

PHYSICAL DISABILITY: UNDERSTANDING DIFFICULTY IN MOBILITY

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Physical disability denotes a condition that restricts a learner's physical abilities, movement, coordination, or endurance, impacting their capacity to engage completely in everyday and educational tasks. A major type of physical disability is mobility challenges, frequently referred to in clinical and educational settings as Impaired mobility. This condition can occur due to congenital disorders, injuries, or long-term illnesses like cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, or spinal cord injuries. Challenges in mobility are not indicative of a learner's intelligence; numerous students facing mobility issues have average or superior cognitive skills but face obstacles in physical access and movement within educational settings (Sherrill, 2010). These difficulties are frequently associated with deficits in muscle strength, coordination, balance, or motor control, which can influence a learner's ability to be independent and engage in school activities.

Students facing mobility challenges may show several indicators, such as difficulties in walking, keeping balance, or executing fine and gross motor activities like writing, transporting items, or using stairs. Some individuals might depend on mobility aids such as wheelchairs, crutches, or walkers. Some individuals might feel tired or experience discomfort while moving, which can further restrict involvement in classroom activities and extracurricular engagements. Timely recognition and assistance are crucial since mobility issues can affect not just physical access but also social engagement and emotional health. In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd, 2021) advocates for inclusive education and mandates that schools offer suitable

accommodations and services to guarantee that students with physical disabilities, such as mobility challenges, receive equal access to quality education

Evaluating learners with mobility challenges usually includes a multidisciplinary group, comprising doctors, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and educational professionals. Assessments may consist of physical evaluations, motor skill evaluations, and functional mobility assessments to identify the learner's abilities and challenges. Instruments like the Gross Motor Function Measure (GMFM) and the Functional Independence Measure for Children (WeeFIM) are frequently utilized to evaluate mobility and independence levels. These evaluations inform the creation of personalized education plans (IEPs) and intervention methods designed to meet the learner's unique requirements.

Schools are essential in aiding students with mobility challenges by fostering accessible and inclusive settings. Accommodations might involve adding ramps, elevators, and restrooms designed for accessibility; organizing classroom setups to facilitate easy mobility; and offering assistive devices like adaptive desks or writing instruments. Educators can adjust activities by providing additional time for assignments, minimizing physical activity, or integrating digital resources for engagement. Sherrill (2010) states that inclusive strategies and adaptive physical education initiatives are crucial for enhancing involvement and physical growth. Working together, educators, parents, and healthcare professionals provide continuous support, enabling learners to reach their maximum potential.

In summary, challenges with mobility represent a notable yet manageable physical disability that impacts a student's capacity to move and engage with their surroundings. Through early detection, appropriate evaluation, and inclusive teaching methods, students with mobility difficulties can engage in school and achieve success both academically and socially. Acknowledging the difficulties and capabilities of these learners is vital in promoting independence, self-assurance, and comprehensive growth.

References:

Sherrill, C. (2010). Adapted physical activity, recreation and sport: Crossdisciplinary and lifespan (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Department of Education (DepEd). (2021). Policy guidelines on the provision of educational programs and services for learners with disabilities in the K to 12 basic education program (DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021). <https://www.deped.gov.ph>