



SELF-CONCEPT OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

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Abstract

The present study intended to examine self-concept of students with learning disabilities of ninth standard of Chennai district. The sample size of the study is 78 selected by stratified random sampling. It is a normative survey type study. The research tool used is Self-concept Scale adapted from Mohsin's Self-concept inventory. The results indicated that there is no significant difference between the self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to gender, medium of instruction and type of school management except the level of learning disabilities.



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Introduction

Every child is very precious, and needs to be carefully and lovingly nurtured to be able to develop to fullest capacities. There are children who have special needs, for whom the nature and intensity of required care is even more significant. In our new understanding, children with disabilities should be integrated into mainstream schools. To make this feasible, we need to deepen our understanding of the nature of the conditions, and how best these children can be assisted in achieving their full potential. The least understood among various disabilities are the cluster of disorders generically described as learning disorders (Mander, 2003). In spite of having average or above average intelligence, many children perform poorly in academics. These children may face difficulties in one or several areas of academics such as reading, arithmetic, spelling and writing (Karanth, 2003). This group of children, generally reported to as having learning disabilities, pose an important challenge for researchers and represent a significant risk to physical and psychological health as well as to personal life fulfillment (Sahni, 2011, p. 2).

The social functioning of students with learning disabilities has been the subject of research for more than a decade (Sridhar & Vaughn, 2001). Findings from initial research suggest that almost 50% of students with learning disabilities are not well accepted by their peers and are at risk for social isolation (Stone & La Greca, 1990). Studies indicate that students with learning disabilities demonstrate social difficulties that are recognized by

parents (McConaughy & Ritter, 1986), teachers (Seidel & Vaughn, 1991), and peers (Stone & La Greca, 1990).

Chronic difficulties with academic assignments often lead children with learning disabilities to anticipate failure; success is seen as an unattainable goal no matter how hard they try (Gargiulo, 2009, p. 213). Research suggests that some students with learning disabilities, in comparison to their typical peers, have poor self-concept, most likely due to frustration with their learning difficulties (Mercer & Pullen, 2005).

Learning disabilities

Kirk and Gallagher (1997) defined specific learning disability as a psychological or neurological impairment of spoken or written language or perceptual, cognitive or motor behavior. This impairment is of such nature and extent that the child does not learn by ordinary methods and materials appropriate for the majority of children but requires specialized procedures for development. This impairment is manifested by discrepancy between his evidenced ability and academic achievement.

According to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 Specific learning disabilities means a heterogeneous group of conditions wherein there is a deficit in processing language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself as a difficulty to comprehend, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations and includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and developmental aphasia.

Self-concept

Self-concept refers to a person's awareness of his or her own characteristics and the way in which he or she is like and unlike others Bryan (1991). According to Saraswat and Gaur (1981) self-concept is the individuals' way of looking at himself and it signifies his way of thinking, feeling and behaving. Self-concept is considered as a multi-dimensional construct referring to an individual's perception of the self and is developed in interaction with the environment and others (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985).

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to assess the self-concept of students with learning disabilities at IX standard level in selected schools of Chennai Educational District.

Research method

The present study is a descriptive one with normative survey method.

Population and sample

The population of the study is students with learning disabilities at IX Std level in State Board Government, Government aided and Self Financing High and higher secondary schools in Chennai District. Out of 634 students from the selected schools, the researcher has identified 78 IX standard students with learning disabilities among them 40 are boys and 38 girls. The sample was selected from two Government Higher secondary schools, two Government aided schools and from two Self-financing Higher Secondary Schools in Chennai district. The stratified random sampling with inclusion and exclusion criteria was used for selecting the sample for the study.

Research tool used

The Mohsin's Self-concept Inventory (1979) was adapted to construct the Self-concept scale for this present study to assess the self-concept of students with learning disabilities. The tool has 48 items consisting of positively or negatively phrased statements about abilities and strengths pertaining to the cognitive, affective, and conative areas. The positively and negatively phrased statements are equally balanced in number; all positively phrased statements affirm a positive quality and all negatively phrased statements deny a negative quality. The acceptance of a statement as characterizing oneself signifies, in either case, positive evaluation of the self. Four point scale was used as strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The construct validity was established for the tool. The test retest reliability of the tool was found to be 0.78.

Hypotheses of the study

H₀₁ There is no significance difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to gender.

H₀₂ There is no significance difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to medium of instruction.

H₀₃ There is no significance difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to type of school.

H₀₄ There is no significance difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to level of learning disability.

Table 1 Gender difference in self-concept among students with LD

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
Male	40	135.15	16.32	2.66	76	0.10*
Female	38	124.95	17.56			

* $p > 0.05$

An independent *t* test was conducted to determine if a difference existed between the mean self-concept scores of male and female students with learning disabilities. There was no statistically significant difference between the mean self-concept scores of males (n=40, M=135.15, SD=16.32) and females (n=38, M=124.95, SD=17.56), $t(76) = 2.66$, $p = 0.10$. The researcher accepted the null hypothesis H_01 .

Table 2 Self-concept of students with LD with respect to Medium of Instruction

Medium of Instruction	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Tamil	28	131.14	18.92	0.349	76	0.72*
English	50	129.64	16.98			

* $p = 0.05$

An independent *t* test was conducted to determine if a difference existed between the mean self-concept scores of Tamil and English medium students with learning disabilities. There was no statistically significant difference between the mean self-concept scores of Tamil medium (n=28, M=131.14, SD=18.92) and English medium (n=50, M=129.64, SD=16.98), $t(76) = 0.349$, $p = 0.72$. The researcher accepted the null hypothesis H_02 .

Table 3 Self-concept of students with LD with respect to type of school

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	1792.183	2	896.091	3.048	0.053*
Within Groups	22047.304	75	293.964		
Total	23839.487	77			

* $p > 0.05$

A one way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there is a significant difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to the type of school. The obtained F value (3.048) is smaller than the F value (3.13) at 0.05 level. This shows that there was no significant difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to the type of school. Hence the researcher accepted the null hypothesis H_03 .

Table 4 Self-concept of students with LD with respect to level of LD

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between Groups	15869.401	2	7934.700		
Within Groups	7970.087	75	106.268	74.667	0.000*
Total	23839.487	77			

* $p < 0.05$ & 0.01

A one way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there is a significant difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to level of LD. The obtained F value (74.667) is greater than the F value (3.13 & 4.92) at 0.05 and 0.01 level with $df=2, 75$. This shows that there was significant difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to level of LD. Hence the researcher rejected the null hypothesis H_0 .

Major Findings of the study

1. There was no significant difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to gender.
2. There was no significant difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to medium of instruction.
3. There was no significant difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to type of school management.
4. There was significant difference between self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to level of learning disability.

Discussion and Conclusion

Research activities through light on unexplored areas of study in accordance with the context we live. In this line the present research intended to examine the self-concept of students with learning disabilities of Chennai Educational District. The study revealed that male and female students with learning disabilities do not differ in their self-concept. The medium of instruction and type of school do not have any influence on the self-concept of students with learning disabilities. The level of learning disability is the only variable differentiate the self-concept of students with learning disabilities. The mild, moderate and the severe level of students with learning disabilities differ in their self-concept from one another. The present study has limitations such as it focused only on Chennai Educational District Schools, only six schools and two from each type of management are taken for the study. The study examined the self-concept of students with learning disabilities with respect to gender, medium of instruction, type of school management and level of LD, and not the

other variables. The sample for the study selected only at ninth standard level, and not compared with other levels such as primary, upper primary and higher secondary.

This study concludes that the level of learning disability has affected the self-concept of students with learning disabilities at ninth standard level. This indicates that there is need for keen observation and certain training programmes to improve the level of self-concept of the students with learning disabilities at various levels, in order make them feel as strong and face the academic and personal life. This study has opened new avenues of research in the field of learning disabilities and scope for further studies in various psychological and academic variables related to learning disabilities.

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