



ROLE OF PARENTS FOR THE LIFE SKILL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITY

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ABSTRACT Life skills have been defined as the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the challenges of life. Hence in this constantly changing social, economical and political environment, developing life skills is an essential part of being able to meet the challenges of everyday life and even more. Parents have a pivotal role in the overall development of the child. So awareness about life skills and advantages of having good life skills, are essential for bringing up a child as a successful and happy individual. The present paper deals with the Role of Parents for the Life Skill Development of Children with Learning Disability.

KEYWORDS : Learning Disability, Life Skills, Parenting Styles

INTRODUCTION

According to WHO (2015) Life skill development promotes basic education, gender equality, democracy, good citizenship, childcare and protection, quality and efficiency of education system, promotion of lifelong learning, quality of life and promotion of peace. Life skills can help one to accept and understand others who are different which can improve social interactions, to recognize stress and pressure and to maintain emotional balance in all situations. During the first years of life, as parents guide their young children from complete infantile dependence into the beginning stages of autonomy, the role of parents is significant because their styles of care giving can have both immediate and lasting effects on children's social functioning in areas from moral development to peer play to academic achievement (Lea Bornstein M. H., 2014).

IMPORTANCE OF LIFE SKILLS

Life skills are essential for holistic development of a child. Due to the gaps in objectives and achievements in EFA and the inclusion of life skill development in school curriculum, there is no purposeful development of life skills in schools. Teachers in general schools are neither aware of life skills nor have the time for special children. Parents have more concern and patience in understanding a child with learning disability.

Adolescence is the most difficult phase of life and it's also the period during which most of the life skills are developed. The development of life skills in children with learning disability is all the more important, to save the child from degenerating and to build up the potential of the child to the maximum. To be able to lead a successful and happy life in this stressful scenario, life skills have a significant role as these skills are multidimensional in nature and encompass a broad class of individual attitudes, behaviors and habits that are necessary for promoting mental well-being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life.

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING DISABILITIES

The Census of India (2011) reports that, children and young adults in the age group 0-6 years suffer from some form of disability. Census of India further reports that percentage of disabled persons in India has increased both in rural and urban areas during the last decade, proportion of disabled population is higher in rural areas and that decadal increase in proportion is significant in urban areas.

Menon, Singh & Rashmi (2015) in "An overview of life skills in India: evidence and current practices in the education system", outlined the case for emphasizing on competencies additional to reading, math and subject knowledge. It was found that, there is a strong evidence base demonstrating that cognitive skills and life skills are complementary in affecting socio-economic outcomes, and that building character skills can be life-changing for children from poor backgrounds. It was also evident that psycho-social competencies, such as resilience, self-

esteem and problem solving are vital in helping children move up and out of poverty.

According to WHO (2007) life skills are essential in promotion of healthy child and adolescent development, primary prevention of key causes of child and adolescent death, disease and disability, socialization and moulding of young children for meeting the changing social circumstances.

DIMENSIONS ON PARENTAL STYLES AND LIFE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The study by Diana Baumrind (1996) "Effects of Authoritative Parental Control on Child Behavior" defined the three parenting styles.

Johnson D.J (1999) in the article on "Helping Young Children with Learning Disabilities at Home" stated that, children with learning disabilities are unique, and because their strengths and weaknesses vary, parents often need help in understanding their difficulties. The author gave general recommendations for parents for helping children with learning disabilities at home.

Lea Bornstein (2014) investigated "Parenting styles and child social development", and found that, in many situations, adoption of a flexible and warm authoritative parenting style is most beneficial for a child's social, intellectual, moral and emotional growth.

Contemporary researchers typically classify parenting styles into four groups:

- Authoritarian parenting: characterized by high levels of control and low levels of responsiveness
- Indulgent permissive parenting: characterized by low levels of control and high levels of responsiveness
- Authoritative parenting: characterized by high levels of both control and responsiveness
- Neglectful parenting: characterized by lack of both control and responsiveness .

METHODOLOGY

The district of Ernakulam has been chosen as the area of study. In this study, descriptive research design was employed. All the parents of the children with learning disability, who are studying in NIOS and special schools in Ernakulam District of Kerala is considered as the universe of the study. The researcher adopted the descriptive sampling method and followed simple random sampling technique.

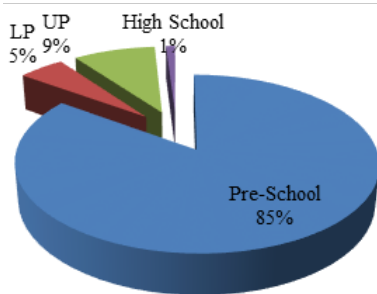
The contours of parental style and skill development has been analyzed using perception framework with the help of primary data collected from the parents of children with learning disability. With this end in view, this chapter has been dichotomized into different sections. The first deals with the profile of the parents while the second is an evaluation of parental style and skill development of the disabled children.

Table No 1 Socio-demographic details of the respondent (Total-100)

Variables	Frequency & Per cent
Gender	57 (57%)
Male	43 (43%)
Female	
Religion	57 (57%)
Hindu	35 (35%)
Christian	8 (8%)
Muslim	
Type of Family	19 (19%)
Joint	81 (81%)
Nuclear	
Occupation	23 (23%)
Government Employment	35 (35%)
Private Employment	24 (24%)
Self-Employed	8 (8%)
Unemployed	8 (8%)
Daily Wages	
Number of Children	25 (25%)
One	75 (75%)
More than One	

It shows that the majorities (57%) of the respondents surveyed were males and 43% of are females. Though there is only a minor difference in gender levels, the profile shows a male bias. Majority of the sample respondents are Hindus (57%) with Christians forming the second largest religious group in the sample with 35%. Muslims constitute only 8%. The family type of the respondents. It is clear that as expected, in an urban setup, the majority (81 %) live independently as nuclear families. It depicts the number of children in the family. Majority of the sample respondents (75%) have two children in their family and 25% are one child family. The households with 3 or more children constitute only 16%.

Graph No 1 Age at Detection of Learning Disability of the Child



Age of detection of learning disability of a child is pertinent in acquiring learning skills. In this case the earlier the better. Along with this, it is equally relevant that the parents admit and accept that their child has learning disability. It shows the varying stages of detection.

The data on age at detection shows that majority (85%) of the children have been detected with learning disability at pre-school stage i.e. at an age below 5 years.

Table No 2 Frequency of Parent-Teacher Interaction

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Monthly	38	38
As per request	26	26
Annually	27	27
Quarterly	9	9

Parent-teacher interaction and parent's visit are quite often cited as powerful factors to assess the progress of the studies of their disabled kids. For the children with learning disability it is a matter of care on the part of their parents and for the school authorities it is an element of interest of the parents in the studies of their disabled children with learning disability. Table explains the details regarding the frequency of parent-teacher interaction.

Most of the parents visit the institution and discuss the progress monthly or whenever required (38 and 26% respectively). It shows that 27% visit annually and 9% visit quarterly. The parent-teacher

interaction in most of the situation happens monthly or as and when required. This seems to be promising considering that majority of the respondents are employed

Parental Style of the Respondents

The three parenting styles considered were authoritative, authoritarian and permissive and accordingly the tool was set. But none of the respondents could be categorized into a single parenting style; instead all exhibited a certain degree of responsiveness, domination and permissiveness.

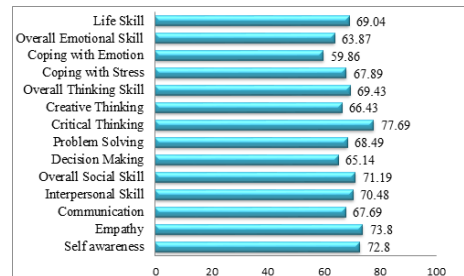
Table No 3 Parenting Style Scores

Grading	Score for Degree of Responsiveness(%)	Score for Degree of Dominance(%)	Score for Degree of Negligence(%)
Below Average	27	26	23
Average	23	27	35
Above Average	26	22	23
High	24	25	19
Total	100	100	100

One of the objectives of the study was to assess the parenting style of the respondents. The three parenting styles considered were authoritative, authoritarian and permissive and accordingly the tool was set. But none of the respondents could be categorized into a single parenting style; instead all exhibited a certain degree of responsiveness, domination and permissiveness.

The scores are nearly equally distributed as below average, average, above average and high for degree of responsiveness and degree of domination. For degree of negligence 35% have recorded average score and only 19% have recorded high scores which validates the scores for responsiveness.

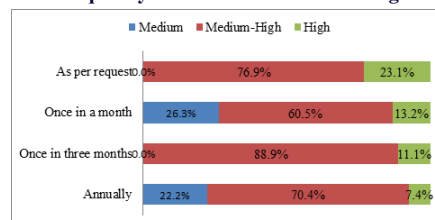
Graph No 2 Life Skills Scores of Children



These ten life skills had been further categorized as 'Social Skills, Thinking Skills and Emotional Skills'. The results have been compared with income, education of mother, age at detection and frequency of parent-teacher interaction, which in turn were used to test whether these indicators have an influence on the development of life skills of the children with learning disabilities.

The mean scores based on the assessment of the parents seemed to be impressive as it yielded more than 60% for all life skills except coping with emotions which generates an average less than 60%. Among the three skills, the lowest average score is for the emotional skills (63.87%) compared to social skills (71.19%) and thinking skill (69.43%). The results infer that the children with learning disability lag behind in coping with various emotions in comparison to other life skills.

Graph No 3 Frequency of Interaction and Thinking Skills



In fact, the percentage of children in the high Life Skills category (23.1%) increases with the increase in frequency of parent-teacher interaction (monthly or as per request). The Life Skills of children whose parents visited annually have the tendency to fall in the medium Life Skills category.

For Thinking Skills as well, the percentage of children in the high Thinking Skills category (23.1%) increases with increase in frequency of parent-teacher interaction (monthly or as per request). The Thinking Skills of children whose parents visited annually had more or less

Table No 4 Life Skills and Early Detection

SI No	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of Thinking skills is the same across all categories of Detection age.	Independent Samples Mann- Whitney U Test	0.060	H0 retained
2	The distribution of Social skills is the same across all categories of Detection age.	Independent Samples Mann- Whitney U Test	0.007	H0 rejected
3	The distribution of Emotional skills is the same across all categories of Detection age.	Independent Samples Mann- Whitney U Test	0.304	H0 retained
4	The distribution of Life skills is the same across all categories of Detection age.	Independent Samples Mann- Whitney U Test	0.032	H0 rejected

*significance level is 0.05

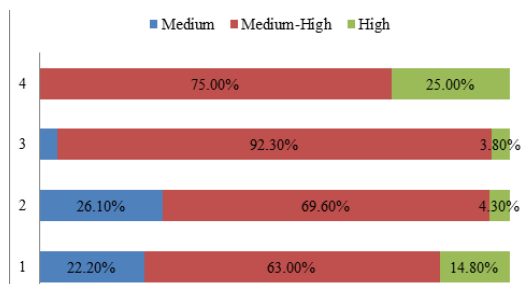
From the Hypothesis testing the following facts emerge,

- The distribution of Life Skills varies across all categories of Detection age.
- The distribution of Thinking Skills is the same across all categories of Detection age.
- The distribution of Social Skills varies across all categories of Detection age.
- The distribution of Emotional Skills is same across all categories of Detection age.

Life Skills and Parenting Style

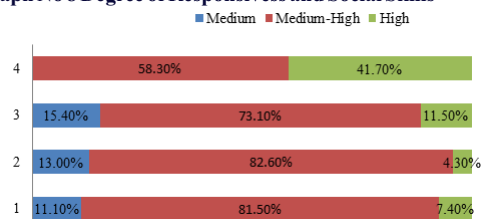
The role of three parenting styles viz. Responsiveness, Dominance and Negligence on shaping the life skills of the children has been evaluated, by identifying whether there is any pattern in the distribution of life skills based on the parenting style followed, distribution of life skills based on the parenting style followed, Of the three parenting styles considered, Authoritative Parenting style is the most responsive style. The parenting style with more degree of responsiveness is seen fetching significant results for social, emotional and overall Life Skills.

Graph No 7 Degree of Responsiveness and Life Skills



The Life Skills of 25% of children having parents falling under the high range of degree of responsiveness (4), fell in the high Life Skills category. But the percentages for those under the, above average range (3), average range (2) and below average range (1) of degree of responsiveness didn't show a progressive change. Almost all (92.3%) children, of parents having above average range (3) of degree of responsiveness category are found to have Life Skills in the medium-high range.

Graph No 8 Degree of Responsiveness and Social Skills



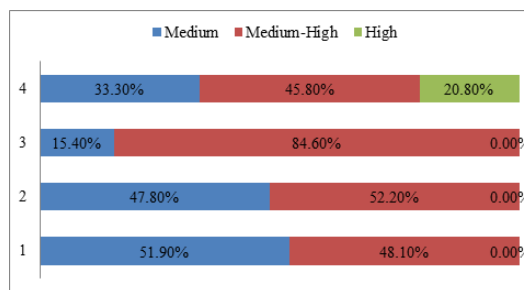
medium life skills (88.9%).

Age at Detection and Life Skills

For analysis purpose, the detection age of learning disability was classified as below 5 years and above 5 years and the impact of early detection on improving life skills of the children was tested with the null hypothesis that the Life Skills remains the same for both categories of detection age. Hence, Mann-Whitney U Test has been employed for significance testing.

From the graph it can be inferred that higher the range of degree of responsiveness of parents, higher will be the proportion of children in the high Social Skills category (41.7%).

Graph No 9 Degree of Responsiveness and Emotional Skills



The Graph above shows that 20.8% of the children having parents with high range of degree of responsiveness are in the high Emotional Skills category. But none of the children of parents, whose degree of responsiveness was in the above average, average and below average ranges had high Emotional Skills.

The effect of degree of responsiveness of the parents, on the Life Skills, Social Skills and Emotional Skills of the children can be well understood from the results and this in a way seems to complement the hypothesis testing results.

Major Findings

The major findings of the study are given below on the basis of the objectives.

• **Life Skills and Socio-economic Status of the Family**

Socioeconomic status of the family is dependent on many factors such as income, education and occupation. In this study the income of the family alone is considered as it is more or less directly related to educational qualification and occupation in the population considered. It was found that the income of the family has a significant influence on the life skills of children with learning disability.

• **Parental Style of the Respondents**

One of the objectives of the study was to study the parenting style of the respondents. The three parenting styles considered were authoritative, authoritarian and permissive and accordingly the tool was set. But none of the respondents could be categorized into a single parenting style; instead all had a certain degree of responsiveness, domination and permissiveness. Hence the degree of responsiveness, degree of domination and degree of negligence have been studied.

• **Life Skills and Mother's Education**

A mother has a significant role in the life of her child. A mother plays a significant role in the physical, mental and emotional development of the child and most often detects any deficiencies in these areas. Educated mothers may be able to detect deficiencies in the overall development of the child and be able to initiate corrective steps for

improvement.

• Role of Parents

Parents can play a pivotal role, especially in the life skill development of Children with Learning Disability. Life skills of parents have a positive effect on the development of children . (Peterson, Gravestjein, & Roest, 2016)

The degree of responsiveness of a parent can enhance the life skills of their children . (Landry, 2014) This study also showed the degree of responsiveness has a positive impact on the life skills of children.

The life skills of parents need to be assessed and if need be suggestions can be provided by the school authorities to improve the same. The parents have to be encouraged to adopt a more responsive style of parenting without tending to be too lenient.

• Role of Teachers

Normally wherever parents and teachers cooperate a more meaningful and effective outcome is guaranteed. Parents interact with their children at home as well in society while teachers have the opportunity to interact with them at school. Thus possible differences in the perception of these authorities with respect to child's potential, reactions, capacity for adaptation, communication, behavior under peer influence etc. is to be expected. Thus there is a need for parents and teachers to interact frequently based on close observation of the child's learning progress and more importantly the essential life skills expected at each stage of development. By communicating with each other parents and teachers can better access the child's strength and weakness.

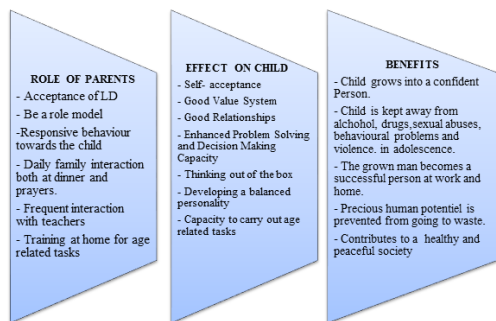
• Role of Family Environment

For children with learning disability, the family environment created by parents and siblings, can help in overcoming some of the lacunae in the educational system. Parents should shape the family environment by providing children with challenges, new experiences, role models and expectations. A parent child interaction of specific support and autonomy can promote a child's self-esteem.

Based on the above factors the following recommendations are suggested for life skill development of learning disabled children

1. Focus on the child's strength
 2. Set reasonable expectations
 3. Provide guidance needed for independence
 4. Maintain consistence discipline
 5. Share your enthusiasm for learning with your child
 6. Reinforce your child's ability to cope
 7. Help your child make one real friend
 8. Above all listen to your child's feelings
 9. Request meeting with your child's teacher frequently be open and transparent with them.
- Life skill training is to be made as part of academic training as it is useful not only for the children with learning disability but also for normal children. This can be possible by appointing life skill trainers in all the schools
 - Training for teachers to guide them in giving adequate attention to the life skill development of learning disabled children
 - Trainings and awareness programmes for parents to guide and provide adequate attention to the life skill development of learning disabled children.

SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION MODEL



CONCLUSION

A parent is the most important significant person in a child's life. A child with a learning disability in the family is a stressful scenario and parents take the brunt of the problem. In spite of this the parent has to play the most important role in the overall development of the child.

According to studies, academic outcome alone doesn't form the basis of happiness and success in life. The development of life skills in children with learning disability is all the more important, to save the child from degenerating and to build up the potential of the child to the maximum. In the current study the role of parents in the life skill development of children with learning disability has been evaluated and suggestions for improvement have been proposed.

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