



KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ON LEARNING DISABILITIES IN CHILDREN: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Learning disability (LD) is a general term that describes specific kinds of learning problems. A descriptive study was conducted to assess knowledge and attitude of primary school teachers on learning disabilities in children in selected primary schools at Trivandrum. Convenient sampling technique was adopted and selected 225 primary school teachers. The tool used for data collection consisted of socio demographic proforma, structured questionnaire and five point likert scale. Data were tabulated and analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that more than half (56.4%) of the subjects had good knowledge and majority (91.6%) of the subjects had positive attitude. There is a highly significant association between knowledge, attitude and socio demographic variables such as age, gender, education, experience, and subjects which teaching ($p < 0.05$). The study concludes that majority of the primary school teachers have good knowledge and positive attitude regarding Learning Disabilities.

KEYWORDS : Knowledge; Attitude; Primary school teachers; Learning disabilities; children

INTRODUCTION

Children represent the future, and ensuring their healthy growth and development ought to be a prime concern of all societies. The middle childhood years are very exciting, filled with many changes and some challenges as well. Many children experience learning difficulties and thus have special educational needs at some time during their schooling. Schools have to find ways of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities.

Learning disabilities are one of the emerging childhood problems in India. The term "Learning Disability" coined in the year 1960. Learning Disability is also termed as "Specific Academic Skill Disorder" or "Specific Learning Disability". National Joint Committee on Learning Disability defines Learning Disability as "A heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities". According to the National Centre for Learning Disabilities, LD is a neurological disorder that affects the brain's ability to receive process, store and respond to information. Learning Disability is not a single disorder. It is a term that refers to a group of disorders in listening, speaking, reading, writing and mathematics Morgan, a general practitioner in Sussex, England, published the first case of what is now known as dyslexia, a word derived from the Latin word "dys", which translates to "difficult", and the Greek word "lexia", translates to "words"; it literally means, "difficulty with words". In the years following the report on the first case of dyslexia, different types of specific learning disabilities were defined: dyslexia (difficulty in reading), dysgraphia (difficulty in writing), dyscalculia (difficulty in numbers and mathematical concepts) and dysnomia (difficulty in naming). Simultaneously dysphasia (expressive language difficulty) was also being noted together with receptive language difficulties. Today all these are included under the umbrella of Specific Learning Disability (SLD).

Learning disability is worldwide Problem today. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fourth Edition (DSM-IV-TR, 2000) the official learning disabilities definition is as follows: "Learning Disorders are diagnosed when the individual's achievement on individually administered standardized tests in reading, mathematics, or written expression is substantially below that expected for age, schooling, and level of intelligence." The WHO estimates prevalence of Learning Disabilities in industrialized countries is around 3%. Learning disabilities were thought to be rare but statistics in India shows that 13%-14% of children are affected by this disability. The world over 10 out of every 100 school children are said to suffer from learning

disabilities. Between 24-52% children with learning disabilities are reported to have significant social and emotional difficulties. In India, it is estimated that at least five students in every average-sized class has Learning Disabilities.

There is no magic bullet to cure Learning Disability. These students require continuous help to adapt to learning situations. The successes of these children are determined by the response of the school personnel to the needs of these children. In United Kingdom and United States there is very specified programme for teachers and also sufferers of specific learning disability. But in India such services are not economically feasible. Hence educating teachers in improving quality of educational interventions for learning disabilities is very useful method for minimizing school drop outs and enhancing individual performance. Because teacher are the primary person who will have the opportunity to identify the learning problems in children. There is a limited awareness of LD among parents, teachers, and educational administrators and lack of teacher training in this area. In this context, the importance of a teacher becomes vital in safeguarding and promoting the mental health of children and early identification of deviations from normal. This is especially true in an Indian setting where there is considerable shortage in mental health facilities for children.

The number of children identified as learning disabled has increased greatly in recent years. Kids with learning disabilities aren't lazy or dumb. In fact, most are just as smart as everyone else. Teachers spend most of the school hours with children and are familiar with them. They can detect the signs and symptoms of common problems in learning at the earliest stage in the classroom setting. Lower primary school teachers can easily identify the learning disabilities and can effectively deal with many of the problems in this area within resources available close to them. Thus to find out the knowledge and awareness about learning disabilities among teachers becomes imperative. All children are unique and their needs are also different. Education for all children includes children with special needs too. The identification and description of learning disabilities are being deficient. General learning process centering mostly on what we today called vulnerability, hyperactivity, visual perceptual, perceptual and motor problems. Globally it still remains one of the least understood and most debated condition.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A Descriptive study was conducted using quantitative approach with the objective to assess knowledge of primary school teachers regarding learning disabilities among children, to assess attitude of

primary school teachers on learning disabilities, to identify the association between selected socio demographic variables with knowledge of primary school teachers on learning disabilities and to identify the association between selected socio demographic variables with attitude of primary school teachers towards learning disabilities. The setting chosen for the present study was the selected primary schools in Trivandrum district. There were total 17 government and private schools were selected for the study. The sample of the present study consisted of 225 primary school teachers (teaching 1-7 classes) from selected 17 primary schools at Trivandrum and they were selected by convenient sampling technique. The tool used for data collection consisted of socio demographic profoma, structured questionnaire to assess knowledge among teachers and five point likert scale to assess the attitude of primary school teachers regarding Learning Disability . The reliability of the tool was calculated by using split half method through the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula. The reliability score for structured questionnaire is 0.91 and attitude scale is 0.90. Ethical committee clearance, setting permission and informed consent was obtained prior to the data collection. Permission was obtained from the **DPI (Directorate of public instruction) Jagathi, Trivandrum Before starting study.** Data were tabulated and analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. Confidentiality and anonymity of study participants was maintained by not revealing names of any of the participants anywhere in the study.

RESULTS

a. Sample characteristics

In this study majority of subjects (63.1%) were belongs to age group of .40 years followed by 30.2% were belongs to 31-40 years and 6.7% were belongs to 20-30 years out of 225 primary school teachers. Among subjects 69.8% of primary school teachers were female and 30.2% were male. Majorities (52.4%) of schools were government and 47.6% were private schools. Majorities (53.8%) of teachers were having B Ed education and 32% have graduation and 14.2% have TTC. Out of 225 majority(65.8%) of teachers have above 10 years of teaching experience, 13.8% have 6-10 years of experience, 10.2% have 2-5 years of experience and 10.2% have less than 2 yrs of experience. More than half of the (71.6%) were in rural area and 28.4% were in urban area. Majority (26.7%) of teachers were teaching language 26.2% were teaching any other (all subjects) 25.3% were teaching science and 21.8% were teaching mathematics. Majority (100%) of teachers have previous experience with LD child.

b. Knowledge of primary school teachers regarding learning disabilities among children.

Majorities (56.4%) of primary school teachers have good knowledge on learning disabilities and 43.6% have average knowledge regarding learning disabilities in children.

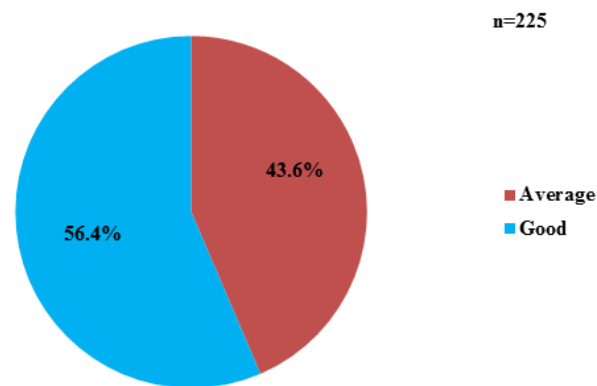


Fig 10: pie diagram showing the percentage distribution of subjects according to knowledge.

C: Attitude of primary school teachers on learning disabilities

n=225

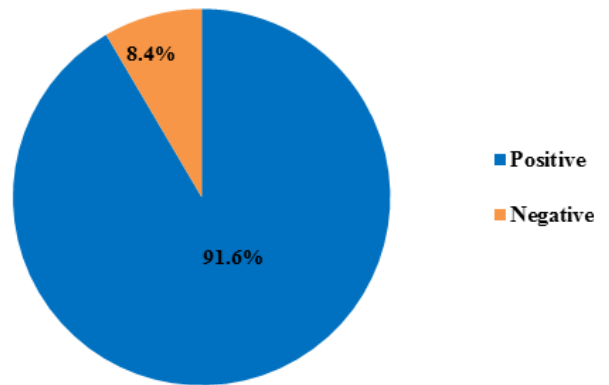


Fig 11: pie diagram showing the percentage distribution of subjects according to attitude

Fig 11 shows that majority (91.6%) of primary school teachers have positive attitude 8.4% have negative attitude towards children with learning disability.

Association between selected socio demographic variables with knowledge of primary school teachers on learning disabilities

Chi square test was used to find association between selected socio demographic variables with knowledge of primary school teachers on learning disabilities and it is interpreted that there was a highly significant association between age, gender, education, experience, and subjects which teaching and knowledge at p<0.005 level.

Hence it is interpreted that there was no association between nature of school, location and knowledge.

Association between selected socio demographic variables with attitude of primary school teachers on learning disabilities.

Chi square test was used to find association between selected socio demographic variables with attitude of primary school teachers on learning disabilities and it is interpreted that there was highly significant association between age, gender, education, experience, subjects and attitude at p<0.005 level.

Hence it is interpreted that there was no association between nature of school, location and attitude.

DISCUSSION

The present study revealed that majority of subjects (56.4%) had good knowledge on learning disabilities followed by 43.6% had average knowledge and no one have poor knowledge . The study shows that majority of subjects (91.6%) had positive attitude towards children with learning disabilities followed by 8.4% had negative attitude.

The present study results is consistent with the results of a descriptive study conducted to assess the knowledge and attitude of teachers regarding specific learning disabilities among children in selected schools at Mangalore. The study revealed that majority of teachers (64%) had average knowledge regarding specific learning disability and majority of teachers (94%) had a most favourable attitude

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