



ATTITUDE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS LEARNING DISABLED CHILDREN

*¹Ms. Neha & ²Dr. K. S. Roopa

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Human Development and Research Centre,
Smt. V.H.D. Central Institute of Home Science (Autonomous), Seshadri Road,
Bangalore (India)

²Associate Professor and HOD, Department of Human Development and Research Centre,
Smt. V.H.D. Central Institute of Home Science (Autonomous), Seshadri Road,
Bangalore (India)

ABSTRACT

Learning Disabilities (LD) are problems or difficulties related to the processing of information. A child would find it as a herculean task to understand, articulate his/her thoughts in words, have problems in reasoning, and perform mathematical operations. Another disadvantage these children have is that since they look 'normal' to societal standards, their handicap isn't considered or handled in the right manner. Instead, they are very often mistaken to be a lazy or stupid or disinterested child. This further discourages children to take any sort of interest in their school work. Such children need to be handled with love and care and lot more patience, rather than being labeled or pushed away as a waste of time to be corrected or taught. An understanding of LD is very important. It is vital for teachers to have the right attitude while dealing with learning disabled children.

The present study aimed at assessing and comparing the attitude of primary school teachers towards learning-disabled children of both government and private schools. The investigator developed a questionnaire to study the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the attitude of teachers with regard to LD in children. The total sample comprised of 400 teachers, of which 200 were from 16 government schools and 200 were from 16 private schools in Urban Bangalore city. Statistical analysis of the acquired data was carried out by applying percentages, mean, standard deviation, chi square and "t" test. The findings of the study revealed that a statistically significant association was found between the level of attitude among the government and private school respondents. The chi-square value being 73.37 was found to be significant at 1% level. It is also seen that the private school respondents had a higher mean score

percentage related to attitude ($M = 63.60\%$) when compared to government school respondents ($M = 53.10\%$) on LD in children. However, it was found that both the groups had moderate attitude towards LD in children.

Key words: Primary school teachers, attitude, learning disabilities, government and private schools.

INTRODUCTION

In a time where academic success is not considered to be of utmost importance by several people around the globe, the story of a young boy who was termed as an “addled child”, “dumb and psychotic” and so on way back in 1854, who became the genius of the century is an inspiration for many. Such was the story of Thomas Alva Edison, the inventor of the incandescent light bulb and any more useful technologies that have made our lives so much easier. There are many more scholars, athletes, artists and lay men who have a learning condition called learning disabilities (LD).

It was in the early 1960's that in many children the difficulty in learning began to attract serious attention in the United States. On April 6, 1963, Dr. Samuel Kirk addressed a gathering of anxious parents in Chicago, at which he first used the term learning disability to describe these children. He defined learning disability “as a retardation, disorder or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, spelling, writing or arithmetic resulting from a possible cerebral dysfunction and/or emotional or behavioral disturbance and not from mental retardation, sensory deprivation, or cultural or instructional factors”.

LD are the vaguest and mystifying when compared to other major handicapping or disabling conditions, with the possible exception of emotional disturbances. It is only at a later date that LD were officially recognized other than handicapping conditions; there is still a great deal of debate as to what is meant by the term LD.

The National Joint committee on Learning Disabilities (1997) states that:

1. Learning disabilities are a heterogenous groups of disorders. Individuals with learning disabilities exhibit many kinds of behaviors and characteristics.
2. Learning disabilities result in significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical skills.
3. The problem is intrinsic to the individual. Learning disabilities are due to factors within the person rather than external factors, such as the environment or the educational system.
4. The problem is presumed to be related to the central nervous system dysfunction. There may be biological basis to the problem.
5. Learning disabilities may occur along with other disabilities or conditions. Individuals can have several problems at the same time, such as learning disabilities and emotional disorders.

When the special needs of children with LD are not met, it can lead to scholastic backwardness and related psychosocio problems. Hence, early identification of learning-disabled children by the teachers in mainstream schools is crucial. In India, most teachers have limited knowledge related to LD in children. (Shari and Mysore, 2016)

Das (2013) stated that primary and secondary school teachers have unfavorable attitude with regard to LD in children and a limited or low competence in teaching learning disabled children in a regular classroom.

According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), attitude is defined as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor. It involves three components: emotional component (how the object, person, issue or event makes you feel), cognitive component (your thoughts and beliefs about the subject) and behavioral component (how the attitude influences your behavior)”.

In the light of the above discussion, an attempt was made to study the attitude of primary school teachers of government and private schools with regard to LD in children.

METHODOLOGY

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the attitude of primary school teachers with regard to learning disability in children.
2. To assess and compare the attitude of government and private school teachers towards children with LD.

HYPOTHESIS

1. Primary school teachers will have a moderate level of attitude towards children with LD.
2. There will be a significant difference in the attitude of the government and private school teachers towards children with LD.

SELECTION OF SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The researcher surveyed the various government and private schools in Bangalore city. 32 schools from Urban Bangalore district were identified for the study, of which 16 were private schools and 16 were government schools. Purposive random sampling technique was adopted for the study. Teachers who were teaching primary school children were selected. The total sample consisted of 400 primary school teachers, of which 200 teachers belonged to government schools and 200 teachers were from private schools.

TOOL

The investigator developed a questionnaire for the purpose of studying the attitude of teachers towards children with LD. The tool consisted of two parts: Part A and B. Part A contained items correlated to the basic data of the respondents and Part B had a total of 31 statements on specific data related to attitude of teachers related to LD in children, for which the responses were to be marked using the 5-point scale.

PROCEDURE

The researcher surveyed the primary schools in Urban Bangalore district. Sixty schools in total were visited by the researcher and 32 schools were randomly streamlined to be a part of the study. A total of 400 primary school teachers, of which 200 were from private schools and 200 were from government schools were selected. Official permission was obtained from the administration of the educational institutions to collect data from the teachers. Once the appointments to meet the teachers were fixed, the researcher met the teachers during their free time, explained the significance of the study and requested them for a date and time to collect the data as per their convenience. According to the specified date and timings, the investigator administered the scale and collected the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from the respondents was tabulated and statistically analyzed by applying percentage, mean, standard deviation, chi square and 't' test. Table 1 shows the classification of respondents by gender.

Table 1
Classification of respondents by gender

n=400

Gender	Respondents						χ^2 Value
	Government Schools		Private Schools		Combined		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Male	15	7.50	10	5.00	25	6.30	1.07 ^{NS}
Female	185	92.50	190	95.00	375	93.70	
Total	200	100.00	200	100.00	400	100.00	

NS: Non-significant

 $\chi^2 (0.05, 1df) = 3.841$

Table 1 describes the classification of respondents by gender. In case of government schools, a higher percentage of respondents (92.50%) were females whereas only 7.50 percent of them were male teachers.

With regard to private schools, majority of them (95.00%) were female teachers and only 5.00 percent were male teachers.

The combined results showed that majority of respondents (93.70%) were female teachers. However, the respondents' gender of the government and private schools showed no significant differences as indicated by the chi-square value. The Chi-square value found to be 1.07.

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents based on variable - Age.

Table 2
Classification of respondents by age

n=400

Age group (years)	Respondents						χ^2 Value
	Government schools		Private schools		Combined		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
21-30	35	17.50	42	21.00	77	19.30	4.74 ^{NS}
31-40	64	32.00	50	25.00	114	28.50	
41-50	57	28.50	50	25.00	107	26.70	
51-60	44	22.00	58	49.00	102	25.50	
Total	200	100.00	200	100.00	400	100.00	

NS : Non-significant

$\chi^2 (0.05,3df) = 7.815$

It is inferred from table 2 that majority of respondents (32.00%) from government schools belonged to the age group of 31 to 40 years followed by 28.50 percent between the age group of 41 to 50 years, 22.00 percent of them were in the 51 to 60 years age group and 17.50 percent of them belonged to the age group of 21-30 years.

Among the private school respondents, majority of them (49.00%) were in the 51 to 60 years age group, an equal percentage of them (25.00%) belonged to 31 to 40 years and 41 to 50 years age group and 21.00 percent of them were in the age group of 21 to 30 years.

Combined results showed that majority of respondents (28.50%) were from the age group of 31 to 40 years. The chi-square test value was found to be 4.74 and showed no significant difference in the age group of government and private school respondents.

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents based on the grades they teach at school.

Table 3
Classification of respondents by the grades they teach for children in the classroom

n=400

Teaching children	Respondents						χ^2 Value
	Government schools		Private schools		Combined		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Grade 1	23	11.50	24	12.00	47	11.80	4.86 ^{NS}
Grade 2	39	19.50	26	13.00	65	16.20	
Grade 3	33	16.50	33	16.50	66	16.50	
Grade 4	36	18.00	31	15.50	67	16.70	
Combination	69	34.50	86	43.00	155	38.80	
Total	200	100.00	200	100.00	400	100.00	

NS : Non-significant

$\chi^2 (0.05,4df) = 9.488$

Table 3 illustrates the classification of respondents by the grades (standards) they teach at schools. From the table it is inferred that among the respondents from government schools, majority of them (34.50%) were teaching in a

combination of the grades mentioned above in the table followed by 19.50 percent teaching the 2nd grade, 18.00 percent engaging the 4th grade, 16.50 percent of them educating the 3rd grade children and 11.50 percent of respondents teaching the 1st grade children.

With reference to the respondents from private schools, a higher percentage of them (43.0%) were teaching a combination of the grades as mentioned above, 16.50 percent were teaching for 3rd grade, 15.50 percent were teaching the 4th grade, 13.00 percent educating children in the 2nd grade and 12.00 percent of them engaging children from the 1st grade.

Combined results showed that majority of respondents (38.80%) from government and private schools were teaching a combination of all the grades. However, there is no significant association found between the classification of respondents by the grades they teach. The chi-square test value is found to be 4.86 and is statistically non-significant.

The respondents' attitude levels with regard to LD in children is shown in table 4.

Table 4
Respondents' level of attitude related to LD in children

n=400

Attitude Level	Respondents						χ^2 Value
	Government schools		Private Schools		Combined		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Unfavorable (31-77 score)	62	31.00	0	0.00	62	15.50	73.37**
Moderate (78-116 score)	138	69.00	200	100.00	338	84.50	
Favorable (117-155 score)	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	
Total	200	100.00	200	100.00	400	100.00	

** Significant at 1% level,

$\chi^2 (0.01, 1df) = 6.635$

The above table reveals the respondents' attitude level related to LD in children. A chi-square analysis was made to test the spread of scores on different levels of attitude of the government and private school respondents related to LD in children. A statistically significant association was found between the level of attitude among the government and private school respondents. The chi-square value being 73.37 was found to be significant at 1% level.

It was hypothesized that the primary school teachers from government and private schools will have a moderate level of attitude towards children with LD.

In the study, the attitude of respondents towards LD in children has been categorized into three levels. The score between 31-77 has been categorized as an indicator of an unfavorable attitude, scores 78-116 represent moderate level of attitudes and scores between 117 - 155 categorized as a favorable level of attitude.

It is revealed that majority of respondents from government school (69.00%) had a moderate level of attitude, 31.00 percent of them had unfavorable attitude level and none of the respondents showed a favorable level of attitude towards LD in children.

With reference to private school respondents, cent percent (100.00%) showed moderate level of attitude whereas none of them had an unfavorable or a favorable level of attitude towards LD in children.

The combined results showed that 84.50 percent of respondents from both government and private schools had moderate level of attitude thereby accepting the hypothesis postulated for the study. The obtained results are contradictory to the findings of the study conducted by Shari and Mysore in 2016, which revealed that the teachers had less favorable attitude towards children with LD in regular schools.

Table 5 depicts data on the respondents' overall mean attitude scores related to LD in children.

Table 5
Respondents' overall mean attitude scores related to LD in children

n=400

No.	Respondents	Statements	Max. Score	Scores				't' Test
				Mean	SD	Mean (%)	SD (%)	
1	Government (n=200)	31	155	82.32	8.27	53.10	5.30	19.81**
2	Private (n=200)	31	155	98.58	8.20	63.60	5.30	
	Combined (n=400)	31	155	90.45	11.57	58.40	7.50	

** Significant at 1% level,

t (0.01,398df) = 2.58

Table 5 indicates the analysis of the respondents' overall mean attitude scores related to LD in children. The observed mean attitude scores of government and private school respondents differ significantly and the 't' value was found to be 19.81, which is highly significant beyond 5% level.

It is clearly depicted in the table that the private school respondents had a higher attitude mean score percentage (M = 63.60%) when compared to government school respondents (M = 53.10%) on LD in children. However, it was found that both the groups had a moderate attitude towards LD in children.

Table 6 depicts data for the association between demographic variables and pre-test attitude level of the government school respondents towards LD in children.

Table 6

Association between demographic variables and pre-test attitude level of the government school respondents towards LD in children

n=200

Demographic Variables	Category	Sample	Attitude level				χ^2 Value	P Value
			Unfavorable		Moderate			
			N	%	N	%		
Gender	Male	15	9	60.00	6	40.00	5.83*	P<0.05 (3.841)
	Female	185	56	30.30	132	71.40		
Age group (years)	21-30	35	7	20.00	28	80.00	8.27*	P<0.05 (7.815)
	31-40	64	22	34.40	42	65.60		
	41-50	57	16	28.10	41	71.90		
	51-60	44	17	38.60	27	61.40		
Teaching children	Grade 1	23	8	34.80	15	65.20	11.59*	P<0.05 (9.488)
	Grade 2	39	13	33.30	26	66.70		
	Grade 3	33	6	18.20	27	81.80		
	Grade 4	36	13	36.10	23	63.90		
	Combination	69	22	31.90	47	68.10		

* Significant at 5% level

NS : Non-significant

Table 6 describes data on the association between demographic

variables and pre-test level of attitude related to LD in children among the government school respondents. When gender was considered as a variable, it was found that majority of the male respondents (60.00%) had unfavorable attitudes and a slightly lower percentage (40.00%) had moderate attitude regarding LD in children. Among the female respondents, it was seen that a higher percentage (71.4%) had moderate attitudes and 30.3 percent of them had unfavorable attitudes regarding LD in children. The chi-square value 5.83 was found to be significant at 5% level and the p value 3.841 was found to be lesser than the table value.

When the values for age and the attitude level among the government school respondents was measured, it was seen that most 21 to 30-year-old respondents (80.00%) had moderate attitudes and 20.00% of them had an unfavorable attitude regarding the topic at hand. Among the 41 to 50-year-old respondents, similar results were seen with most of them having moderate attitudes (71.9%) and 28.1 percent having unfavorable attitudes. When the 31 to 40-year-old respondents were taken into consideration, it was seen that 65.6 percent of respondents had moderate level of attitude, whereas 34.4 percent had an unfavorable attitude. When the responses collected from 51 to 60-year-old respondents were tabulated, it was seen that a higher percentage of respondents (61.4%) had moderate attitudes and that 38.6 percent of had unfavorable attitudes regarding LD in children. The chi square value for age as a demographic variable and the level of attitude among the respondents was found to be 8.27, significant at 5% level. The calculated P value (7.815) was lesser than the table value.

When the grade that the respondents teach was measured as a variable associated with the attitude level the respondents possess, it was seen that majority of the respondents teaching children of 1st grade (65.2%) from government schools had moderate levels of attitude related to LD in children, and 34.8 percent had unfavorable attitudes. Among the respondents handling second grade children, majority (66.7%) had moderate levels of attitude and 33.3 percent had unfavorable attitudes. The scores of the respondents teaching the third grade indicated that 81.8 percent seemed to have

moderate attitude and 18.2 percent had unfavorable attitudes about LD. When the results from the respondents teaching the 4th grade children were tabulated, it was seen that majority of them (63.9%) had moderate levels of attitude and 36.1 percent had unfavorable attitudes regarding the LD in children. When the data from respondents teaching a combination of grades were considered, it was seen that most of them (68.1%) had moderate attitude and 31.9 percent had unfavorable attitudes related to LD in children. The chi square value 11.59 was found to be significant at 5 % level and the p value found (9.488) was lesser than the table value.

When the above-mentioned categories were tested for an influence of demographic variables and attitude level of the government school respondents, it was indicated that there is a need of an educational program to improve the level of attitude among respondents in dealing with LD in children. There is a significant association found with regard to gender, age group and teaching children of different grades among primary school teachers.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that the respondents from both government and private schools had a moderate level of attitude towards LD in children. Learning disability affects the child's learning and processing capacities. The attitude of the people around children with LD will either make or break their willingness to work harder and push to help achieve and complete the level of education they desire. The attitude of especially the teachers is of highest importance as how they view the child and choose to deal with the challenges the children with LD throw at them every now and then will affect the child's confidence, success and interest in education.

The research highlighted the need for bringing an awareness and positive attitude among primary school teachers in dealing with LD in children into the educational mainstream.

REFERENCES

- Lokanandha .G. Reddy, R Ramar and A. Kusuma. (2016). Learning disabilities – A practical guide to Practitioners. Discovery Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, India, pp: 02.
- Mehra, Vivek, Thapa, Komilla, Van Der Aalsvoort, Geerdina and Pandey, Janak. (2008). Perspectives on Learning Disabilities in India – Current practices and Prospects. Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi. Pp: 24.
- Saini, B. L. (2002). Education of exceptional children. Ludhiana: Tandon Publications, pp:56-67.
- Shari M., Mysore. N. Vranda, (2016) Primary School Teachers towards Children with Learning Disabilities, Journal Indian Association of Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Volume 12(4), pp:323-335.
- Werts. G. Margret, Culatta. A. Richard and Tomphins. R. James. (2011) Fundamentals of Special Education, - What Every Teachers Needs to Know, Third Edition, Pearson Education. Inc, Publishing as Prentice Hall, PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd, Delhi, pp:121.

WEBSITE REFERENCES

- <https://thebl.com/culture/thomas-edison-the-mother-makes-the-genius.html>
- www.understood.org
- www.ldonline.org

