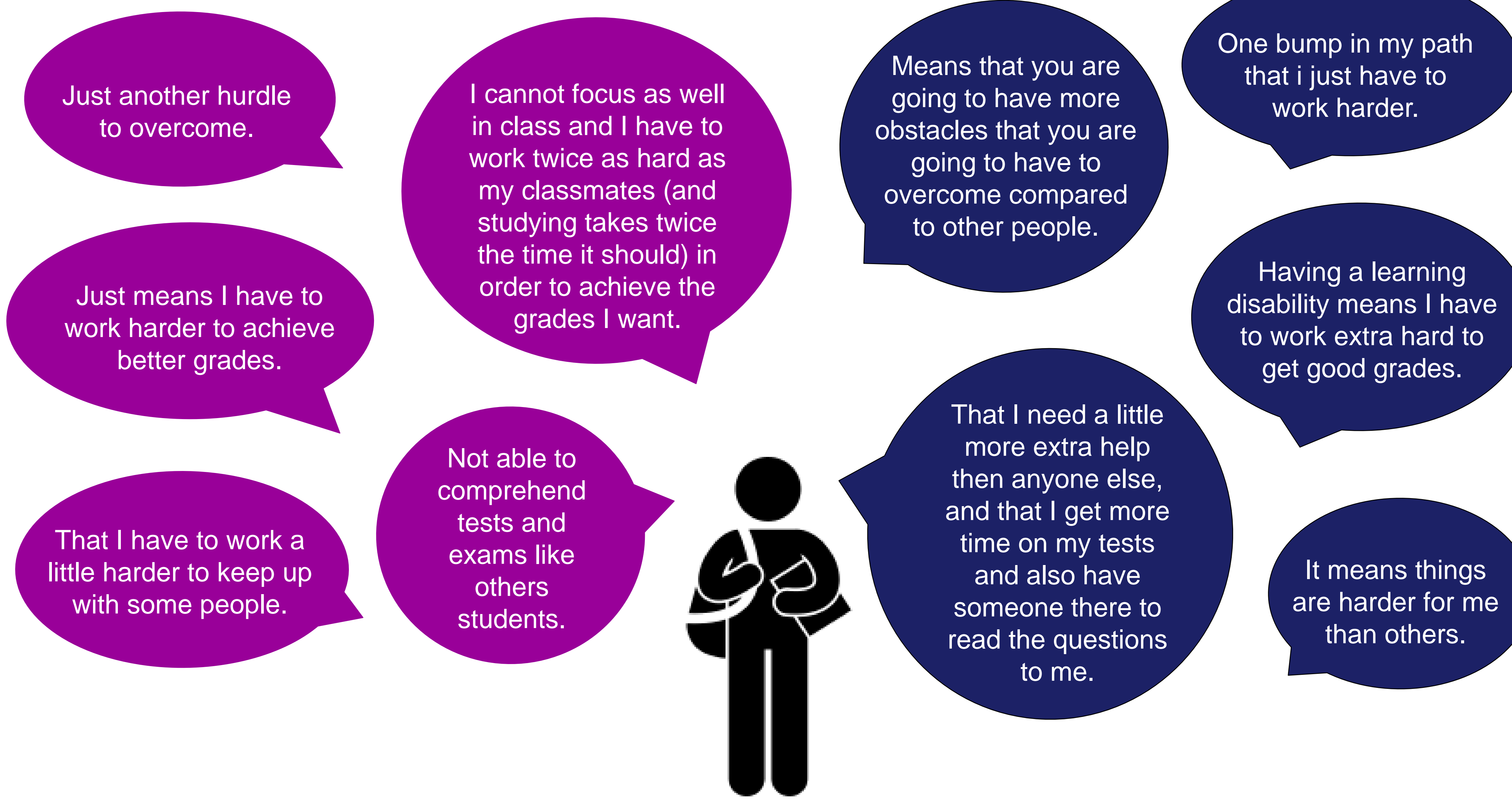
RESULTS

- Sample: 29 males, 19 females & 4 unidentified.
- The mean rating for severity of LD was 3.54.
 - Low** severity group ≤ 3 ($n = 25$), and **high** severity group ≥ 4 ($n = 24$).

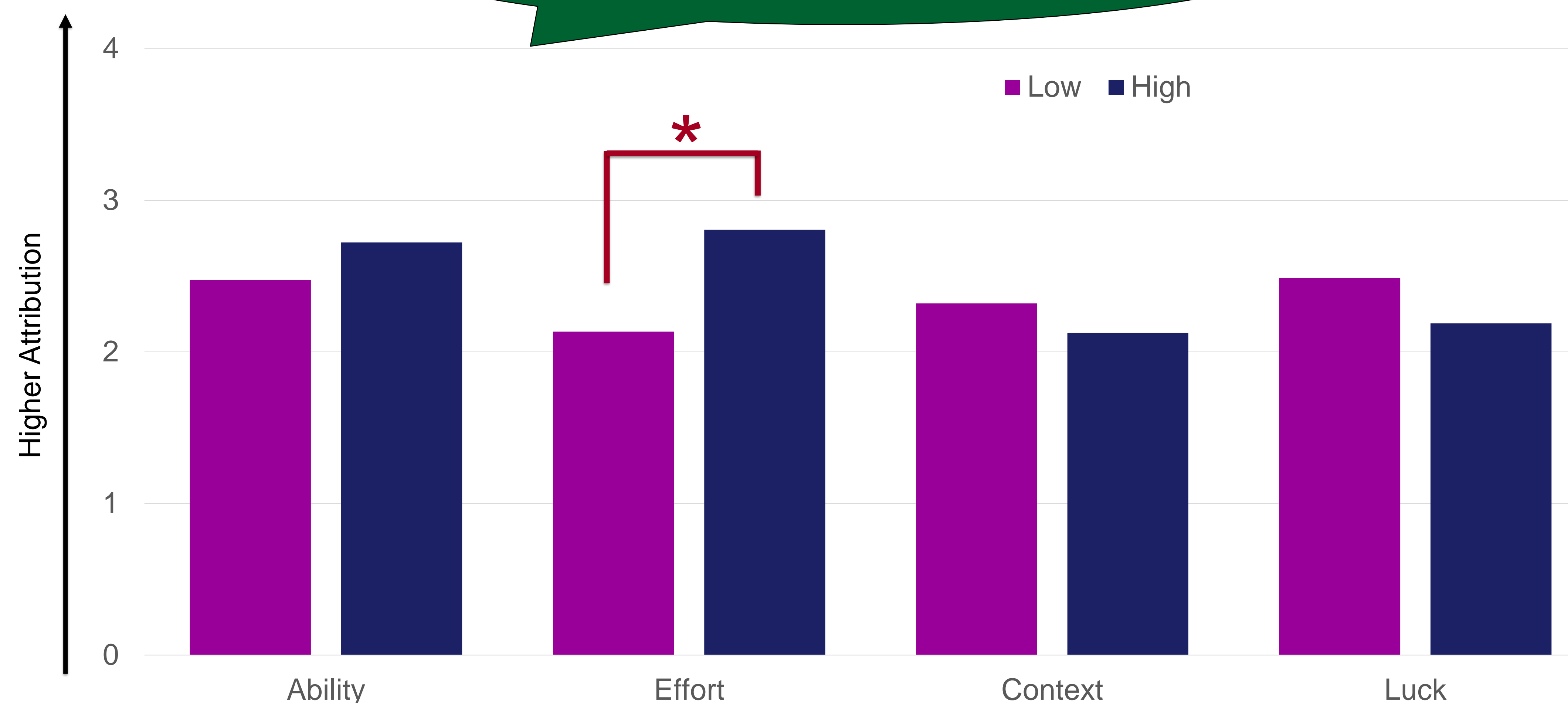
FREE RESPONSE RESULTS:

- Students’ free responses were open-coded. General themes that emerged: (1) having to try harder, (2) identifying challenges experienced & (3) comparison to others.
 - No differences between **low** & **high** groups.

What does it mean TO YOU to have a learning disability?



What do you attribute academic outcomes to?



RESULTS

BETWEEN GROUPS COMPARISONS

- Means on MMCS subscales were compared between the **low** and **high** severity groups.
- Students in the **high** group were more likely to attribute effort to academic outcomes than students in the **low** group, $t(47) = 2.68, p = .01$.

WITHIN GROUP COMPARISONS

- No differences on the subscales for those who identified with **low** severity ($p < .05$).
- The **high** group rated internal attributes (effort & ability) higher than external factors (context & luck; p ranged from .01 to .004).

CONCLUSION / IMPACT

- Our results are consistent with the prevalent understanding of LD: individuals with LD require high levels of effort and support to achieve similarly to their peers (LDAC, 2015).
- According to attribution theory (Weiner, 2014), students’ internal attribution of effort can increase self-esteem when linked to success.
- Ability causation when failure occurs can lead to feelings of helplessness, which can negatively impact future performance.
- Understanding students’ causal attributions is important for supporting future learning.

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