

Exploring The Relationship Between Social Skills and Adjustment Among Children With Learning Disability



Psychology

KEYWORDS : Adjustment , Social skills , Learning disability

Joseph Thomas R

Research Scholar, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Chennai

ABSTRACT

Social skill deficits have the potential to affect negatively both social and academic achievement in students diagnosed as learning disabled (LD) (Kavale & Forness, 1996). The main objective of the study is to identify the relationship between adjustment and social skills. This study follows a correlation research design basically looks into the variables that seem to interact with each other. In the first part of this study, the investigator measures the level of social skills and adjustment. With that, the study aims to identify the relationship of social skills with adjustment among children with learning disability. The findings of this research indicate that social skills have a strong correlation with adjustment and aggression. Thus, it can be concluded that promoting social skills among children with learning disability will in turn helps in decreasing aggressive behaviours and enhancing adjustment. The results of this study points out the importance of developing social skills intervention programs for children with learning disability.

Background

Throughout history, many children have encountered problems in learning. In the last 40 years the term "learning disability" has been used (Turkington & Harris, 2002) to denote a certain syndrome of learning problems. In different countries under different policies and programs, underachieving children could not receive special education services unless they were diagnosed as emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded or physically handicapped (Lyon & Fletcher, 2001). The term "learning disability" (LD) was first introduced by Dr. Samuel Kirk (1963) to denote problems of the perceptually handicapped child. More than a decade later, learning disability was accepted as an additional special education category in federal IDEA legislation (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1975).

Children with learning disabilities have difficulty with social skills as well as with learning because they do not accurately perceive social signals, cues, and patterns. The child with LD frequently does not understand a person's negative facial affect as conveying disapproval or may not understand what caused the disapproval. The dual challenge of learning in a classroom, and also experiencing difficulty in learning, acquiring, and using appropriate social skills is a recurring problem for many individuals with learning disabilities (Sturomski, 1995). Students with learning disabilities frequently manifest tremendous problems in social relations. A learning disability affects a student's academic performance, but also has consequences for the LD individual's adjustment to home, work, community, and adult life (Spekman, Goldberg, & Herman, 1992). Deficits in social skills are manifested early and persist throughout life without effective intervention (Mellard & Hazel, 1992). Students with learning disabilities suffer from a low peer acceptance rate and poor academic performance (Elbaum & Vaughn, 1999; Elksnin & Elksnin, 1998; Fuchs et al., 2002; Getty, 2003; Vaughn & Haager, 1994; Vaughn & Hogan, 1994).

Social skill deficits have the potential to affect negatively both social and academic achievement in students diagnosed as learning disabled (LD) (Kavale & Forness, 1996). Social skills can refer to a wide range of behaviors and abilities, which can be categorized 5 as behaviors associated with social interactions (Kavale & Forness, 1996), and social competence (McFall, 1982). These dimensions of social interactions and competence can include friendliness, helpfulness, self-control, the ability to cooperate, and the ability to share (LaGreca, 1987).

Research on children's development and later socio emo-

tional adjustment has emphasized the contribution of vulnerability and protective factors at the individual, family, and community levels (Campbell, 2003; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Research during the past two decades has demonstrated that children with LD face many psychosocial challenges and experience emotional and behavioral problems (Sorensen et al., 2003). Similarly, a recent study by Martinez and Semrud Clikeman (2004) has shown that emotional and behavioral adjustment profile varies among children with different types of LD: namely, single and multiple LD. This study revealed that adolescents in the multiple reading and math disabilities category and math disability only category showed significantly more impairment on depression and immature behavior measures than adolescents with reading disability only or adolescents with typical achievement. The other study has provided evidence for higher levels of emotional problems, as well as behavioral difficulties and attention problems, among children with dyslexia cases (Heiervang, Stevenson, Lund, & Hugdahl, 2001). Overall, these results point to the fact that the heterogeneity of LD does matter and should be taken into account when analyzing adjustment difficulties.

Here the paper investigates on the level of social skills among children with learning disability and its relationship with their adjustment level.

Definitions

Learning disability

The term learning disability is used to describe specific group of children, adolescents and adults who have problems in learning. It refers to a neurobiological disorder in which one or more of the basic processes involved in understanding spoken or written language. These problems are generally in the areas of reading, writing, spelling and mathematics. This brain variance may influence an individual ability to speak, listen, read, write, spell, reason, organize information, or do mathematical calculations. (Kamphaus, Frick & Lahey, 1991; Glassberg, Hooper & Mattison, 1999)

Social skills

Social skills described as the discrete component skills of social competence both verbal and nonverbal that enables to meet our needs and avoid unpleasant circumstances. Social skills have been defined as the "ability to express feelings or to communicate interests and desires to others" (Lieberman et al. 1975). Some authors define it as "the ability to express both positive and negative feelings in the interpersonal context without suffering consequent loss of social reinforcement" (Hersen and Bellack 1977). It has also

been defined as “the ability of an interactant to choose optimal communicative behaviors for successful accomplishing his own interpersonal goal during the interaction while maintaining the face and line of his fellow interactants” (Wiemann 1977) and “the process of generating skilled behavior directed to a goal” (Trower 1982). Spence (1985) categorized social skills into four skill set: Self awareness, Empathy, interpersonal relationship and effective communication

Adjustment

Adjustment refers to the behavioural process of balancing conflicting needs, or needs against obstacles in the environment. Adjustment may be defined as a process of altering behavior to reach a harmonious relationship with the environment, Bridges (1988). Investigator measures adjustment with a Adjustment Inventory for School Students which defines adjustment with three domains such as emotional adjustment, social adjustment and educational adjustment.

Objectives

To assess the level of social skills among Children with Learning Disability

To assess the level of adjustment among Children with Learning Disability

To identify the relationship between adjustment and social skills among Children with Learning Disability

Variables

The independent variable in this study is social skills and its dimensions.

The independent variable Social Skills has four domains which are:

Self-awareness

Empathy

Effective Communication

Interpersonal Relationship

The dependent variables of the study is adjustment

Hypothesis

“Adjustment has significant influence on the social skills among children with learning disability”.

Research design

This study follows a correlation research design basically looks into the variables that seem to interact with each other. In the first part of this study, the investigator measures the level of social skills and adjustment. With that, the study aims to identify the relationship of social skills with adjustment among children with learning disability. This will help us to establish the strength and direction of relationship.

Tools used

Social Skills Assessment Scale

Description of the tool: The multi dimensional social skills assessment scale consists of 42 items in the form of statements in build with a five point scale for the respondent to check the appropriate response which is most descriptive to the individual. It has got both negative and positive items and the advantage of the scale is that it could be self administered or could be used in

a group setting. This tool is developed by the researcher. Social skills assessment scale measures four dimensions which are self awareness, empathy, effective communication and interpersonal relationship. The scores obtained under each dimensions represent the level of social skills in the representative domain and summation of all the scores obtained under each of the dimension would evolve as a global score for social skills.

Reliability

Chronbach's coefficient alpha, test retest and split half reliability was assessed for the tool.

Reliability coefficient of Social Skills Assessment Scale

Type of coefficient	Reliability
Split half	.71
Test retest	.74
Chronbach's alpha	.68

Reliability coefficient of Social skills assessment (dimension wise)

Sr. No	Dimension	Reliability
1	Self Awareness	.71
2	Empathy	.79
3	Effective communication	.80
4	Interpersonal relationship	.76

The above table indicates that social skills assessment scale is highly reliable and consistent.

Adjustment Inventory for School Students (AISS)

Description: Adjustment Inventory for School Students (Dr. AKP Sinha and Dr. RP Singh) is a widely used adjustment inventory in researches. It measures the adjustment of secondary school students in three areas of adjustment such as emotional, social and educational adjustment. The inventory contains 60 items which are equally distributed amongst the three areas of adjustment ie, 20 items measures emotional adjustment, 20 items measures social adjustment and 20 items measures educational adjustment.

Administration: It is a self administrating scale. The scale can be administered above the age group of 12 years. After establishing a good rapport requisite the subject to read the instructions carefully. Request the subject to carefully read each statement and give a honest response. Generally, the scale will takes about 20 to thirty minutes to complete.

Scoring: There are 60 items in the scale, each statement of scale has given response Yes or No. The numerical weight-age of responses were 1 and 0 respectively. All the items were for positively worded.

Reliability and Validity: Coefficient of reliability was determined by split half method, test retest and K- R formulae-20. The reliability coefficients are given below.

Method used	Emotional	Social	Educational	Total
Split half	.94	.93	.96	.95
Test Retest	.96	.90	.93	.93
K-R formulae-20	.92	.92	.96	.94

Validity of the AISS were established as .47

Sample

Sample of the study consists of adolescents with learning disability between the age group of 12 to 18 years (basically studying in 7thStd and 12thStd). Total sample taken for the study is 400.

Inclusion criteria

Children who have already been identified as Learning

Disabled at the institution level

Children with learning disability studying in 7th to 12th standards

Exclusion criteria

Adolescents with mental disabilities or any other associated Developmental disorders

Adolescents studying in 7th standard but below 12 years of age

Adolescents studying in 12th standard but above 18 years of age

Sampling method and procedure

The non probability sampling method was used to draw the required sample in this study. A sample of 400 adolescents was selected for the study. They were selected by using purposive sampling of non-probability method. A purposive sampling is sample procedure in which the sample has been handpicked by the investigator to fully ensure that specific elements are included. 400 students were selected based on the list of learning disabled adolescences, identified by the School psychologist or Special educator. The sample was collected from 11 schools and a clinic.

Data analysis and findings

Table 1

Social skills among children with learning disability

Variable	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Social skills	Low	176	44
	Average	175	43.8
	High	49	12.3
	Total	400	100

The percentage distribution given in the above table clearly indicates that majority of the respondents have low level of social skills (44%). Among the respondents 43.8% have average level of social skills 12.3 % of the responders fall under the category of high level of social skills.

Table 2

Adjustment among children with learning disability

Variable	Levels	Frequency	Percentage
Adjustment	Excellent	3	.8
	Good	44	11
	Average	164	41
	Unsatisfactory	129	32.3
	Very unsatisfactory	60	15
	Total	400	100

The percentage distribution given in the above table clearly indicates that majority of the respondents have average level of adjustment (41%). At the same time, the fact is clear in this table that the level of unsatisfactory (32.3%) and very unsatisfactory (15%) which come together around 47% among the respondents. This figure indicates that the adjustment issues are a major concern among children with learning disability. The table shows that .8% and 11% comes under excellent and good level of adjustment respectively.

Hypothesis

“Adjustment has significant influence on the social skills among children with learning disability”.

Table 3: Correlation coefficient of Adjustment and Social Skills (dimension wise) among children with learning disability (N= 400)

		Total Social Skills	Self-Awareness	Empathy	Effective Communication	Inter-personal Relationship
Ad-justment	Pearson Correlation	.758**	.318**	.383**	.261**	.313**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.005	.000	.000
	N	400	400	400	400	400

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 reveals that adjustment and social Skills of children with learning disability are positively and significantly (p<0.01) correlated .The correlation value between adjustment and social skills is .758, which shows positive and significant relationship between these variables. All the dimensions of the social skills are also significantly correlated with adjustment such as self-awareness (r= 0. .318), empathy (r= 0.383), effective communication (r= 0. .261) and interpersonal relationship (r= 0. .313).

Consistent with the developmental literature, intervention research has shown that universal, school-based programs targeting social and emotional skills-building have been successful in fostering adjustment and increasing children’s social competence with peers (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Wilson & Lipsey, 2007). Kapp-Simon KA, 1992, conducted a study on Self-perception, social skills, adjustment, and inhibition in young adolescents with craniofacial anomalies. He found that social sills predict to adjustment . Another study by titled social skills and psychological adjustment of child and adolescent cancer survivors by Levin Newby W, 2004 highlight that psychological adjustment of pediatric cancer survivors and demonstrate the role of learning difficulties and family functioning in influencing social skills and adjustment for these children and adolescents.

Conclusion

The study was an attempt to find out the relationship of social skills with adjustment and aggression among children with learning disability. The findings of this research indicate that social skills have a strong correlation with adjustment and aggression. Thus, it can be concluded that promoting social skills among children with learning disability will in turn helps in decreasing aggressive behaviours and enhancing adjustment. The results of this study points out the importance of developing social skills intervention programs for children with learning disability.

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