



RESEARCH ARTICLE

**THE KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS REGARDING SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES
AMONG CHILDREN: A DESCRIPTIVE APPROACH**

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 5th, December, 2014

Received in revised form 12th, December, 2014

Accepted 6th, January, 2015

Published online 28th, January, 2015

Key words:

ABSTRACT

Background of the study

Learning disability (LD) is a general term that describes specific kinds of learning problems. A learning disability can cause a person to have trouble in learning and using certain skills. The skills most often affected are reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing maths. Learning disabilities vary from person to person, one person with learning disability may not have the same kind of learning problems as another person with learning disability. It is usually identified among preschool and primary school children although it tends to progress into adult hood.

Globally it still remains as "one of the least understood and most debated conditions that affect children. To serve the needs of the children with learning disability most effectively, all preservice teachers should have a thorough knowledge on learning disability and various instrument techniques to assist such children in general education classrooms.

Objectives

1. To determine the knowledge of teachers regarding specific learning disabilities among children in selected schools at Mangalore.
2. To determine the attitude of teachers towards specific learning disabilities among children in selected schools at Mangalore.
3. To find out the association between knowledge score and selected demographic variables.
4. To find out the association between attitude of teachers and selected demographic variables

Method

A descriptive study design was adopted to assess the knowledge and attitude among 50 school teachers in selected schools at Mangalore. The sampling technique used was non probability convenient sampling technique. The sample comprised of 50 school teachers. The tools used were demographic performa, structured knowledge questionnaire and attitude scale.

The content validity of the tool was established in consultation with experts from the field of Mental Health Nursing, Child Health Nursing, Psychiatric Medicine. Reliability of the tool was tested by using Karl Pearson's correlation co-efficient and it was found to be reliable. Pilot study was conducted to find out the feasibility of the study. Data collected from the samples were analysed by descriptive and inferential statistics..

Result

The study revealed that majority of teachers (58%) was in the age group of 20-30 years. Majority of teachers(86%) were females. Most of them (62%) were with B.Ed qualification. Maximum percentage of sample were with (48%) having 0-3 years of experience. Majority of the teachers (56%) were married. Most of the teachers(54%) are had child psychology in their curriculum. Majority of teachers (60%) are not attended inservice education on problems of learning. Majority of teachers (86%) are not having family history of learning disabilities and few of them (14%) has relatives with learning disability. Majority of teachers (64%) had average knowledge regarding specific learning disability. Majority of teachers (94%) had a most favourable attitude.

There was no significant association between knowledge score and selected demographic variables such as age, gender, educational qualification, years of experience, marital

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status., child psychology in curriculum, in service education, family history of learning disabilities. There was a significant association between attitude score and few demographic variables such as gender, educational qualification, child psychology in curriculum.

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INTRODUCTION

Today's children are tomorrow's citizens. They are in continuous process of growth and development. Every child, on provision of a favourable and an enabling environment, may bloom into an ever fragrant flower, to shine in all domains of life. These remind us at the tiring responsibility that we have to mould and shape their present state in the best possible way.¹

According to Mahatma Gandhi, education means all round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit. Only an efficient and an understanding teacher can identify capacities, strength and weakness inborn in each student.²

Learning disability is the term came to use in 1960's. It is also termed as specific learning disability. It is a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning and arithmetical abilities.³

Viewing scholastic backwardness in terms of poor academic achievements, several school surveys in the past decade have recorded prevalence rates, that range between 20 % and 50%. A study of scholastic backwardness among 5-8 years old school going children found that 10.23% of them have scholastic backwardness. Gender difference was not noticed. The rates of specific difficulties such as reading, writing and calculations were found to be 4.69%, 5.15% and 15.96% respectively.⁴

The study of learning disability is gradually gaining thrust as more and more children are experiencing problem in academic and non academic areas. Current literature indicates that 10 – 14 % of 416 million children have specific learning disability.⁵ A study was done in Mangalore among 75 primary school teachers to assess the effectiveness of structured teaching programme on learning disabilities. The study results revealed that 52% of teachers had poor knowledge and only 2% of them had good knowledge.⁶

As the children with learning disability find it difficult to adjust in schools, teachers are also challenged to find ways and provide them with the very best instructions possible. The best sources of support and the most promising pool of resources are to be initiated right there in the school. General and special educators have to be working productively, sharing ideas and strategies, tapping related service providers and others including speech therapists, psychologists and occupational therapists and implementing progress-monitoring activities.

These are ways to ensure that children with learning disability have the best opportunities to succeed and it also help the educators and administrators to create learning communities, providing resources and sharing expertise to the benefit of all.⁷ In India, the first national policy on education was passed in 1986, and the goal of this policy

was equal educational opportunity. The policy stated that educational facilities should be enhanced and expanded to include, children with specific learning disabilities in normal schools.⁸

According to National Centre for Learning Disability, teachers are the essential linkage between children with learning disorder and the interventions that help them. Trained teachers may have positive attitude and practical knowledge for concerning individual needs and problems of children with learning disability and they can manage emotional and psychosocial problems of these children.⁹

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Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria included teachers who were

- working full time in selected schools.
- willing to participate in this study
- available at the time of data collection

Exclusion Criteria

The exclusion criteria included the teachers who had:

- undergone training or experience in special schools

Data Analysis

The data obtained was planned to analysis in terms of objectives of the study using descriptive and inferential statistics. The plan of data analysis was developed accordingly

- The collected data was coded and transformed to master sheet for statistical analysis.
- Frequency and percentage for the analysis of demographic characteristics of the study sample.
- Mean, median and standard deviation for total score of teachers in the selected schools were computed.
- Chi square test was used to determine the association between knowledge and attitude of teachers and demographic variables

teachers are having good knowledge. Data presented in the table 3 and figure 10 shows that majority,94% of teachers are having most favourable attitude and only 6% of them are having favourable attitude regarding specific learning disabilities in children.

Table 4 Area wise mean, standard deviation, mean percentage of knowledge score

Sl.No	Area of knowledge	Maximum possible score	Mean score	SD	Mean%
1	General information, Meaning, Definition	3	1.54	.73	3.08
2	Causes and types	12	3.48	.50	0.96
3	Prevention and Management	11	4.24	2.18	8.48
4	Overall	26	9.26	5.29	18.52

Data presented in the table 5 indicates that Chi square value of demographic variables that age, gender, educational qualification, years of experience, marital status , child psychology in curriculum, inservice education on specific

RESULTS

Part I: Description of demographic characteristics of teachers.

Part II: Description of knowledge and attitude.

Part III: Area wise analysis of knowledge score

Part IV : To find the association between knowledge on specific learning disabilities and selected demographic variables

Part V: To find the association between attitude on specific learning disabilities and selected demographic variables

Table 1 Description of demographic characteristics of teachers

SL No	Sample characteristics	Frequency(f)	Percentage(%)
1.	Age in years	29	58
	a)20-30	19	38
	b)31-40	2	4
2.	c)>40		
	Gender	7	14
3.	a)Male	43	86
	b)Female		
4.	Educational qualification	11	22
	a)Teachers training programme	31	62
	b)B.Ed	2	4
	c)M.Ed	6	12
	d)Any other specify		
5.	Years of experience	24	48
	a) 0-3	21	42
	b) 4-7	5	10
	c) 8		
6.	Marital status	28	56
	a)Married	21	42
	b)Un married	1	2
7.	c)Divorced/Separated		
	Did you have child psychology in your curriculum?	27	54
8.	a)Yes	23	46
	b)No		
9.	Have you attended in service education on problems of learning?	20	40
	a)Yes	30	60
10.	b)No		
	Do you have any history of learning disabilities in your family?	7	14
11.	a)Yes	43	86
	b)No		

Table 2 Frequency and percentage distribution of knowledge score

Level of knowledge	Score	Frequency	Percentage
Very good	20-26	0	0%
Good	14-19	3	6%
Average	8-13	32	64%
Poor	0-7	15	30%

Table 3 Frequency and percentage distribution of attitude score

Level of attitude	Score	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Most favourable attitude	31-45	47	94%
Favourable attitude	16-30	3	6%
Unfavourable attitude	0-15	0	0%

Data presented in the table 2 and figure 10 shows that majority of teachers 64% of teachers are having average knowledge, 30% of teachers are having poor knowledge and only 6% of

leaqrning disabilities, family history of learning disabilities. It was significant at 0.05 level of significance. Thus it concluded that there is no significant association between knowledge of teachers and selected demographic variables such as age, gender, educational qualification, years of experience, marital status, child psychology in curriculum, inservice education on problems of learning, family history of learning disabilities.

The calculated Chi square value (age 0.177, gender 0.195, educational qualification 0.195, years of experience 0.039, marital status 0.574, child psychology in curriculum 1.034, inservice education on problems of learning 0.014, family history of learning disability 0.195) were less than that of table value 0.05 level of significance. So that the null hypothesis was accepted for this variables. psychology in curriculum , inservice education on problems of learning , family history of learning disability.

Table 5 Association between knowledge of teachers regarding specific learning disabilities and selected demographic variables

Sl.No	Demographic variables	<Median	Median	Df	X ²	Inference
1	Age in years	31	17	1	.177	NS
	a)20-40	1	1			
2	b)>40			1	.195	NS
	Sex	5	2			
3	a)Male	27	16	1	.195	NS
	b)Female					
4	Educational qualification	27	16	1	.195	NS
	a)teacher training programme, B.Ed	5	2			
5	b)M.Ed, Any other			1	.039	NS
	Years of experience	29	16			
6	a)0-7	3	2	1	.574	NS
	b) 8					
7	Marital status	31	18	1	1.034	NS
	a)Married, unmarried	1	0			
8	b)Divorced/seperated			1	.014	NS
	Child psychology in curriculum	19	8			
9	a)Yes	13	10	1	.014	NS
	b)No					
10	Inservice education on problems of specific learning disability	13	7	1	.195	NS
	a)Yes	19	11			
11	b)No			1		
	Family history	5	2			
12	a)Yes	27	16	1		
	b)No					

Table value=3.84, P>0.05

Table 6 Association between attitude of teachers regarding specific learning disabilities and selected demographic Variables

Sl.No	Demographic variables	<Median	Median	Df	X ²	Inference
1	Age	24	24	1	.0000	NS
	a)20-40	1	1			
2	b)>40			1	4.153	S*
	Sex	1	6			
3	a)Male	24	19	1	4.153	S*
	b)Female					
4	Educational qualification	24	19	1	2.000	NS
	a)teacher training programme, B.Ed	1	6			
5	b)M.Ed, Any other			1	.020	NS
	Years of experience	21	24			
6	a)0-7	4	1	1	13.60	S*
	b) 8					
7	Marital status	25	24	1	3.000	NS
	a)Married, unmarried	0	1			
8	b)Divorced/seperated			1	.166	NS
	Child psychology in curriculum	7	20			
9	a)Yes	18	5	1	3.000	NS
	b)No					
10	Inservice education on problems of learning	7	13	1	.166	NS
	a)Yes	18	12			
11	b)No			1		
	Family history	3	4			
12	a)Yes	22	21	1		
	b)No					

Table value=3.84, P>0.05 S= Significant N.S= Non significant

It was significant at 0.05 level of significance. Thus it is concluded that there is significant association between the attitude of teachers and selected demographic variables such as sex , education ,child psychology in curriculum and attitude of teachers were independent on age, years of experience, marital status, inservice education on problems of learning, family history of learning disability The calculated chisquare value (sex 4.153, educational qualification 4.153,child psychology in curriculum 13.60) was greater than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. So that the research hypothesis was accepted for this variables. The Chi square value of age 0.000, years of experience 2.000, marital status 1.020, inservice

education on problems of learning 3.00, family history 1.66 were less than that of table value 0.05 level of significance so that the null hypothesis was accepted for this variables.

Acknowledgement

I express my sincere gratitude to my mentor for his inspiring guidance, Ms. Viji Prasad.C, Lecturer of Department of Mental Health Nursing, Yenepoya Nursing College , Mangalore. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Asha P Shetty ,Principal, Yenepoya Nursing College, for her guidance which has madethis study a successful one.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are discussed under the following parts:

- Demographic characteristics of teachers
- Knowledge of teachers regarding specific learning disability
- Attitude of teachers towards specific learning disability
- Association between knowledge and demographic variables
- Association between attitude and selected demographic variables.

Demographic characteristics of teachers

The findings of the present study revealed that more than half (58%) of the teachers belonged to the age group of 20 -30 years and majority (86%) of them were females. Majority (62%) of teachers were completed B Ed. Most of the teachers (48%) having 0-3 years of experience. Maximum (56%) of teachers were married. Majority (54%) teachers were had child psychology in curriculum. Most of them (60%) were not undergone any in-service education . Majority (86%) teachers were not had the family history of specific learning disability. And our study is consistent with following studies. A study was conducted in Bangalore to assess the knowledge and attitude regarding learning disabilities among children in selected schools ,26.67% belonged the category of 25 – 29 years of age,35% in 30-40 years 23.33% in 35-39 years and remaining 15% in the age group above 40 years. Majority 93.33% of sample were females and only 6.67% were males. Among the teachers 75% of them completed B.Ed. 5% had teacher's training program, 3.33% had M Ed and remaining 16.67% had other qualifications. The study showed that 48.33% possessed 0-5 years of experience , 31.67% had 6-10 years.86.67% of sample were married where as 11.67% were unmarried. Among the sample 91.67% studied child psychology in their curriculum and remaining 8.33% had not studied child psychology.

Knowledge of teachers regarding specific learning disability

In the present study, majority of the teachers (64%) were having average knowledge, 30% of them were having poor knowledge and only (6%) had good knowledge on specific learning disability.

A study was conducted in Mangalore to assess the effectiveness of self-instructional module of learning disabilities among school. The study results revealed that 52%

teachers have poor knowledge and only 2% have good knowledge.

Attitude of teachers regarding specific learning disability

In the present study 94% had most favorable attitude,6% had favorable attitude and none of the teachers had unfavorable attitude

A study was conducted in Bangalore, 98.33% had highly favorable attitude, 1.67% had favorable and none of the teachers had unfavorable attitude. Mean percentage score for highly favorable attitude was 89.6% with standard deviation 6.61, for favorable attitude 75.55%.

Association between knowledge and demographic variables

The present study findings show that there was no association between knowledge level and the selected demographic variables

such as age, gender, educational qualification, years of experience, marital status, child psychology in curriculum, in-service education and family history.

The study done in Bangalore revealed that there was association between knowledge and educational qualification of teachers ($p=0.0417$; $p<0.05$). No other variables like age, gender, years of experience, marital status, child psychology in the curriculum and in-service education had significant association with the knowledge of teachers on learning disability.

Association between attitude and demographic variables

The present study finding shows that there is an association between attitude and demographic variables such as gender, education, child psychology and there is no association between age, years of experience, marital status, in-service education, and family history of learning disability

A study was conducted in Bangalore revealed there is a significant association between attitude and age of the teachers ($X^2=4.87$ $P<0.05$) but there was no significant association between attitude score of the teachers and other demographical variable like gender ,educational qualification years of experience ,marital status, child psychology in the curriculum and In-service education.

Limitations

The study is limited to:

The study was confined to a specific schools.

The present study was limited to assess the knowledge and attitude of teachers regarding specific leaning disability.

The study has used non probability convenient sampling technique which limits the generalization of the results

Recommendations

Keeping in view the findings of the present study, the following recommendations were made.

A similar study on a large sample may help to draw more definite conclusions and make generalization.

A follow up study can be conducted to determine the effects of information booklet in term of gain in knowledge to improve the knowledge of teachers.

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