

A Study on Awareness of Learning Disability Among Parents of Elementary School Children

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Abstract

This study investigates parents' awareness of elementary school children's learning disability. Learning Disabilities are problems that affect the brain's ability to receive, process, analyse, or store information. It makes difficult for a student to learn as quickly as someone unaffected by a learning disability. It refers to a group of disorders that affect a broad range of academic and functional skills including the ability to speak, listen, read, write, spell, reason & organize information. Learning disorder is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in acquiring and using listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though it may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or environmental influences (e.g., cultural differences, insufficient/inappropriate instruction, psychogenic factors), it is not the direct result of those conditions or influences.

However, parents' awareness and understanding of learning disabilities play a vital role in this process. The major objective of this study is to assess the level of awareness and knowledge of learning disabilities among parents of elementary school children and find out the significant gap in parent's awareness and understanding of learning disabilities.

Keywords: *Learning Disability, Awareness, Elementary School Children, Parental Stress, Delayed Identification.*

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Introduction

Learning disabilities are neurologically grounded conditions that affect an existent's capability to reuse and retain information, leading to academic achievement and diurnal life challenges. "According to the APA, a literacy disability is a condition that results in an individual performing considerably lower than expected on achievement tests. This is generally two standard diversions below what is anticipated for their age, grade, and established intelligence. Roughly 20 percent of the population has a literacy disability". It is a lifelong disability affects people with average or above-average intelligence. Learning disorders refers to a variety of diseases that affect a person's capability to gain, flash back, recall, and organize the use of information (Lyon et.al., 2003).

Specific literacy disability is another name for learning disability. Specific literacy disability (SpLD) is a general term that refers to a miscellaneous group of neurobehavioral diseases manifested by significant unanticipated, exact, and patient difficulties in the accession and use of effective reading (Dyslexia), jotting (Dysgraphia) or fine (Dyscalculia) capacities despite conventional instruction, complete senses, normal intelligence, proper provocation, and acceptable sociocultural occasion (Sunil et.al., 2007). Learning disabilities are diseases that alter the use, understanding, association, and retention of verbal and verbal information. These neurodevelopmental diseases can lead to difficulties in perceiving and recycling verbal and verbal data (Chieffo et.al., 2023). More specifically, the US Department of Education defines a specific literacy disability as a difficulty in one or further introductory cerebral processes that make listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or fine computations delicate for an existent (IDEA, 2014).

Every child has a right to receive help in literacy according to their capacity. Every nation and society must give equal educational rights to every child, whether they are normal or abnormal children. Children having difficulty in literacy are normal but slow learners due to some literacy issues, because of this, they are not quick learners. Two aspects are committed to the equivalency of occasion, fair access to the training and education as well as equal success in the training and education. Children may have the possibility of great difficulty in learning especially in areas of different subjects. It is essential to understand that this type of disability can be veritably problematic to a child's life and can affect him or her along with family, and the educational system. It happens when the information is not reused duly, making it delicate for a child to learn. The parents or the preceptors know how to educate children who are going

through this problem when the child with literacy problems are occasionally surprised because his/ her parents were also going through the same situation. These children have difficulties in only some areas of literacy, though they have other different skills in other areas of their interests. This happens when the child's gift is not concentrated whereas only the unruly situation of the child is concentrated (Abbasi et.al., 2023).

Parenting children with learning disabilities requires high knowledge and access to resources, information, and services. Their lack of perseverance and determination missed openings for early intervention and remediation for the children. The incognizance of these issues increased frustration and stress for parents and children. However, they are at threat of developing low self-esteem and frustration, and depression, if children with learning disabilities are not handled with applicable interventions. Parents know their children better than anyone differently and they are the first people to face any difficulty faced by their children. Therefore, determining the mindfulness of learning disabilities among parents of elementary school children becomes imperative which will help them to recognize early signs of it to give applicable treatment to the child and help further complications (Hohlfeld et.al., 2018).

Review of Literature

The experiences of students with learning disabilities in Australian universities have been a subject of increasing concern and research. Janette Ryan's study employed a qualitative approach to explore the personal experiences and challenges faced by this population within the university environment. The study's findings reveal critical insights into the inadequacies of existing support services, the lack of awareness among students about available resources, and the general inaccessibility of university settings for those with learning disabilities (Couzens et.al., 2015).

Importantly, the proportion of university students with learning disabilities is expected to remain high, as more and more students with these conditions graduate from high school and continue their education (Lauffer, 1999). As such, universities must actively examine how to accommodate and support this growing demographic. Ryan's study incorporated detailed case studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes, support systems, and barriers encountered by students with learning disabilities. This approach allowed for a deeper exploration of these students' personal experiences and challenges. Social skills instruction is crucial for many students, including those with learning disabilities (Francis et.al., 2013).

Individuals with learning disabilities often struggle with social competence and interpersonal skills, which can negatively impact their academic and personal outcomes (Greca, 1987).

Despite the implementation of new mathematics curricula and teaching approaches, such as Realistic Mathematics Education, children with Mathematics Learning Disabilities continue to face significant and persistent difficulties in developing mathematical proficiency (Hornung et. al., 2014). The existing research highlights the need for a comprehensive understanding of the diverse cognitive and metacognitive profiles exhibited by young children with MLD, as well as the development of effective assessment and intervention strategies to support their learning.

The study by Desoete et al. found that MLD can be highly persistent, often leading to continued challenges with mathematics well into adolescence and adulthood. The researchers emphasized the importance of a well-developed assessment and intervention process, as MLD can manifest in a wide range of individual cognitive and metacognitive profiles among young children (Karagiannakis & Baccaglini-Frank, 2014). Similarly, the study by Malusu and Kamau-Kang'ethe revealed that while teachers were aware of inclusive education practices, they often lacked the professional preparation and specific interventions necessary to effectively support students with learning disabilities in inclusive settings (Karagiannakis & Baccaglini-Frank, 2014). The findings from these studies suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing MLD is unlikely to be effective. Instead, a more nuanced understanding of the diverse cognitive and metacognitive profiles associated with MLD, as well as the development of targeted intervention strategies, is crucial for improving the academic outcomes of children with these challenges (Lewis, 2014).

Findings

Parental awareness and limited knowledge

Parents may have limited understanding of learning disabilities, their effects, and how to support their children. Parents may not be aware of different types of LD and how they affect their children's learning. Children may face symptoms such as difficulty with reading comprehension, trouble with mathematical concepts, struggling to write coherent sentences, avoiding tasks that require reading or writing, and difficulty with time management and organization. However, parents may sometimes be unaware of these symptoms. Without awareness and understanding, parents may not provide appropriate support, accommodations,

or interventions, which can exacerbate their child's struggles and impact their academic and personal growth. Parents need to educate themselves about learning disabilities, recognize their symptoms, and seek professional help to ensure that their child receives proper support and accommodation. Despite reporting high educational situations and influx, Indian parents of children with LD demonstrated a limited understanding of LD, allowing their child to outgrow the difficulty, which negatively impacted the support they handed to their child. Parents play a vital role in supporting children with learning disabilities; however, little is known about their understanding of LD. The number of parents with the individual process and the services their children admit post-diagnosis varies extensively.

Parental Stress

Each parent dreams of making their own children successful in their academics. Therefore, children with learning disabilities take time to fulfil their academic objectives, unlike other students of the same age. Parental stress related to learning disabilities in children can be a significant source of emotional distress, anxiety, and frustration. Parents may feel overwhelmed by the demands of supporting their children's learning needs, navigating the educational system, and advocating for their children's rights. They may also worry about their children's future, academic achievements, and social relationships. Stress can be exacerbated by feelings of guilt, shame, or inadequacy, particularly if parents struggle to understand their child's learning disabilities or feel powerless to help.

Parental stress among parents of elementary school children with learning disabilities (LD) is a significant issue because of the unique challenges they face. These parents often feel overwhelmed by the need to support their children's learning, especially when dealing with conditions such as dyslexia, ADHD, or dysgraphia. Academic demands coupled with difficulties in accessing adequate resources or individualized education plans (IEPs) can amplify stress levels. Social and emotional concerns, such as a child's ability to form friendships, avoid bullying, and maintain self-esteem, are constant sources of worry.

Additionally, the time and energy required for tutoring, therapy, or advocacy often leaves parents feeling burnt out, especially when trying to balance these responsibilities with work and family life. The financial strain from costly private programs, therapies, or limited insurance coverage further exacerbates this burden. Many parents also experience a lack of support from both personal networks and school systems, leaving them feeling isolated or even blamed. The uncertainty about their child's progress and future adds another layer of

anxiety. However, strategies such as seeking education about LDs, joining support groups, accessing professional counselling, collaborating with schools, and prioritizing self-care can help parents effectively manage these challenges. Building strong support networks and advocating for appropriate accommodation are crucial steps in alleviating stress and ensuring the well-being of both parents and their children.

Parents may see their child as a reflection of themselves, viewing their child's achievements or setbacks as indicators of their own values. Those with children who have learning disabilities (LD) frequently witness their struggles, particularly during homework, leading to ongoing emotional distress often described as a "narcissistic injury." This experience can trigger feelings of guilt and shame, which are commonly observed among parents of children with LD.

Influence of teachers on parental awareness

The research findings suggest that teachers play a vital role in shaping parental awareness of learning disabilities. When teachers communicate effectively with parents and provide regular updates on their child's progress and struggles, parents are more likely to recognize the signs of a learning disability. Teachers can help parents understand the difference between learning disabilities and poor academic performance, dispel misconceptions, and reduce stigma. Moreover, teachers can empower parents to become advocates for their children's education, providing them with knowledge and resources to support their children's learning needs. By fostering strong parent-teacher partnerships, educators can help ensure that parents are equipped to support their child's learning journey and help them reach their full potential.

Delayed identification of learning disability

Delayed identification of learning disabilities can have profound consequences for a child's academic trajectory and emotional well-being. Research findings suggest that children from low-income backgrounds, those with parents unfamiliar with the education system, and those with limited English proficiency are more likely to experience delayed identification. Teachers may also overlook or misattribute early warning signs, leading to delayed interventions. Early identification and intervention can significantly affect academic outcomes and long-term success in individuals with learning disabilities. A child's learning disability is not recognized or diagnosed until significantly later than it should be, often occurring after noticeable

difficulties in school or other areas of life, potentially impacting their educational progress and overall development owing to the lack of early intervention.

The main areas of delayed identification of learning disabilities are lack of awareness that is parents, teachers, or healthcare providers might not recognize the signs of a learning disability, mistaking them for typical developmental challenges or behavioral issues. Stigma associated with learning disabilities is another area for the delayed identification. Some families might hesitate to seek evaluation due to concerns about labelling or potential negative impacts on their child's self-esteem. Inadequate screening practices are another reason for delayed identification of learning disabilities. Not all schools or healthcare settings routinely screen for learning disabilities, particularly in younger children. The cultural factors, language barriers or cultural differences can also complicate identification.

Significant gap in parent's awareness and understanding of learning disabilities

The prompt identification and efficient assistance of children with learning impairments (LDs) might be affected by the frequently large knowledge and comprehension gaps among parents. The definition of learning impairment is not well understood by many parents, who frequently mistake it for intellectual disabilities, behavioral problems, or general academic difficulties. This misunderstanding may postpone early interventions that are essential to a child's social and academic growth. The lack of trustworthy information regarding LDs is a significant factor contributing to this disparity. It is possible that parents are not exposed to educational resources that clearly describe the characteristics, causes, or symptoms of learning disabilities. Cultural norms and stigma associated with impairments can also impede candid conversations and acceptance, which keeps many parents in the dark about their child's unique requirements. Misconceptions can often worsen the issue, such as thinking that the youngster would "grow out of it" or attributing difficulties to indolence or lack of effort.

This gap may worsen if parents and educators do not work together or communicate effectively. Parents may feel abandoned and unclear about what to do if educators and educational institutions do not offer concise explanations or directions regarding the issues they have noticed. Similarly, socioeconomic problems can hinder families from learning how to successfully nurture their children, such as restricted access to expert evaluations or specialized resources.

Focused efforts will be made to close this gap, such as educating the public about LDs through media campaigns, community initiatives, and workshops held in schools. Early detection and

open communication with parents and providing them with helpful guidance and tools to help them comprehend their child's situation should be a top priority for educators and medical experts. Parents can improve their ability to identify learning problems, look for suitable therapies, and speak up on their children's needs by removing these obstacles.

Conclusion

Parental awareness is of crucial importance in elementary school children's learning disabilities. Learning disabilities are neurological disorders that affect a wide range of academic and functional skills, including speaking, listening, reading, writing, reasoning, and organization. Despite their prevalence, affecting approximately 10-15% of the population, learning disabilities often go unrecognized or are misattributed. Consequently, children with learning disabilities may struggle academically, socially, and emotionally, leading to long-term consequences. Therefore, it is essential for parents to be informed and vigilant in identifying potential signs of learning disabilities, such as difficulties with reading, writing, or mathematics, and in seeking support from educators and professionals. By promoting awareness and understanding, we can ensure that children with learning disabilities receive appropriate accommodations, interventions, and support to reach their full potential and succeed in their academic journeys.

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