

LEARNING DISABILITY: EMERGENT NEED FOR IDENTIFICATION, TREATMENT AND EDUCATION

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Abstract

When learning problems are caused by a disturbance in the psychological process or brain dysfunction, rather than by any limitation or environmental or economic disadvantages, learning disability is defined as an imperfect ability to listen, think, talk, read, write, or do arithmetic. It's a global issue that's becoming worse, yet few people are aware of it. And hence, the investigation became necessary. For the study, secondary data sources were explored, and the data was treated using an analytical method. Early intervention is essential for effective management of learning disabilities, according to the findings. Learning challenged youngsters benefit greatly from special education with a personalised curriculum and manner. From features and symptoms of learning disabled children, identification of them is possible. Creating awareness about learning disability at an early stage is the only safe way to overcome it.

Key Words: Learning disability, special children, method, intervention, dysfunction.



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Introduction

It is a noticeable fact that some children learn faster than others. While one child does mathematical calculations very easily, another does it with much time and effort. One child may read, write, spell, pronounce words with ease, and another may do the same with much difficulty. Previously it was thought that such problem was due to lack of intelligence, attention or practice; but modern researches have shown that the problem lies in the learning process, and it is called learning disability. According to Samuel Kirk (1962), who used the term for the first time, "Learning disability refers to retardation, disorder, or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, spelling, writing or arithmetic resulting from a possible cerebral dysfunction and /or emotional or behavioural disturbance and not from mental retardation, sensory deprivation, cultural or instructional factors." In other words, learning disability is a neurologically based processing problem

which affects learning basic skills such as reading, writing and/or doing arithmetic, and it differs from the learning problems which arise from visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, from mental retardation, emotional disturbance or from environmental, cultural or economic disadvantages. Learning disability is sometimes referred to as 'hidden disability' as there seems to be a gap between the individual's potential and achievement

Related Studies

The following related studies were reviewed to prepare the base of the present study.....

Sharma (1993) attempted to examine the difference in the personality characteristics of the learning disabled (LD) and the non-learning disabled (NLD) children identified in Std III, IV, and V from urban and rural localities of the four districts of Rayalaseema, Andhrapradesh. The study also assessed the efficacy of intervention programmes developed specifically for parents, teachers and the learning disabled (LD) children in improving the academic performance and children with varied learning disabilities.

Holland (2000) attempted to identify several significant biological, psychological, and social concerns that may affect people with learning difficulties as they age. Because persons with more severe disabilities have a shorter life expectancy, there is a convergence between people with learning difficulties and those without in later life. People with Down's syndrome are at a higher risk of developing age-related disorders early in life. It is commonly known that people with learning difficulties have a longer life expectancy. There is a lack of a coordinated approach to guarantee that people with learning disabilities receive the greatest possible health and social care in later life.

Soni (2003) sought to study the perceptions of both sexes of students, teachers and parents about education of the disabled students in Devas and Ujjain district. Survey design was followed for the study. The tools were the interview schedule for the students, teachers and parents, and the observation schedule. Purposive sampling technique was used. The sample comprised of 101 from Devas district and 101 from Ujjain district including of all categories. There was no significant difference between the perceptions of male and female respondents in all three groups, and there was no significant difference between Devas and Ujjain districts. Special facilities for disabled children were non-existent in schools of both the districts. All three groups were not aware of the provisions for facilities for disabled children under SSA.

Cooke (2007) carried out this research to conclude a 60-year study on the rate of cancer mortality in a group of people with learning disabilities. It was conducted on an in-patient population, with data gathered from hospital death records and patient medical records. Cancer was responsible for 13.6 per cent of all deaths over the 10-year study period, compared to a rate of 26 per cent in the general population. The proportions of different forms of cancer were also significantly different from those in the general population, with cancers of the gastro-intestinal tract accounting for a particularly high proportion (55%) of all malignancies. Other cancers, such as those affecting the bronchus, breast, and prostate gland, which are the most common causes of mortality in the general population, were barely mentioned.

Bansal (2014) presents facts of learning disabilities as more boys than girls have learning disability, and the ratio is 3:1.; students with learning disabilities are identified by the time they reach the late 3rd or early 4th grade. More students are identified because of deficits in reading and the language arts than in mathematics. IQs of identified LD students are typically in the 90-95 range. Students with LD tend to have deficits in short-term memory. Phonological awareness deficits and poor phonics development are common among the LD population. Students with LD are not as socially acceptable as other students. As much as 50% of LD students drop out of school prior to high school education.

Rationale of the study

Learning disability is not totally curable; rather it is a lifelong challenge. There are different factors that are responsible for learning disability. These may be pre-natal factor, peri-natal factor, post-natal factor, hereditary factor, environmental factor, etc. And awareness and identification of the factor or factors is very much essential, because appropriate support and intervention may help people with learning disabilities in achieving success in school, office and in any relationship. As this is a hidden disability, we treat the children with learning disabilities as normal like the other students of their age. But actually, their performance is affected by such hidden disability. As the number of such children is increasing day by day, it is extremely essential to identify them as early as possible so that necessary treatment and education may be given to them. Approximately 20% of the children in the elementary school are found to be learning disabled, and most of them are boys, though the reasons are unknown. However, the problem needs serious attention to address.

Objectives of the study

The present study was conducted keeping ahead the following objectives-----

- (i) To identify the symptomatic characteristics of learning disabled children,
- (ii) To ensure treatment and education of learning disabled children.

Symptoms of learning disability

Learning disability can be identified by both testing and non-testing devices. However, there are some symptoms of learning disability that help in identifying the same. These may be presented as below-----

- 1) Learning disabled children feel difficulty in remembering or repeating something.
- 2) They cannot exact time of the day, and also the order of days, months or months.
- 3) They fail to sit calmly at a place for some time.
- 4) They respond and do any work very slowly.
- 5) They perform poorly in one or two subjects.
- 6) They face language-based learning difficulty, i.e., dyslexia.
- 7) They have difficulty in writing correctly and at normal speed, i.e., dysgraphia.
- 8) They cannot do simple mathematical calculation, i.e., they have dyscalculia.
- 9) They do not seem to understand given instruction properly.
- 10) They get easily distracted even by a little disturbance.
- 11) They misread letters or words or sometimes reverse the same.
- 12) They sometimes feel confusion about right and left directions.
- 13) They are 'slow learners' but not mentally retarded.
- 14) Their problem is not due to their practice or attention.
- 15) Generally, they have even above average intelligence.

Treatment and education

Behaviour modification measures are to be taken for treating learning disabled children. Teachers can remove many of their problems by adopting some remedial measures. They must improve some basic skills like reading, listening, writing, spelling, pronunciation, etc. As they have deficiency in learning, there is a gap between their potential and actual academic achievement. The problem of learning disability is unique for each individual student, and hence it is not possible to remediate their deficiencies in group. No uniform treatment or remedial measure should be adopted for all learning disabled children. Each of the learning disabled children should be given a separate treatment as per their nature and

amount of learning disability. Arrangement of special remedial programmes will be very much effective for such children. Besides behavioural and individualised approaches, psychoanalytic, multi-sensory and technological approaches may work effectively for the purpose. Remediation should initially focus on the simplest and most basic perceptual associational elements. There should be frequent reviews of basic perceptual associational skills and necessary changes and modifications should be made in the light of new findings. For this, improvement of existing set-up is very much essential. Teachers should take extra care in the classroom. Alongside teachers, parents also have a role to play. They should take extra care in respect of their children's education at home. It is to be emphasized that the sooner the remedial instruction starts in the elementary school the easier for the child to compensate his deficiencies, and the better for his later progress in upper classes.

Educational Implication

The current study is unquestionably significant from the educational point of view. To guide the concerned pupils, the concerned teachers will have some input on learning disabilities. Concerned parents, guardians, and other family members will receive pertinent information about learning disabilities, which will greatly assist them in appropriately caring for their children. The study may also provide some guidance to policy-makers and curriculum planners. Not only that, the study will provide some guiding principles for Voluntary Organizations (VOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who work for children with learning disabilities. These principles will assist them execute their job in the field more successfully. The research will aid in the creation of some level of awareness in the subject of learning disability and boost the morale of the personnel who work for the children with learning disability.

Conclusion

Learning disability is a lifetime burden, not an illness that can be fixed with medicine or surgery. Early intervention is very vital in this case because success is dependent on it. Learning disability management will begin as soon as a learning disability is detected. It is a collaborative effort in which teachers, parents, therapists, experts, and psychologists work to mainstream and rehabilitate children with learning disabilities. The most crucial factor is awareness. It's not simple to care for youngsters that are learning challenged. As a result, parents and other family members should acquire as much information as possible about learning disabilities. Children with learning disabilities require special attention. As they have

a distinct method of comprehending and expressing things, learning challenged youngsters require more attention and compassion. They will undoubtedly learn profoundly overcoming their limitation if we can do it whole-heartedly.

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