

Original Research Article

A Descriptive Study to Assess the Knowledge and Attitude of School Teachers Regarding Learning Disabilities among Children in Selected Schools at Bagalkot

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Abstract: Today's children are tomorrow's citizens. They are in a continuous process of growth and development. Any alteration in its course leads on to developmental disorders. Of the developmental disorders learning disability plays a significant role as a silent handicap among children. It is estimated that 4-5% of students in school have learning disability. Learning Disability is "A disorder that affect people's ability to either interpret what they see and hear or to link information from different parts of the brain. Such difficulties extent to school work and can impede learning to read, write or do math". As there are no specific test to identify children with learning disability, health professionals have to rely mainly on teacher's report for its diagnosis. Previous studies have proved that teacher's attitude towards such children have great influence towards their recovery.

Keywords: Leaning disability; Attitude; Knowledge; Disabled Children; School teachers.

INTRODUCTION

The Hindu philosophy places teacher on a pedestal - even above God and just after the parents. Children spend most part of their working hours in school with teachers who play an important role in moulding their future. A teacher is responsible for the integrated all round development of a child. Like a gardener, he provides all suitable conditions for their best growth. "The quality of children's life solely depends on the type of family environment, school and neighborhood" - Dr. R. Parthasarathy [3]. Unhealthy social surrounding can put them into stress and can increase their vulnerability to develop emotional disorders. Devivasigamani reported a prevalence rate of 20-33 % of psychiatric disorders in school children in Indian setting. Among them Learning Disorder constitute 3-7% [3]. The term "Learning Disability" came to use in the 1960's. Learning Disability is also termed as "Specific Academic Skill Disorder" or "Specific Learning Disability"[4]. National Joint Committee on Learning Disability defines Learning Disability as "A heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities" [5]. The 4th version of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV) of mental disorders refers these disabilities as learning disorders rather than academic skills disorders and mentioned under the section called "disorders first diagnosed in infancy, childhood or adolescence"[4]. According to UNESCO records in European countries, the percentage of students learning in special schools ranges between 2.5 and 4.5 and 10 – 15 % of the school age population is in special educational need, which includes defects of speech, major behavioral problems, and various forms of Learning Disabilities. 4.5% of students (2.8 million) in schools had been identified as having learning disabilities.

OBJECTIVES:-

- To assess the level of knowledge of teachers regarding learning disabilities among children
- To measure the attitude of teachers towards children with learning disabilities.
- To associate the knowledge of teachers with selected socio demographic variables.
- To associate the attitude of teachers with socio demographic variables.
- To correlate the knowledge and attitude of school teachers regarding learning disability.

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METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research approach and Research design:-Descriptive and Descriptive Research design.

Study setting:-

- Selected 5 Primary schools in Bagalkot

Target population: -

- Primary school Teacher in Bagalkot
- Sample and sampling technique: 60 Primary school teacher and Convenient Sampling technique

Inclusion Criteria:-

- Teachers who are teaching in standard 1 to 5. Teachers of selected private schools in Bagalkot . Teachers who know Kannada and English
- Teachers who are willing to participate in the study

Exclusion Criteria:-

- Teachers who are teaching in schools for physically or mentally challenged children

Development and Description of Tool:-

Section I: Demographic data consists of 8 items seeking information about age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, years of experience, child psychology in the curriculum, in service education, and experience in teaching children with learning disability.

Section II: Consists of 30 questions related to meaning, incidence, causes, clinical features, diagnosis and management of a child with learning disability.

Section III: Attitude scale with 30 items to assess the attitude of teachers towards children with learning disability. The items are rated against a 3 point scale such as – Yes, Cannot say, No where score given is 3, 2 and 1 respectively .The negative items have reverse scoring. Out of 30 items, 11 are negative statements

Data collection after informed consent was obtained from the Headmistress of all the five schools selected schools for study, after explaining the purpose of the study and assuring confidentiality. Study was conducted and was collected through interview with participants between 17-11-20to 30-11-20.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the subject were transformed into excel master sheet and analyzed using statistical package for social sciences(SPSS)Descriptive (frequency and percentage) and inferential statistics (Chi-square test) were used in study. All statistical analysis was carried out at a 5%level of significance.

RESULTS

Section-I: Description of study subjects by sociodemographic variables.

Table-1: Frequency and Percentage distribution of subjects according to age in years, N = 60

SI No	Age in years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	25 – 29	16	26.67
2	30 – 34	21	35
3	35 – 39	14	23.33
4	≥ 40	9	15

Table-1 Shows the distribution of teachers based on their age. Maximum number 21 (35%) of school teachers belong to age group 30 – 34 years of age group and only 9 (15%) were above 40 years.

Table-2: Frequency and Percentage distribution of subjects according to gender N =60

SI No	Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Male	4	6.67
2	Female	56	93.33

Table-2 depicts that majority of the teachers that is 56 (93%) were females and only 7% of them were males as per the sample.

Table-3: Frequency and Percentage distribution of subjects according to their Educational Qualification N = 60

SI No	Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Teacher’s Training Programme	3	5
2	B.Ed	46	76.67
3	M. Ed	2	3.33
4	Others	9	15

Table-3 reveals that 75% of teachers had B E, 5% had Teacher’s Training Certificate, 3.33% M Ed and remaining 16.66% had other qualifications like Montessori Training, BA, MA etc

Table-4: Frequency and Percentage distribution of subjects according to the Marital Status N=60

SI No	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Married	52	86.67
2	Unmarried	7	11.67
3	Widow	1	1.66

Table-4 indicates that majority of school teachers 52(86.67%) were married, 7(11.67%) were unmarried and 1(1.66%) per sample was widow

Table-5: Frequency and Percentage distribution of subjects who had Child Psychology in their curriculum N= 60

SI No	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Studied Child Psychology	55	91.67
2	Not Studied Child Psychology	5	8.33

It indicates that a major proportion 91.67% of subjects had Child Psychology in their curriculum and rest of them 8.33% of subjects did not have Child Psychology in their curriculum.

Table-6: Frequency and Percentage distribution of subjects who had in service Education on Problems of Learning N = 60

SI No	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Attended In service Education	55	91.67
2	Not Attended In service Education	5	8.33

Table 6 it shows that only 8.33% had attended in service Education on problems of Learning whereas 91.67% had not attended any such programs.

Table-7: Frequency and Percentage distribution of subjects who had experience in teaching children with Learning Disability N=60

SI No	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Taught children with Learning Disability	0	0
2	Not Taught children with Learning Disability	60	100

Table-7 indicate that out of 60 samples nobody had an opportunity to teach children with Learning Disability

Section-II: Relationship between the selected socio – demographic variables with the knowledge scores.

Table-8: Statistical Inference based on Chi Square test between above and below median of knowledge score of the subjects based on each demographic variable

Sl No	Socio demographic variables	Frequency of subjects ≤ median value(20)	Frequency of subjects > median value(20)	Total Frequency	Chi Square	Result
1	Age in Years					
	≤ 34 years	18	19	37	0.752	Not significant
> 34 years	9	15	23			
2	Gender Male Female					
		2	2	4	* 0.641	Not Significant
	26	30	56			
4	Education					
	Qualification					
	B.Ed &M.Ed	19	29	48	0.042*	Significant
	Others	10	2	12		
5	Years of Experience					
	≤10 Years	18	27	45	3.214	Not significant
> 10 Years	10	5	15			
6	Marital Status					
	Married Others	24	28	52	0.576*	Not significant
	4	4	8			
7	Studied Child Psychology				* 0.798	Not Significant
	Not studied Child Psychology	32	23	55		
8	Attended In service Education				* 0.05	Not Significant
	Not Attended In service Education	0	5	5		
		27	28	55		

*Fisher's Exact Test Significant at 5% level ($P < 0.05$),

Table-8 presents the substantive summary of Chi- square analysis, which was used to bring out the relationship between knowledge of teachers on learning disability and socio demographic variables.

Chi square was done to find out the association between knowledge and age of the teachers. As calculated value of the Chi square (0.752) was lower than the table value (3.814) at 5% level of significance, there was no significant association between knowledge and age of teachers. Hence H1 is rejected.

In order to find out the association between knowledge and sex of the teachers Fishers exact test was done. As P calculated (0.641) was greater than 0.05 there was no significant association between knowledge and sex of teachers. Hence H1 is rejected.

Fisher's exact test was done to find out the association between knowledge and educational qualification of the teachers. As calculated P value (0.042) was lower than 0.05, the association between knowledge and educational qualification of teachers is significant. Hence H1 is accepted.

Chi square was done to find out the association between knowledge and years of experience of the teachers. As calculated value of the Chi square (3.214) was lower than the table value (3.814) at 5% level of significance, there was no significant association between knowledge and years of experience of teachers. Hence H1 is rejected.

To test the significance of association between knowledge and marital status of teachers, Chi square was done. As calculated value of the Chi square (0.579) was lower than the table value (3.814) at 5% level of significance, there was no significant association between knowledge and marital status of teachers. Hence H1 is rejected.

Fisher's exact test was done to find out the association between knowledge and Child Psychology in the curriculum. As calculated P value (0.798) was greater than 0.05, the association between knowledge and Child Psychology in the curriculum of teachers was Found to be insignificant.

Section-III: Relationship between the Selected Socio – Demographic Variables with the Attitude Scores

Table-9:-Statistical Inference based on Chi Square test between above and below median of Attitude score of the subjects based on each demographic variable

SI No	Socio demographic variables	Frequency of subjects ≤ median value(80.5)	Frequency of subjects >median value(80.5)	Total	Chi Square	Results
1	Age ≤34 years >34 years	22 7	15 16	37 23	4.87	significant
2	Gender Male Female	2 27	2 29	4 56	* 0.66	Not significant
4	Educational qualification BEd & MED Others	22 8	26 4	48 12	0.27*	Not significant
5	Years of Experience ≤10 years >10 years	22 7	23 8	45 15	0.02	Not significant
6	Marital status Married Others	29 4	23 4	52 8	* 0.52	Not significant
7	Learned Child Psychology Not learned Child Psychology	26 3	29 2	55 5	* 0.46	Not significant
8	Attended Inservice education Not attended Inservice education	1 28	4 27	5 55	* 0.36	Not significant

In order to find out the significance in the association between attitude and sex of the teachers Fishers exact test was done. As P calculated (0.66) was greater than 0.05 there was no significant association between attitude and sex of teachers.

Chi square was done to find out the significance in association between attitude and educational qualification of teachers. As calculated P value (0.27) was lower than the table values the association between attitude and educational qualification of teachers was not significant.

P value is calculated to find the significance in the association between attitude and marital status of the teachers was 0.52. Since it was higher than 0.05, there was no significant association between knowledge and marital status of teachers.

Fishers' exact test was done to find out the association between attitude and child psychology in the curriculum of teachers was done. As calculated P value (0.46) was greater than 0.05, the association between attitude and Child Psychology in the curriculum of teachers was found to be insignificant.

The result showed that there was significant association between attitude of teachers and their age. No other Socio demographic variables had significant association with attitude at $P < 0.05$. This authenticates that factors like Sex, Educational Qualification Years of Experience, Marital Status, Child Psychology in the curriculum and In service Education did not influence the teacher's attitude

Section-IV: Level of Knowledge of the Subjects

Frequency and Percentage distribution of teachers according to the knowledge score on learning Disability: Good knowledge >75% Average knowledge 50-75% Poor knowledge <50%

SI No	Level of knowledge	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean score	Mean percentage Score (%)	SD
1	Good	0	0	0	0	0
2	Average	35	58.33	24.6	61.5	2.8
3	Poor	25	41.67	16.16	40.4	2.2

Section-V: Level of Attitude of the Subjects

Highly favourable Attitude – >75%

Favourable Attitude -75-50%

Unfavourable Attitude – <50%

Table-10: Frequency and Percentage distribution of subjects according to the Attitude score on Learning Disability

Sl No	Level of knowledge	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean score	Mean percentage Score (%)	SD
1	Highly favorable attitude	59	98.33	80.71	89.6	6.61
2	Favorable Attitude	1	1.67	68	75.55	0
3	Un favorable attitude	0	0	0	0	0

DISCUSSION

The study revealed that major portion (35%) of primary school teachers belonged to the age group 30-35 and of these 93% were females. Majority of them (75%) possessed B.Ed degree. Nearly half of them (48.33) had less than 5 years of teaching experience. 91.67% studied child psychology in their curriculum but very few (8%) had opportunity to attend in service educations on problems of learning. No teachers had opportunity to teach such children. Chi square revealed a significant association ($P < 0.05$) between knowledge and Educational qualification. Significant association was identified between attitude and age of the subjects also. The study revealed that none of teachers had excellent knowledge on learning disability but almost all (98.3%) had highly favourable attitude towards such children. A positive correlation ($r = +0.83$) was identified between knowledge and attitude of teachers towards children with learning disability.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the level of knowledge regarding learning disability was low among school teachers but in general, most of them had highly favourable attitude towards such children. A positive correlation was identified between knowledge and attitude score of teachers on the subject. The study concluded that need for providing knowledge on learning disability is an important strategy to utilize teachers as effective contributors towards child mental health services.

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