



## COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ANXIETY AMONG CHILDREN WITH AND WITHOUT LEARNING DISABILITY

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**ABSTRACT** The study focuses on the anxiety among learning disabled children (n=50) and children without learning disability or normal peers (n=50) from various schools of Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. Participants from both the groups were given Revised Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS). The scores were compared and it shows that there is significant difference between both groups. Learning disabled children show increased anxiety than children without learning disability. We need to focus on the emotional development aspects of the children with learning disability. Psychological intervention is needed of the earlier stages to improve self and wellbeing.

**KEYWORDS :** Learning disability, Anxiety, Psychological Intervention.

### INTRODUCTION

The term "Learning Disability" was coined by Samuel Kirk and it came into use on 1962. Learning disability includes a range of disorders affecting the mental processes that work with the information. Learning disabled children have behavioral issues, lack of self control and difficulty in socializing with people. Learning difficulty includes emotional and learning issues that affect a person's ability to learn and cope with peers.

Children with learning disability have perceptual disorder, metacognitive deficits, memory problems, phonological deficits. If a child's performance on any of the academic skills is more than two standards below the standard he/she is studying currently, it indicates presence of a learning disability. If the child's performance is just one standard or two below it indicates a learning "difficulty" (Kapur & etal, 2002)

The prevalence of learning disability has been found to be highly variable (5-17%) with 2-4 boys being affected for every girl. (Rutter & Caspi, 2007)

Studies from India and other parts of world have found the prevalence of arithmetic disability range between 3-6.5%. In contrast to reading disability, the prevalence is equal in both genders. (Gross-Tsur, 1996 & Badian, 1983 & Ramaa, 2002)

Children with reading disability show frequent emotional and behavioral difficulties which were also confirmed by a recent review, which identified dyslexia to be significant risk factor for internalizing depressive and anxiety symptoms. (Beitchman, 1997)

A study conclude that challenging behavior to cope with studies has found to be a cause of anxiety (Menolascino, 1997)

Frequent somatic complaints are made by students who have increased levels of anxiety due to learning difficulty (Margalit & Raviv, 1984)

Margalit & Zak (1984) found that learning disabled children shows higher level of anxiety than their peers.

Adolescents with learning disability experience high level of anxiety than their peers (Huntington and Bender (1993)).

Children aged 6-17 with learning disability was found to have higher level of anxiety than their peers (Paget & Reynolds (1984))

Because of constant frustration school children become fearful. They face failure and entering new situation is extremely anxiety provoking for them. This avoidance behavior is misinterpreted by teachers and parents as laziness (Ryan, 1994)

### AIM

To compare the level of anxiety between children with and without learning disability.

### METHODS AND MATERIALS

The sample comprised of 300 school children, ranging in age from 8 to 12 years, selected from various private and government schools

in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. NIMHANS INDEX for Learning Disabilities was administered to all the students. Those who score two standards below to their class were named as learning disabled. 50 learning disabled children were selected for the study (n=25 girls & n=25 boys) and 50 children without academic difficulty were selected as control group (n=25 girls & n=25 boys). The revised Children Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS) was administered to both learning disabled and non learning disabled children.

### Tools

#### NIMHANS INDEX FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

The NIMHANS index for specific learning disabilities was developed in the Department of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Bangalore. It was initially developed by Kapur, John, Rozario, and Oommen in the year 1991 to screen the children with SLD. The index consists of tests for reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic abilities.

#### THE REVISED CHILDREN MANIFEST ANXIETY SCALE (RCMAS)

The RCMAS is a 37 item self assessment inventory to measure anxiety in children. It has 28 anxiety items. It has 3 anxiety subscales i.e. psychological anxiety, worry/oversensitivity, social concerns/concentration and 9 lie (social desirability) items. Relatively high Cronbach's alpha scores for the total anxiety scale ( $\alpha=0.80$  range) have been reported (Gerard & Reynolds, 1999)

### RESULTS

The data was analyzed using t-test

**Table 1: Comparison between anxiety among Children with and without learning disability.**

Variable	Learning disabled children		Children without learning disability		T-value	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Anxiety	46.24	5.69	14.34	6.76	25.52	0.000

The results obtained indicate that learning disabled children shows significant level of anxiety (0.00) compared to children without learning disability. It is evident from the results that learning disabled children shows high level of anxiety. Decreased knowledge about learning disability increased pressure from school and family leads to high level of anxiety among these children.

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Findings of this study indicate that learning disabled children shows significant difference in anxiety compared to children without learning disability. This finding must be taken into consideration during intervention strategies. Therefore providing additional time, appointing scribe and focus on strengths (extra curricular activities) helps learning disabled children to improve self esteem, reduce their anxiety level and improve the quality of life.

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