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A study on awareness levels of primary school teachers on learning disabilities in government schools of Telangana

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Abstract

Learning disability 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 abilities. Teachers play an important role in identifying children with learning difficulties. They are the first ones to recognize difficulties in school children. It is the responsibility of the parents and the teachers to identify the difficulties of children and not to demotivate them because of their disabilities. Hence the present study was aimed to know the awareness levels of primary school teachers on learning disabilities. An ex-post Facto research design was employed to assess the awareness levels of 60 primary school teachers on learning disabilities in government schools of Hyderabad (24) and Rangareddy (36) districts of Telangana. The major findings state that 55% of school teachers showed moderately adequate knowledge, and 38% showed inadequate knowledge. Only 10% of showed Adequate knowledge on Learning disabilities. The study concludes that there is a need to improve the knowledge of primary school teachers on LD and to enhance their basic skills in recognizing learning disability at the earliest.

Keywords: Learning disability, awareness levels, primary school teachers

Introduction

Learning disability is the disorder associated with the nervous system which hinders the learning skills such as writing, reading, calculating etc. In such cases the children would be weak in their academic performances, due to reduced concentration and attention span but they can perform well in other extracurricular activities. Learning Disability (LD) is real and a stumbling block for a nation's development process. In India around 13-14% of all school children suffer from learning disorders (Sadaket, 2009) [7]. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction and may occur across the life span. Poor school performance or scholastic backwardness is estimated to affect one in every five school children in India (Sukumaran 2011) [10] Undetected and unmanaged specific learning disability results in chronic scholastic backwardness ensue school drop outs, emotional and behavioural problems such as depression, substance abuse and social delinquency (Winters 1997) [11]. These children are labelled as failures by the society we live in but in reality, it's not that these children who have failed but it is the education system that has failed, failed in recognizing and helping them.

Teachers play an important role in any educational system. Teacher is an artist who moulds and shapes the physical, intellectual and moral power of children. In normal school, every classroom one or two can find children with learning disabilities. As teachers are the link between the children and education system, it's their level of understanding and awareness that sets the path for these children's future. Often, the children with severe learning problems enter into the special schools meant for them. But many students with LD are admitted in normal schools and they fail to succeed in their education and eventually quit school early (Gandhimathi, 2010) [5]. If these disabilities are not recognized, unnoticed, ignored and such children's need are not met in regular classrooms or special education within the school, we cannot fulfil the aim of universalization of elementary education and equalization of educational opportunity. Therefore, there is a great need to improve the knowledge levels of primary school teachers on LD and to enhance their basic skills in recognizing learning disability at the earliest.

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Need for the study

During the last decade or two, however, there has been an increasing awareness and identification of children with LD in India. Learning disability (LD) is one of the major causes of poor scholastic backwardness. Undetected and unmanaged specific LDs result in chronic scholastic backwardness ensuing school dropouts, emotional and behavioral problems such as depression, substance abuse and social delinquency. Since teachers are the ones who first encounter academic difficulties of children, their knowledge and training on LD is of utmost importance in identifying it at an initial stage and to prevent further mental and social damage. There is lack of knowledge regarding these conditions due to lack of awareness and special training courses to the teachers regarding identification of learning difficulties. Hence the present study was conducted to assess the knowledge level of primary school teachers on learning disability in Government Schools of Hyderabad and Rangareddy districts of Telangana

Review of literature

Arifa and Siraj (2019) ^[1] Conducted a descriptive study on 60 primary school teachers to assess the knowledge and attitude of primary school teachers regarding learning disabilities among children in selected schools of district Pulwama Kashmir. The study revealed that majority of teachers 73.3% had moderate knowledge on learning disability, 20.0% had inadequate knowledge regarding learning disability and only 6.7% teachers had adequate knowledge on the subject.

Alahmadi *et al.* (2019) Assessed Primary School Teacher's Knowledge of Specific Learning Disabilities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A sample of 902 primary private and public-school teachers from 78 schools across different regions of Saudi Arabia was selected using a convenience sampling technique. The study found that a majority of primary school teachers have average knowledge about specific learning disabilities. Consequently, teachers range of knowledge has statistically significant impact on their level of knowledge.

Basim *et al.* (2019) ^[2] analysed the knowledge levels on learning disability among government primary school teachers of Malappuram district, Kerala. Majority of the teachers (56%) had some knowledge about the outcome and treatment of learning disability, they lack sufficient knowledge about its concepts and causes and it is grossly insufficient for its practical application in the class room, there is a need to improve the knowledge of primary school teachers on LD and to enhance their basic skills in recognizing learning disability at the earliest.

Daniel *et al.* (2019) ^[4] Non- Experimental descriptive research design was conducted in the selected schools of Pune city. A structured questionnaire was administered on 150 primary school teachers to assess the knowledge levels of teachers on LD. The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions and each question carried one mark. Majority of the sample 57.33% had average knowledge, 41.33% samples had poor knowledge and only 1.33% sample had good knowledge regarding learning disability. Fisher's exact test was used to find out the significance with demographic variables. Only medium of instruction was significant with the findings.

Charan and Kaur (2017) ^[3] Reported that knowledge level regarding dyslexia among teachers in 10 selected schools of Punjab. Study found that 35.5% teachers had average knowledge, 29.1% had below average, 27.3% had good and very few of them had 8.2% excellent knowledge. Study also found that there is a highly significant association between

level of knowledge and socio-demographic variables i.e. age, qualification, teaching experience, marital status, areas of residence, religion and source of information

Ghimire (2017) ^[8] conducted a Descriptive cross-sectional design to assess the knowledge of primary school teachers. A structured knowledge questionnaire was developed focusing on learning disabilities. The study was carried out in 16 schools of Dharan, Nepal. About 150 primary school teachers were selected by convenience sampling technique. Majority, 52.67% of the primary school teachers had moderately adequate knowledge and 47.33% had inadequate knowledge regarding learning disabilities. There was a significant association of knowledge of primary school teachers with demographic variables such as class involved in teaching.

Shukla and Agrawal (2015) ^[9] Conducted a study on Awareness of Learning Disabilities among Teachers of Primary Schools in Haridwar region, 15 schools were selected and data was collected from 60 primary teachers from these 15 schools. The study found the low level of knowledge and awareness about learning disabilities among teachers of primary schools. Majority of the teachers 67% had no knowledge of learning disabilities. 20% teachers had little aware of learning disabilities. 11% teachers knew about the learning disabilities satisfactorily.

Objective of the study

- To know the general profile of the primary school teachers
- To assess the awareness levels of primary school teachers on learning disabilities

Materials and Methods

Research Design

An ex-post Facto research design was employed as the study aim to know the Awareness levels of primary school teachers on learning disabilities in government schools of Hyderabad and Rangareddy districts of telangana

Area of The Study: Primary schools from Hyderabad (5 schools) and Rangareddy (10 schools) district were purposively selected for conducting the present study.

Sample Selection for the Study

The sample for the study comprised of 60 government primary school teachers, the samples were selected by using Convenient Sampling Technique

Criteria for Selection of Samples

- Both male and female teachers.
- Teachers who are willing to participate in this study.
- Teachers from first class to 5th standard.
- Samples who can understand the information.

▪ **Structured Questionnaire:** To assess the knowledge regarding learning disabilities. It contains 30 multiple choice questions to assess knowledge regarding learning disabilities among the school teachers. Each question has 4 options in which one option is correct and other three options are wrong. Each correct answer carries one-mark wrong answer carries zero mark, the possible maximum mark is 30 and minimum score is zero.

Grading of Knowledge Level

- Inadequate 1-10

- Moderately adequate 11-20
- Adequate 21-30

Results

60 primary school teachers were selected for data collection from selected areas of hyderabad and ranagareddy districts of Telanagna.

Section 1

Table 1: The description of the samples according to demographic variables, (n=60)

Demographic Variables		
Age	Frequency	Percentage
26-30	10	17
31-35	18	30
36-40	22	36
Above 40	10	17
Sex		
Female	28	47
Male	32	53
Educational Qualification		
TTC	15	25
B.ED	31	52
M.ED	14	23
Experience		
Less than 5 years	4	7
5-10	13	21
10-15	28	47
15 Above	15	25
Employment		
Temporary	6	10
Permanent	54	90

Table no 1: shows the distribution of demographic data where majority of the respondents 36% were in the age group of 36-40 years, majority of the respondents (53%) were male teachers. majority of the respondents (52%) were B. ED completed, maximum number of respondents 47% of the respondents have an experience of 10-15 years, and majority of the respondents 90% were permanent staff.

Section 2

Table 1: Awareness levels of Teachers on Learning disabilities

Category	Frequency	percentage
Inadequate	23	38
Moderate	33	55
Adequate	6	10

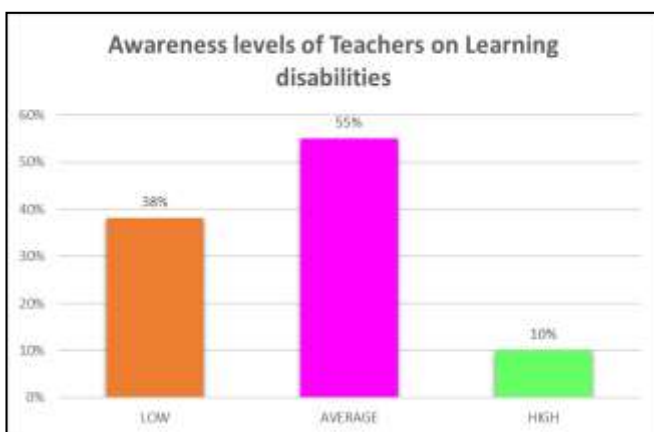


Fig 1: Awareness levels of Teachers on Learning disabilities

The above table represents the distribution of Awareness levels teachers on Learning Disabilities. The results revealed that (55%) of school teachers showed moderately adequate knowledge, and 38% showed inadequate knowledge. Only 10% of showed Adequate knowledge on Learning disabilities, Similar findings were found by (Arifa and Siraj, 2019) [1] revealed that majority of teachers 73.3% had moderate knowledge on learning disability, 20.0% had inadequate knowledge regarding learning disability and only 6.7% teachers had adequate knowledge on the subject. The findings clearly shows that majority of them were in moderate category this might be the reason because, majority of the teachers were having more than 10 years of experience, and few teachers also expressed that through experience only they were able to identify the difficulties among children apart from not attending trainings on LD. They also reported that due to lack of training programmes they were unable to identify the invisible disability.

In India, many classroom teachers in regular mainstream schools have limited knowledge of LD (Karande, 2008) [6]. As teachers play a very important role in moulding the child in their earlier stages of life. They play an important role in identifying children with learning difficulties. There is a lack of knowledge regarding these conditions due to lack of awareness and special training courses to the teachers regarding identification of learning difficulties.

Hence it is essential for the teachers to know about various problems that the child may face and help the child as well as the parents to fight against those problems. Teacher’s knowledge regarding learning disability helps them to find out any abnormalities in the child and help them to overcome these problems in their earlier stages of their life so that they can cope up with the realities and situation that they face in their further life.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that 55% of school teachers showed moderately adequate knowledge, and 38% showed inadequate knowledge. Only 10% of showed Adequate knowledge on Learning disabilities. The study recommends an educational programme for the teachers as there is a need to improve the knowledge of primary school teachers on LD and to enhance their basic skills in recognizing learning disability at the earliest.

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