

Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of Primary School Teachers in Dealing with Learning Disabilities among Children

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ABSTRACT

Learning disabilities are neurologically-based processing problems. These processing problems can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing and/or mathematics. They can also hinder higher level skills such as organization, time planning, abstract reasoning, long or short-term memory and attention. It is essential to realize that learning disabilities can affect an individual's life beyond academics and can impact relationships with family, friends and in the workplace. The present study aimed at assessing and comparing the knowledge, attitude and practices followed by primary school teachers of government and private schools in dealing with learning disabilities among children. A questionnaire was developed by the investigator to study the demographic characteristics and to assess and compare the knowledge, attitude and practices followed by teachers in dealing with learning disability among primary school children. The sample comprised of 60 primary school teachers, 30 teachers from 4 government and 30 teachers from 4 private schools. The statistical analysis was carried out by applying percentages, mean, standard deviation, chi square and 't' test. The findings of the study revealed that, majority of the respondents (50%) from private schools had moderate level of knowledge, whereas 43.3 percent of respondents from government schools showed inadequate knowledge on learning disabilities. It was found that respondents of government schools in an equal percentage (40 & 40) had unfavorable and moderate level of attitude about learning disabilities whereas, among the respondents of private schools, 46.6 percent of them had moderate attitudes and 36.7 percent of them had a favorable attitude about learning disability in children. It was also revealed that majority of both respondents from private schools (50 %) and government schools (44.4%) had moderate level of practices in dealing with children with learning disability.

1. Introduction

A learning disability is a neurological disorder. In simple terms, a learning disability results from a difference in the way a person's brain is 'wired'. Children with learning disabilities are as smart as their peers. But they may have difficulty in reading, writing, spelling, reasoning, recalling and / or organizing information if left to figure out things by themselves or if taught in conventional ways.

According to the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (2001), "Learning Disabilities refer to a variety of disorders that affect the acquisition, retention, understanding, organization or use of verbal and / or non-verbal information. These disorders result from impairments in one or more psychological processes related to learning, in combination with otherwise average abilities essential for thinking and reasoning".

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2016) states that 'Learning Disabilities' is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical skills. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be

due to central nervous system dysfunction and occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not, by themselves, constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other disabilities (for example, sensory impairment, intellectual disabilities, emotional disturbance), or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural or linguistic differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences.

Learning disability affects children in many ways from the time of preschool:

- Speaks later than most peers.
- Has pronunciation difficulties.
- Slow vocabulary growth, often unable to find the right word.
- Confuses basic words (*run, eat, want*).
- Has trouble learning numbers, alphabet, days of the week, colors, shapes.
- Slow to learn and understand the connection between letters and sounds.
- Difficulty with rhyming words.
- Extremely restless and loses focus easily.
- Difficulty in following directions or routines.

- Fine motor skills slow to develop.
- Trouble mingling with peers.

Learning disabled children studying in grades 1-4 experience the following:

- Makes consistent reading and spelling errors including letter reversals (*b/d*), inversions (*m/w*), transpositions (*felt/left*), and substitutions (*house/home*).
- Transposes number sequences and confuses arithmetic signs (+, -, x, /, =).
- Slow to recall facts.
- Slow to learn new skills, depends heavily on memorization.
- Impulsive, has difficulty in planning.
- Unstable pencil grip.
- Trouble learning time.
- Poor coordination, unaware of physical surroundings, prone to accidents.

A teacher plays an important role in contributing to improve the educational experiences of a learning-disabled child. He/she can seize the opportunity to make enormous differences in a child's life. Early intervention and remedial instruction can help struggling learners speed up their basic skills. This extra support from the teachers can help them catch up to their peers and improve in their academic achievements. In the light of above discussion, an attempt has been made to study the attitude of primary school teachers in dealing with learning disabilities among children.

2. Methodology

Objectives:

1. To assess and compare the knowledge of government and private school teachers in dealing with learning disability among children.
2. To assess and compare the attitude of government and private school teachers in dealing with learning disability among children.
3. To assess and compare the practices followed by government and private school teachers in dealing with learning disability among children.

Hypothesis:

1. There is a significant difference in the knowledge of government and private school teachers in dealing with learning disabled children.
2. There is a significant difference in the attitude of government and private school teachers in dealing with learning disabled children.
3. There is a significant difference in the practices followed by government and private school teachers in dealing with learning disabled children.

Selection of sample and sampling technique:

Purposive random sampling technique was adopted. The total sample comprised of 60 primary school teachers, of which 30 were from government and 30 were from private schools. The samples were drawn from the following schools in Bangalore City:

Sl. No:	Name of Government Schools:	Name of Private Schools:
1.	St. Anthony's School, Tilak Nagar.	Colonel Hill English High School, Shivajinagar.
2.	Sri Kumaraswamy Vidya Mandir, Hanumanthnagar.	Huda National School, Broadway center, Shivajinagar.
3.	Bharath Matha Vidya Mandir, Hanumanthnagar	B.E.S.T Nursery, Primary and High School, Shivajinagar.
4.	Government Lower Primary School, Jayanagar	St. Mary's Girls Primary School, Shivajinagar.

Tool:

A questionnaire was developed by the investigator for the purpose of studying knowledge, attitude and practices of government and private school teachers towards learning disability among children. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part A and B. Part A covered the basic data with regard to gender, age, education and teaching experience. Part B contained specific data related to knowledge, attitude and practices of government and private school teachers in dealing with learning disability among children. The tool comprised of three sections with 105 statements. Section I consisted of 41 statements related to knowledge, giving the respondents three options to mark their responses viz, "Yes", "Not sure" and "No". Section II had 33 statements related to the attitude, with "Strongly agree", "Agree", "Not sure", "Disagree" and "Strongly disagree" as response options and section III had 31 statements, providing the options "Always", "Sometimes", "Not sure", "Rarely" and "Never" to mark their responses.

Procedure:

The investigator surveyed various schools of which eight schools were selected for the study in Bangalore city. Official permission was taken from the administrators of the institution seeking permission to collect the data from the teachers. Then the investigator met the teachers, explained the significance of the study and asked them to give their preference date and time to administer the scale. As per the specified dates given by the teachers, the investigator administered the scale giving them sufficient time to provide their responses.

3. 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. Table1 shows the classification of respondents by gender.

TABLE 1 Classification of respondents by gender
N=60

Gender	Respondents						χ ² Value
	Government		Private		Combined		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Male	2	6.7	1	3.3	3	5.0	

Female	28	93.3	29	96.7	57	95.0	0.35 ^{NS}
Total	30	100.0	30	100.0	60	100.0	

NS: Non-significant $\chi^2 (0.05,1df) = 3.841$

It is inferred from Table 1 that, with regard to teachers working in government schools, majority were females (93.3%) and only 6.7 percent were males. Whereas in case of teachers working in private schools, a higher percentage of them (96.7%) were females and only 3.3 percent were males.

significant association with government and private schools among teachers. The chi-square value found to be 0.35.

The classification of respondents by age group is shown in Table – 2.

Combined results showed that majority of respondents (95%) were females. However, gender did not have any

TABLE 2 Classification of respondents by age
N=60

Age group (years)	Respondents						χ^2 Value
	Government		Private		Combined		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
20-39	11	36.7	11	36.7	22	36.7	0.00 ^{NS}
40-59	19	63.3	19	63.3	38	63.3	
Total	30	100.0	30	100.0	60	100.0	

NS: Non-significant $\chi^2 (0.05,1df) = 3.841$

The above table shows the classification of respondents by age. It is inferred that equal percentage of respondents from government and private schools (63.3%) were between the age group of 40-59 years followed by 36.7 percent of them were from between the age group of 20-39 years.

Combined results showed that majority of respondents (63.3%) were from the age group of 40-59 years. The chi-square test value was found to be non-significant.

The respondents based on the educational background is shown in Table- 3.

TABLE 3 Classification of respondents by their educational qualification
N=60

Educational Qualification	Respondents						χ^2 Value
	Government		Private		Combined		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
SSLC	4	13.3	0	0.0	4	6.7	6.44 ^{NS}
PUC	5	16.7	6	20.0	11	18.3	
Degree	15	50.0	17	56.7	32	53.3	
Post graduate	6	20.0	7	23.3	13	21.7	
Total	30	100.0	30	100.0	60	100.0	

NS: Non-significant $\chi^2 (0.05,3df) = 7.815$

Table 3 depicts information on the educational qualification of respondents. Among teachers working in government schools, a higher percentage (50%) were degree holders followed by 20 percent of them being post graduates, 16.7 percent of them completed their Pre-University Course and only 13.3 percent of them studied up to SSLC. Between respondents working in private schools, majority of them

(56.7%) were degree holders whereas 23.3 percent had studied till post graduate level and 20 percent of them studied up to PUC.

The combined results showed that majority (53.3%) of them were degree holders. The test showed non-significant results ($\chi^2=6.44$).

TABLE 4 Classification of respondents by teaching experience
N=60

Teaching experience (Number of years)	Respondents						χ^2 Value
	Government		Private		Combined		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1-5 years	7	23.3	12	40.0	19	31.7	2.25 ^{NS}
6-15 years	12	40.0	11	36.7	23	38.3	
Above 16 years	11	36.7	7	23.3	18	30.0	
Total	30	100.0	30	100.0	60	100.0	

NS: Non-significant $\chi^2 (0.05,2df) = 5.991$

Table 4 represents data on the number of years of teaching experience of respondents working in government and private schools. In the case of respondents working in government schools, 40 percent of them had 6-15 years of teaching experience, followed by 36.7 percent respondents having a teaching experience of above 16 years and 23.3 percent having 1-5 years of experience.

With regard to respondents working in private schools, majority of them (40.0%) had 1-5 years of experience in teaching, followed by 36.7 percent had 6-15 years of experience and 23.3 percent of them had above 16 years of experience in teaching. Combined results showed that, 38.3 percent of respondents had 6-15 of experience in teaching. The chi square value found to be 2.25, which is non-significant.

TABLE 5 Respondents' knowledge on learning disabilities in children
N=60

Knowledge	Respondents						χ ² Value
	Government		Private		Combined		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Inadequate	13	43.3	7	23.3	20	33.3	2.87 ^{NS}
Moderate	10	33.4	15	50.0	25	41.7	
Adequate	7	23.3	8	26.7	15	25.0	
Total	30	100.0	30	100.0	60	100.0	

NS: Non-significant

χ² (0.05,2df) = 5.991

The above table shows the respondents' knowledge on learning disabilities among children. It is observed that majority of respondents from government schools (43.3%) had inadequate knowledge on learning disability followed by 33.4 percent had moderate knowledge on the topic and 23.3 percent had adequate knowledge about learning disability in children.

In the case of respondents from private schools, 50 percent of them had moderate level of knowledge about learning disabilities, 26.7 percent of them had adequate level and 23.3 percent of them had inadequate knowledge on learning disability.

Majority of the respondents from private schools had moderate level of knowledge, whereas 43.3% of respondents from government schools showed inadequate knowledge on learning disabilities.

Combined results showed that 41.7 percent of respondents had moderate level of knowledge on learning disability. The test found to be non-significant with 2.87 value. There is no significant association found between the government and private school teachers in terms of knowledge about learning disability among children, thereby rejecting the hypothesis set for the study.

TABLE 6 Respondents' attitude on learning disabilities in children
N=60

Attitude	Respondents						χ ² Value
	Government		Private		Combined		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Unfavorable	12	40.0	5	16.7	17	28.3	6.13*
Moderate	12	40.0	14	46.6	20	33.3	
Favorable	6	20.0	11	36.7	23	38.4	
Total	30	100.0	30	100.0	60	100.0	

* Significant at 5% level

χ² (0.05,2df) = 5.991

Table 6 describes data on the respondents' attitude level towards learning disabilities among children. It was found that equal percentage of respondents working in government schools (40% & 40%) had unfavorable and moderate attitudes about learning disabled children, and 20 percent of them had a favorable attitude.

With regard to respondents working in private schools, 46.6 percent of them had moderate level of attitude, 36.7 percent of them had favorable attitude about learning disability in children. The findings of the present study supported the

research work carried out by Shari and Mysore (2016) which revealed that respondents expressed favorable attitude towards learning disabilities.

Combined results showed that majority of respondents (38.4%) of government and private schools had a favorable attitude about learning disabilities among children. The chi square value found to be 6.13. The statistical results showed that there is a significant association in the attitude of government and private school respondents, thereby accepting the hypothesis postulated for the study.

TABLE 7 Respondents' practices in dealing with learning disabilities in children
N=60

Practice level	Respondents						χ ² Value
	Government		Private		Combined		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	

Low	7	23.3	9	30.0	16	26.7	1.39^{NS}
Moderate	13	44.4	15	50.0	28	46.6	
High	10	33.3	6	20.0	16	26.7	
Total	30	100.0	30	100.0	60	100.0	

NS: Non-significant

 $\chi^2 (0.05, 2df) = 5.991$

Table 7 depicts the respondents practice level in dealing with learning disabilities among children. A higher percentage of respondents from government schools (44.4%) had moderate level of practices, 33.3 percent of them had high level of practice and 23.3 percent of them had low level of practices in dealing with learning disabilities among children.

With regard to respondents working at private schools, majority of them (50.0%) had moderate level, 30 percent of them had a low level and only 20 percent of them had high level of practices in dealing with children with learning disability.

Combined results showed that majority of the respondents (46.6%) showed moderate level of practice in dealing with learning disabilities among children. The chi-square value found to be non-significant result, thereby rejecting the hypothesis set for the study.

4. Conclusion

The findings of the study revealed that majority of government and private school teachers showed moderate level of knowledge on learning disability. A higher percentage of respondents from government and private schools had an unfavorable and moderate level of attitude in dealing with learning disabilities among children. Majority of respondents from both government and private schools had moderate level of practice in dealing with learning disabilities among children.

A learning disability cannot be cured or fixed; it is a lifelong challenge. However, with appropriate support and intervention, children with learning disabilities can achieve success in school, at work, in relationships, and in the community. Special educators can be appointed in normal schools to assist the teachers in handling children with learning disability.

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