

PREVALENCE: LEARNING DISABILITIES AMONG SCHOOL STUDENTS

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.47211/idcij.2014.v01i03.004>**ABSTRACT**

A large percentage of children suffer from learning disabilities. Which is a childhood disorder characterized by difficulty with certain skills such as reading or writing and they are prevalent in individuals with normal intelligence. Learning disability (LD) is not a single disorder, but includes disabilities in any of seven areas related to reading, language, and mathematics. These separate types of learning disabilities frequently co-occur with one another and with social skill deficits and emotional or behavioural disorders. The primary aim of the present study is early detection and assessment of magnitude of learning disabilities among students in order to plan and provide interventional services. For the present study, univariant descriptive research design was utilized to achieve the objectives. It was conducted in two secondary schools of Amritsar. As per the findings of the specific deficit areas, most of the students have reading disabilities than writing and mathematics disabilities.

Key Words: Learning disabilities, disorder, emotional.

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INTRODUCTION

There are 4 types of learning disorders: Reading disorder, Mathematics disorder, Disorder of written expression and Learning disorder not otherwise specified (NOS). Various studies indicate the prevalence of Learning Disability in specific areas to be 5-7% and all together at 10%. Fortunately, mild forms of learning disability are more common than severe forms. **The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD 1987)** defines learning Disabilities as a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifest in significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction and may occur across their life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviours, social perception and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Teachers either ignore the deficiency or blame it on the child's personality branding it as laziness, attitude or aggression. The child continues to graduate from one class to the other totally inept at handling the pressure of the higher classes. This also leads to behavioural problems among school students.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To assess the prevalence of learning disabilities among students.
2. To assess the prevalence of sub-types of learning disabilities among students.
3. To assess the prevalence of specific deficit areas of learning disabilities among students.
4. To determine the association of learning disabilities among students with selected sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, mother's education, father's education and type of family.
5. To prepare instructional guidelines for teachers and parents suggesting remedial measures and a proactive approach to overcome learning disabilities among students.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The present study is aimed at assessing the prevalence of learning disabilities among school students. Keeping in view the nature of the problem, concepts were adopted for the study. In present study the biological factors and environmental factors were taken that directly affect the cognitive traits and psychological traits.

METHODS AND MATERIAL

Research Approach/Design: For the present study, Non-experimental approach and descriptive research design was considered appropriate as it aimed to assess the prevalence of learning disabilities among students in selected schools of Amritsar, Punjab.

Research setting: The present study was conducted in two secondary schools of Amritsar namely Guru Teg Bahadur Public School and Guru Harkrishan International School of Amritsar.

Population: Population of the present study was the school students studying in 5th to 8th standard.

Sample Size/ Technique: The total sample size was 500 postmenopausal women. Convenient sampling technique was used to select the sample.

Variables under Study: It was including age, gender, mother's education, father's education, mother's occupation and father's occupation, type of family, residence, religion and class.

Research Tool:

Modified learning disability checklist by (National Center for learning disabilities) founded in 1977 by Pete and Carrie Rozelle as the Foundation for Children with Learning Disabilities was used. Part 1- include Socio-Demographic Profile, Part 2 checklist includes a total 40 items reading 15, writing 12 and mathematics 13.

Criterion measurement:

- Maximum learning disabilities score was 40 and minimum disabilities score was 0.
- Maximum reading disabilities score was 15 and minimum reading disabilities score was 3.
- Maximum writing disabilities score was 12 and minimum disabilities score was 3.
- Maximum mathematics disabilities score was 13 and minimum disabilities score was 3.
- Levels of Learning disability were measured as 0-25% = No Learning Disability, 26-50% = Mild Learning Disability, 51-75% = Moderate Learning Disability, 76-100% = Severe Learning Disability.

Procedure of data collection: Before commencing the task of data collection desired changes were made in the tool based on the findings of the pilot study. A formal permission was obtained from Principals of schools. The study procedure was explained and verbal information was also given to study subjects prior to the interview. The Researcher first introduced herself to the respondents and explained the purpose of the study. They were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used only for research purpose.

RESULTS:**TABLE 1: Prevalence of learning disabilities among students N=500**

Degree of learning disabilities	n	%	Mean	SD
No disability	375	75	2.61	1.31
Mild	86	17.2	3.99	1.51
Moderate	27	5.4	7.89	1.21
Severe	12	2.4	11.00	1.35

Maximum disabilities score = 40

Minimum disabilities score = 0

Table 1 depicts the prevalence of learning disabilities among students. It shows that most of them **75 %** had no learning disabilities followed by 17.2 % students with mild learning disabilities, while 5.4 % students showed moderate learning disabilities and only 2.4 % students had severe learning disabilities. Hence it is concluded that mild learning disabilities are more widely spread common as compared to moderate and severe learning disabilities.

TABLE – 2: Prevalence of specific deficit areas among students N=500

Deficits Areas	n	Mean	Mean Percentage	Ranking Order
Reading	177	5.53	35	I
Writing	202	5.15	32	III
Mathematics	264	5.19	33	II

Maximum disability score = 40

Minimum disability score = 10

Table No. 2 depict the specific deficit areas of learning disabilities i.e reading, writing and mathematics. The most prominent disability was found to be the reading disability which affected 35 % of the sample of 500 students. Mathematics disability prevailed among 33% while writing was disability 32 % of the sample.

Association of learning disabilities among students with selected sociodemographic variables such as age, gender, mother's education, father's education and type of family.

In order to assess association among learning disabilities and sociodemographic variables chi square was computed and findings depicted non-significant associations among learning disabilities and all sociodemographic variables except writing disability and parent's education, mild mathematics disability and 11-12 yrs age group and mathematics disability and class of the student where findings showed statistically significant at p value 0.05.

DISCUSSION:

The present study has revealed that the total prevalence of mild learning disabilities was 17.2% and severe learning disabilities were 2.4 % in the selected schools. Similar findings were also reported by **Sadaket Malik Bhalessa Doda J&K (2009)** In India, around 13 to 14 % of all school children suffer from learning disorders. According to study results the most prominent disability was found to be the reading disability which affected 35 % of the sample of 500 students. These findings are consistent with findings of study by **Fluss J et al (2008)** prevalence of reading disability was observed in 12.7% of children. In present study the majority of the students (32.6%) had mild writing disability and 7.4% students had severe writing disability. Another major finding of the present study is that more females (31.5%) have mild reading disability than male (27.2%). But these findings varied from and were inconsistent with other studies; **MiahNahri (2006)** and **Alizadeh (2005)** they revealed that the learning disorder was more common among males. In the present study the writing disability was found more common among females (42%) as compared to male (38.4%) These findings are also inconsistent with findings of **Erfani (1997)** that proved a writing disability prevalence of 20% in male and 12% in female.

CONCLUSION

It was concluded that the prevalence of learning disabilities is common in school going children. More common are reading and mathematics disabilities. There urgent steps are needed to improve the awareness of teachers and parents and early prevention, detection and treatment of learning disabilities among students. Mass level awareness programmes or media can help make the parents and teachers aware about such learning disabilities. There should be screening programmes or facilities for the students so that learning disabilities can be detected and remedial at the earliest.

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