

Adjustment Problems Faced by Children with Learning Disabilities– Impact of Special Education

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ABSTRACT

Learning disabilities are professionally diagnosed difficulties with reading, writing, speaking, listening, spelling, reasoning or doing math. People with learning disabilities have trouble taking in information through their senses and processing that information accurately to the brain-Usually they will receive scrambling information like a distorted radio signal or fuzzy television picture. A child with Learning Disability appears to exhibit emotional problems due to adjustment difficulties resulting from academic failure. Sometimes kids have trouble expressing their feelings, calming themselves down, and reading nonverbal cues, which can lead to difficulty in the classroom and with their peers. Students with undetected learning disabilities might demonstrate undesirable behaviour for a variety of reasons. They might feel angry, sad, lonely, frustrated, or hopeless as a result of focusing on their difficulties. Special needs students are deprived of a suitable education when they are taught at a mismatched level with students how are significantly above their level. Children with learning disabilities may have problems with Academics, social, home and emotional aspects. These problems they may over come through attending special education classes and parental attention. There is a need for special education for children with learning disability and conduct awareness programmes regarding learning disability and their common problems.

In India, elementary schools provide education from Class 1 to Class 8. The children in these classes are generally aged between 6 to 14 years. It is the next stage after kindergarten (Pre-Nursery, Nursery, Prep or Lower Kindergarten and Upper Kindergarten). The next stage after primary education is Middle School (Class 6th to 8th). In most schools in North India, children in Classes 1st to 3rd are taught English, [Hindi](#), Mathematics, [Environmental Science](#), and General Knowledge. In class 4th and 5th the environmental science subject is replaced by General Science and Social Studies. However some schools may introduce this concept in Class 3 itself. Some schools may also introduce a third language in Class 5th or even in Class 4th. [Sanskrit](#) and French are the most common third languages taught in Indian schools. At some places, primary education is labeled as the education of Class 3rd to Class 5th and up to class 2nd as pre-primary education. This is because many new concepts are introduced in this class. Children are taught painting instead of drawing and coloring, exams are taken, and [Word Sum Puzzle](#) in maths is introduced along with geometry.

Introduction

Learning disabilities are professionally diagnosed difficulties with reading, writing, speaking, listening, spelling, reasoning or doing math. People with learning disabilities have trouble taking in information through their senses and processing that information accurately to the brain-Usually they will receive scrambling information like a distorted radio signal or fuzzy television picture.

Student who can think logically and clearly may not be able to write out a simple paragraph. An articulate, informed student might be unable to read a set of instructions. These problems can make it difficult for a student to learn as quickly as someone who isn't affected by learning disabilities.

Generally if a child's cognitive ability is much higher than his or her academic performance, the student is often diagnosed with a learning disability

Definition of Learning Disability

According to Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), (2004), "Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological process involved in understanding or in using languages, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily due to visual, learning or motor handicaps of mental retardation of emotional disturbance or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantages".

People with learning disabilities have average to above average intelligence (Gerber. 1998). In fact, studies indicated that as many as 33% of students with LD are gifted (Baum, 1985; Brody & Mills, 1997; Jones, 1986). With proper recognition, intervention and lots of hard work, children and adults with learning disabilities can learn and succeed

It is interesting to note that many successful people such as Walt Disney, Alexander Graham Bell, and Winston Churchill all had learning disabilities.

Types of Learning Disability

Learning disabilities can be categorized either by the type of information processing that is affected or by the specific difficulties caused by a processing deficit.

Learning disabilities usually fall within four broad categories:

- **Spoken language** - listening and speaking.
- **Written language** - reading, writing and spelling.
- **Arithmetic** - Calculation and concepts.
- **Reasoning** - Organization and integration of Ideas and thoughts

Classification of Learning Disabilities

Dyslexia	Difficulty reading	Problems reading, writing, spelling, speaking
Dyscalculia	Difficulty with maths	Problems doing maths problems, understanding time, using money
Dysgraphia	Difficulty with writing	Problems with handwriting, spelling, organizing ideas
Dyspraxia (Sensory Integration Disorder)	Difficulty with fine motor skills	Problems with hand-eye coordination, balance, manual dexterity
Dysphasia/Aphasia	Difficulty with language	Problems understanding spoken language, poor reading comprehension
Auditory Processing Disorder	Difficulty hearing differences between sounds	Problems with reading, comprehension, language
Visual Processing Disorder	Difficulty interpreting visual information	Problems with reading, math, maps, charts, symbols, pictures

Learning disability and Locus of Control

The term “locus of control” refers to a person’s perception of where rewards are derived in his or her environment. Some people believe that they are solely responsible for the rewards or reinforcements that their environment provides for them. These peoples are referred to as ‘internals’ because their rewards are perceived to be under their internal control.

People who believe their rewards are due more to luck, chance, fate or other significant people in their lives are referred to as ‘externals’. Many years of research has established that there are fundamental differences between internals and externals, including the way that these two groups relate to the process of instruction.

Review of the relevant literature indicated that learning disabled children, like other groups of children who have experienced failure, are more likely to exhibit an external locus of control than their normally achieving peers.

Significant relationship was observed between locus of control and both social adjustment and personal-emotional adjustment of children.

Learning Disability and Behaviour and Adjustment Problems

A child with L.D appears to exhibit emotional problems due to adjustment difficulties resulting from academic failure.

Deficits in social skills found to exist at significantly high rates among children with learning disabilities. In general, social skill deficits include difficulties interacting with people in an appropriate fashion

For example, lack of knowledge of how to greet people, how to make friends, and how to engage in playground games or a failure to use knowledge of such skills in these situations.

Learning Disability and Academic Achievement, Self Concept

Learning disabilities can be extremely frustrating for children. Children with learning disabilities may have trouble expressing their feelings, calming themselves down, and reading nonverbal cues from others. This can lead to difficulty in the classroom and with their peers

Many areas of life are affected, including the role of the person with learning disabilities in their family, relationships with friends, non-academic functioning such as sports or dancing, self-esteem and self-confidence to handle daily situations.

Learning disabilities, and their accompanying academic challenges, can lead to low academic achievement and behavior problems

Special Education

Special Education in its simple meaning stands for a type of education that is quite specific and special in nature. Thus through its name, it is capable of reminding us that it is somewhat different from the education meant for the general population of the students.

Definition of Special Education

Special education means specially designed instruction that meets the unusual needs of an exceptional child. Special materials, teaching techniques, or equipments and or facilities may be required. Hallahan and Kauffman (1991).

Making the right special education decisions for your child requires some study. The special education decision making process is vital to your child's success in school program. Learn how schools develop individual education programs for students with specific learning disabilities and other types of disabilities. Learn what to expect during IEP team meetings and how you can actively participate in this important decision making process to strengthen your child's special education program.

Learning Disabilities Related Problems

Social and emotional difficulties

Sometimes kids have trouble expressing their feelings, calming themselves down, and reading nonverbal cues, which can lead to difficulty in the classroom and with their peers.

Social and emotional skills are an area where you can have a huge impact as a parent. For all children, but especially those with learning disabilities, social and emotional skills are the most consistent indicators of success, outweighing everything else, including academic factors. Academic challenges may lead to low self-esteem, withdrawal and behavior problems, but you can counter these things by creating a strong support system for your child and helping them learn to express themselves, deal with frustration and work through challenges. Your focus on their growth as a person, and not just on academic achievements will help them learn good emotional habits and the right tools for lifelong success.

The consequences of learning disabilities are rarely confined to school or work. Many areas of life are affected, including the role of the person with learning disabilities in their family, relationships with friends, non-academic functioning such as sports or dancing, self-esteem and self-confidence to handle daily situations.

Individuals who have learning disabilities may be less observant in their social environment, may misinterpret the social behavior of others at times, and may not learn as easily from experiences or social "cues" as their friends. Some children may exhibit an immaturity and social ineptness due to their learning disability. While seeking acceptance, their eagerness may cause them to try too hard in inappropriate ways.

Learning Disability and Behaviour

Teachers should explore the possible existence of a learning disability when a student who appears to be capable has a history of struggling with specific components of school and/or begins to demonstrate behavioural difficulties.

Students with undetected learning disabilities might demonstrate undesirable behaviour for a variety of reasons. They might feel angry, sad, lonely, frustrated, or hopeless as a result of focusing on their difficulties. Frustration might arise out of the students' level of performance compared to their level of actual ability, lack of understanding of why they struggle to perform the task or sometimes the inability to communicate in an appropriate way.

A student might also exhibit inappropriate behaviour in order to avoid the frustrating task itself. At other times behaviour might result from poor self-esteem, connected to the student's focus on what he/she can't do; or a student might quit trying, believing that no matter how hard they try they will never attain success. Other behaviour might be the result of an emotional disturbance.

Adjustment Difficulties in Children with Learning Disabilities

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), although not all studies have found this pattern (for a review, see Greenham, 1999). Tsatsanis, Fuerst, and Rourke (1997) identified seven distinct subtypes of psychosocial functioning among seven 13-year-olds with LD, with different subtypes being characteristic for children with a particular type of a learning disability; e.g., reading disability, arithmetic disability or both. Specifically, in their study, children with arithmetic disabilities were characterized by

substantial Adjustment here is defined as “the agreement between the individual’s behavior and the demands of environment and is reflected in the individual’s own satisfaction with the situation” (Magnusson, 1988,p. 59).

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internalizing problems while children with reading disabilities had only normal adjustment patterns. 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.

Other disorders that make learning difficult

Difficulty in school does not always stem from a learning disability. Anxiety, depression, stressful events, emotional trauma, and other conditions affecting concentration make learning more of a challenge.

- **Autism** – Difficulty mastering certain academic skills can stem from Pervasive Developmental Disorders such as autism and Asperger’s syndrome. Children with an autism spectrum disorder may
- **ADHD** – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), while not considered a learning disability, can certainly disrupt learning. Children with ADHD often have problems with sitting still, staying focused, following instructions, staying organized, and completing homework. have trouble making friends, reading body language, communicating, and making eye contact.

A Critical Need for Effective Teaching

Although learning disabilities cannot be overcome in the sense of being cured, persons with learning disabilities can learn strategies that greatly diminish their disabilities’ negative impact—perhaps as exemplified by the renowned individuals discussed earlier. And great strides have been made in developing instructional methods.

Primary prevention efforts are usually aimed at promoting desirable future outcomes in virtually all of the population of individuals who may or may not develop the problem or disorder. For example, in hopes of preventing disease and early death, physicians encourage people to lead healthy lifestyles—to eat healthy foods, exercise, avoid risky behaviors such as smoking, wear seat belts, and so forth. Similarly, public health officials recommend that communities add fluoride to drinking water supplies in hopes of preventing or lessening tooth decay. By analogy, education should apply the most effective instructional practices available in hopes of preventing learning disabilities.

The Reading First program (and Early Reading First, too) aimed to provide support to state education agencies for making grants to local education agencies so that the LEAs could obtain instructional materials and supplies as well as inservice for teachers so that they could teach reading based on high-quality research about effective reading instruction. Primary prevention does not always work, however. Sometimes the preventive measures are not applied faithfully or sufficiently. Or sometimes some people respond to the preventive measures but others are disposed to the condition and they will “get it” no matter what is done.

This does not mean that we should not attempt primary prevention efforts, as they may still keep many from suffering the consequences of the condition. Later chapters in this book describe the most effective methods of teaching in general education that can help prevent many students’ learning disabilities.

Secondary Prevention: Catch It Early and Stop It Right Away.

Secondary prevention efforts focus on early detection of problems and then on stopping or slowing the progress of the condition. In medicine, routine screenings for prostate or breast cancer are examples of early detection efforts. Physicians believe that if they catch the cancer early, they can treat it and prevent subsequent problems. In education, schools often test students with simple screening measures to identify those learners who may have problems. For example, the state of Virginia has a Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening program in which teachers assess nearly all children in the primary grades to identify those who are most at risk of failing in the early stages of reading; schools receive extra funds to provide supplemental instruction in hopes of preventing later reading

problems (Invernizzi, Meier, Juel, & Swank, 1997). In this book we shall introduce you to powerful methods of screening and early intervention for learning disabilities.

Tertiary Prevention: Treat It Aggressively and Minimize the Consequences.

Tertiary prevention aims to reduce or stop an existing problem or condition from getting worse. When people have diabetes, for example, they must control their diet, exercise, and administer insulin (either as a pill or injection). If people with diabetes do not take such steps, they may have periods of shock or even have limbs amputated. Tertiary prevention is equivalent to treatment or intervention. When students have learning disabilities, they already have clearly established problems. If they have been in schools providing primary or secondary prevention (or both), they probably have very serious problems. They must receive instruction that corrects for the imbalance in their skills and that uses the most effective intervention methods available. In this book, you will learn about those methods.

Prevention

Their colleagues (cf. Cruickshank, Bentsen, Ratzeburg, & Tannhauser, 1961; Werner & Strauss, 1941; see Weiss & Lloyd, 2001), whose interventions consisted largely of controlling extraneous stimuli and providing a reliable structure of routines. Researchers have been devising and refining instructional procedures that are more effective than earlier strategies. Among the major approaches we discuss in subsequent chapters are *cognitive training* (which includes procedures such as self-monitoring or self-instruction), *mnemonics* (which includes the use of key words and other ways of assisting memory), *Direct Instruction* (which includes careful sequences of instruction, rapid and frequent responding, and immediate feedback and correction of errors), *metacomprehension training* (which provides students with strategies for thinking about remembering the major points in the material being read), and *scaffolded instruction* (which includes gradual reduction of assistance and reciprocal teaching). Although they vary in the specific skills taught and how they are related to the curriculum areas being taught, these approaches are all systematic procedures for teaching task-approach skills to students with learning disabilities so they can apply these skills in their actual academic situations. Still, special education for students with learning disabilities will need to have certain features.

As Zigmond described it, [It] is, first and foremost, instruction focused on individual need. It is carefully planned. It is intensive, urgent, relentless, and goal directed. It is empirically supported practice, drawn from research. To provide special education means to set priorities and select carefully what needs to be taught. It means teaching something special and teaching it in a special way. To provide special education means using the techniques and procedures described by Howell and Davidson [1997] for defining the special education curriculum appropriate for each student that will be designated on the annual IEP. To provide special education means monitoring each student's progress in the manner described by Deno [1997], and taking responsibility for changing instruction when the monitoring data indicate that sufficient progress is not being made. (1997, pp. 384–385). We believe that special educators must provide instruction based on the very best research available. The instruction that special educators provide must be adapted to meet the individual needs of their students. In this book, we do not advocate a “learning disabilities program.” We recommend an approach to serving individuals with learning disabilities that is based on making sure that students initially receive the most effective instruction available and that those who are not progressing according to reasonably accepted criteria under those conditions are then eligible for additional services—possibly prereferral services and, at least, special education services that are “intensive, urgent, relentless, and goal directed” (Zigmond, 1997, p. 384).

Assessment

Many normed assessments can be used in evaluating skills in the primary academic domains: reading, including word recognition, fluency, and comprehension; mathematics, including computation and problem solving; and written expression, including handwriting, spelling and composition.

The most commonly used comprehensive achievement tests include the Woodcock-Johnson III (WJ III), Weschler Individual Achievement Test II (WIAT II), the Wide Range Achievement Test III (WRAT III), and the Stanford Achievement Test–10th edition. These tests include measures of many academic domains that are reliable in identifying areas of difficulty.

In the reading domain, there are also specialized tests that can be used to obtain details about specific reading deficits. Assessments that measure multiple domains of reading include Gray's

Diagnostic Reading Tests–2nd edition (GDRT II) and the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Assessment. Assessments that measure reading subskills include the Gray Oral Reading Test IV – Fourth Edition (GORT IV), Gray Silent Reading Test, Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP), Tests of Oral Reading and Comprehension Skills (TORCS), Test of Reading Comprehension 3 (TORC-3), Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE), and the Test of Reading Fluency. A more comprehensive list of reading assessments may be obtained from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

The purpose of assessment is to determine what is needed for intervention, which also requires consideration of contextual variables and whether there are comorbid disorders that must also be identified and treated, such as behavioural issues or language delays.

Problems Faced by Special Needs Students

Just as inclusion has its benefits, it also has its disadvantages. Students with disabilities tend to disrupt the classroom with behavior issues. Because they are not as cognitively developed as their peers, the teaching-learning process is not as effective as it could be. It is difficult to serve the needs of every student who is normally in the regular education class, and with the special needs students the job becomes even more of a struggle for the teacher and someone draws the short in of the stick, usually the special needs students. Teachers have to treat special needs students differently based on standards are on their learning level. Special needs students are deprived of a suitable education when they are taught at a mismatched level with students how are significantly above their level. This can negatively affect a student's sense of self-esteem and dignity. Even in physical education classes, students with physical disabilities are disadvantaged because the curriculum is not gear to include them (Combs, Elliott, & Whipple, 2010). This can cause students with disabilities to face discrimination and bullying from their peers. Causing them to experience low self-esteem, isolation, depression, and in some cases aggression (Khudorenko, 2011). These emotional breakdowns can lead to violence (Frances & Potter, 2010)

Conclusion

A child with Learning Disability appears to exhibit emotional problems due to adjustment difficulties resulting from academic failure. Sometimes kids have trouble expressing their feelings, calming themselves down, and reading nonverbal cues, which can lead to difficulty in the classroom and with their peers. Students with undetected learning disabilities might demonstrate undesirable behaviour for a variety of reasons. They might feel angry, sad, lonely, frustrated, or hopeless as a result of focusing on their difficulties. Frustration might arise out of the students' level of performance compared to their level of actual ability, lack of understanding of why they struggle to perform the task or sometimes the inability to communicate in an appropriate way. Just as inclusion has its benefits, it also has its disadvantages. Students with disabilities tend to disrupt the classroom with behavior issues. Because they are not as cognitively developed as their peers, the teaching-learning process is not as effective as it could be. It is difficult to serve the needs of every student who is normally in the regular education class, and with the special needs students the job becomes even more of a struggle for the teacher and someone draws the short in of the stick, usually the special needs students. Teachers have to treat special needs students differently based on standards are on their learning level. Special needs students are deprived of a suitable education when they are taught at a mismatched level with students how are significantly above their level. Children with learning disabilities may have problems with Academics, social, home and emotional aspects. These problems they may over come through attending special education classes and parental attention. There is a need for special education for children with learning disability and conduct awareness programmes regarding learning disability and their common problems.

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