

# A Study on Knowledge and Perception Regarding Learning Disabilities in Children among Primary School Teachers in Thiruvallur District

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**Abstract:- Learning disability is a common problem encountered by primary school children. The skills affected are reading, writing, listening, speaking, doing math. Burden of learning disability varies from 3-12% worldwide. If unnoticed, the child can develop depression or anxiety disorders. This study is to assess the knowledge and perception of teachers about learning disabilities among primary school teachers. A cross sectional study was conducted in 6 schools, in Thiruvallur district. The study sample was 138 teachers and their knowledge was assessed by a questionnaire. The result was found to be that knowledge of teachers about learning disability is fair. There is a need to improve the knowledge of teachers and enhance basic skills to recognize children with learning disabilities by introducing the topics in teacher training courses.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Learning disability is a neurological disorder, characterized by difficulty in certain skills such as reading or writing, coordination, calculation, language processing caused by atypical brain functioning. Learning disability affects the brains ability to receive, process, analyze and store information. It is common in early childhood and it is observed in school going children. The prevalence of learning disability in different parts of the world ranges from 3 to 12 percent and estimation of learning disability in a population of school children ranges from 2% to 20-40% (5). Therefore due to high prevalence of students with learning disability at schools, mainly primary level, it is necessary for primary school teachers to be aware with the concepts of learning disability and to identify these students in their classes (3). Also if the problems of children with learning disability are not recognized and suitable interfering programs are not provided, the risk of some disorders like depression, anxiety and delinquency increases for these children(4). This can be reduced by increasing teacher student interaction and hence the attitude of the teacher can interfere with the socializing ability of the child. The learning ability of the child can be improved by adopting a variety of teaching strategies (12). Therefore it becomes fundamental for teachers to recognize children with learning disabilities and practice special teaching methods for these children. In this regard, high level of awareness and knowledge on learning disability, makes timely diagnosis of this problem and employing correct

educational and psychological strategies that helps the child to overcome their disability. This study is aimed to assess the knowledge and perception of primary school teachers about learning disabilities.

### ➤ Objectives:

- To assess the knowledge on learning disabilities in children, among primary school teachers.
- To study the perception of teachers in primary school about learning disabilities in children.

## II. METHODOLOGY

A cross sectional study was conducted on 138 primary school teachers from 6 different schools in Thiruvallur district. Prior permission from the school authorities was taken for data collection and a structured questionnaire was administered to teachers during the break time. First the questionnaire started with demographic details like name, age, sex, qualification and number of years of experience and then contained questions on knowledge, attitude and practice, with multiple choice answers.

The study was done for three months from January 2019 to March 2019. Data entry and analysis was done using SPSS software version 25. Descriptive statistics was calculated for the background variables. Association between the knowledge and perception of learning disabilities in children among primary school teachers was analyzed and chi-square test was employed as a test of significance.

## III. RESULT

There are totally 138 primary school teachers in the study, from 6 different schools, all of them are females. With regard to age of the teachers, they are classified into age groups between 21-30, 31-40, 41-50 and 51-60 years.

Based on their educational qualification, teachers are divided into 4 groups such as teachers qualified in Montessori training and B.Ed or M.Ed training courses, Arts and Science (BA, MA, B.COM, M.COM, B.Sc, M.Sc), professional courses like B.Tech or B.E and other courses like MBA or MCA.

According to the number of years of experience, teachers are classified with experience from 1-5 years, 6-10

years, 11-15years, 16-20 years and 21-25 years.

VARIABLES	TOTAL (N=138)	PERCENTAGE (%)
<b>AGE</b>		
21-30	30	21.73
31-40	71	51.44
41-50	30	21.73
51-60	7	5.07
<b>QUALIFICATION</b>		
KG	78	56.52
ARTS AND SCIENCE COURSES	32	23.18
PROFFESIONAL COURSES	19	13.76
OTHER COURSES	9	6.52
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>		
1-5 years	82	59.42
5-10 years	35	25.36
11-15 years	15	10.86
16-20 years	4	2.89
21-25 years	2	1.44

Table1:- Background Variables

In this study, 130(94.20%) teachers are aware of the term learning disabilities. Teachers who are aware of the types of learning disability were around 90(65.21%). Teachers who have attended workshops on learning disability were around 67(48.55%). It is observed that teachers who have attended workshops on learning disability have more knowledge about the concepts and practice variety of teaching strategies in their classes for disabled students.

There is a positive significance between the qualification of the teacher and their knowledge and practice on learning disability. There is significant relation between experience of the teacher and their practice. Teachers with more years of experience have good practices compared to teachers with less years of experience. About 107(77.53%) of teachers perceived that appropriate training programs like small group communication, video reports, audio records, computer based activities improve the learning ability of the child.

VARIABLES	KNOWLEDGE			X <sup>2</sup>	P
	GOOD	FAIR	POOR		
<b>AGE</b>				4.21	0.648
21-30	2(1.44)	18(13.04)	10(7.24)		
31-40	16(11.59)	43(31.15)	12(8.69)		
41-50	6(4.34)	18(13.04)	6(4.34)		
51-60	1(0.72)	5(3.62)	1(0.72)		
<b>QUALIFICATION</b>				14.095	0.028
KG AND B.Ed/M.Ed TRAINING COURSES	20(14.49)	44(31.88)	14(10.14)		
ARTS AND SCIENCE COURSES	2(1.44)	15(10.86)	15(10.86)		
PROFFESIONAL COURSES	1(0.72)	8(5.79)	10(7.24)		
OTHER COURSES	1(0.72)	5(3.62)	3(2.17)		
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>				4.899	0.768
1-5	14(10.14)	45(32.60)	23(16.66)		
6-10	6(4.34)	24(17.39)	5(3.62)		
11-15	3(2.17)	11(7.97)	1(0.72)		
16-20	2(1.44)	2(1.44)	0(0)		
21-25	0(0)	2(1.44)	0(0)		

Table 2:- Association between Knowledge of Teachers Regarding Learning Disabilities and Background Variables

VARIABLES	ATTITUDE			X <sup>2</sup>	P
	GOOD	FAIR	POOR		
<b>AGE</b>				5.387	0.495
21-30	8(5.79)	14(10.14)	8(5.79)		
31-40	9(6.52)	36(26.08)	26(18.84)		
41-50	10(7.24)	10(7.24)	10(7.24)		
51-60	2(1.44)	2(1.44)	3(2.17)		
<b>QUALIFICATION</b>				10.688	0.098
KG AND B.Ed/M.Ed TRAINING COURSES	23(16.67)	37(26.81)	18(13.04)		
ATRS AND SCIENCE COURSES	4(2.89)	11(7.97)	17(12.31)		
PROFFESIONAL COURSES	3(2.17)	10(7.24)	6(4.34)		
OTHER COURSES	0(0)	6(4.34)	3(2.17)		
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>				5.777	0.672
1-5	13(9.24)	40(28.98)	29(21.01)		
6-10	7(5.07)	15(10.86)	13(9.42)		
11-15	7(5.07)	5(3.62)	3(2.17)		
16-20	1(0.72)	2(1.44)	1(0.72)		
21-25	1(0.72)	0(0)	1(0.72)		

Table 3:- Association between Attitude of Teachers Regarding Learning Disabilities and Background Variables.

VARIABLES	PRACTICE			X <sup>2</sup>	P
	GOOD	FAIR	POOR		
<b>AGE</b>				4.697	0.583
21-30	10(7.24)	6(4.34)	14(10.14)		
31-40	19(13.76)	19(13.76)	33(23.91)		
41-50	15(10.86)	7(5.07)	8(5.79)		
51-60	2(1.44)	2(1.44)	3(2.17)		
<b>QUALIFICATION</b>				14.672	0.022
KG AND B.Ed/M.Ed TRAINING COURSES	36(26.08)	24(17.39)	18(13.04)		
ARTS AND SCIENCE COURSES	5(3.62)	11(7.97)	16(11.59)		
PROFFESIONAL COURSES	3(2.17)	10(7.24)	6(4.34)		
OTHER COURSES	1(0.72)	5(3.62)	3(2.17)		
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>				19.688	0.011
1-5	14(10.14)	20(14.49)	48(34.78)		
6-10	9(6.52)	10(7.24)	16(11.59)		
11-15	10(7.24)	3(2.17)	2(1.44)		
16-20	3(2.17)	1(0.72)	0(0)		
21-25	2(1.44)	0(0)	0(0)		

Table 4:- Association between Practice of Teachers Regarding Learning Disabilities and Background Variables.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Teachers play an important role in any educational system. At primary level, teachers should play a vital role in identifying children with learning disabilities as early as possible and help them to achieve and succeed. If the child's problem are not recognized and suitable interventions are not provided, the risk of some disorders like depression, anxiety may develop in the child. The right type of teacher with right type of knowledge, can do better justice to the children with learning disabilities. This study aims to investigate the knowledge, attitude, and practice of teachers to assess and support the students.

##### ➤ Age:

Age of the teacher is considered as a criteria to assess their knowledge, practice and attitude towards students with learning disability. In this study, in relation to the influence of teacher's age on their knowledge, it was clear that teacher's age is not significantly affecting their knowledge level. The study conducted by Adebowale and Moye, there was no significant relation between age and teachers knowledge<sup>[6]</sup>. In this study, there is no significance between the age and the attitude of the teacher. In a study conducted in Botswana by Chhabra, they found no significant correlation between attitudes and age of the teacher(10), while studies conducted in Italy by Cornoldil, found that teacher's attitude were significantly associated with their age in which young teachers showed more positive attitudes. In this study, age of the teacher does not have any significance with their practice. In another study

conducted by Hanan Abo and Amaal Mohamed, it was observed that, age of the teacher is not in significance with their practices (14).

##### ➤ Qualification:

Teachers who are educated about learning disabilities during their training courses have good knowledge about its concepts. Primary school teachers are qualified in various departments like arts and science, engineering and commerce. Teacher's knowledge mainly depends on their educational qualification. Those teachers who are qualified in Montessori training and B.Ed OR M.Ed have fair knowledge compared to teachers qualified in other departments.

In this study, knowledge of teachers who are qualified in Montessori and teacher training courses have fair knowledge on the concept of learning disability and there is a significant relation between knowledge and educational status of the teacher. A study conducted by Bhavya and Shari, they observed significant relation between knowledge of teacher and their qualification(13)(8). Teacher's qualification in relation to attitudes was studied and it is found that there is no significance between teacher's qualification and their attitudes. These findings are consistent with the Chopra who reported that there was no significant difference between the teacher's attitude and qualification(9). In another study conducted by Bhavya, it was observed that teachers qualified in training courses show positive attitudes towards students with learning disability and support then to overcome their disability(13).

In this study, age of the teacher does not have any significance with their practice. In another study conducted by Hanan Abo and Amaal Mohamed, it was observed that, age of the teacher is not in significance with their practices(14).

➤ *Number of Years of Experience:*

Teachers with experience would have come across many students with learning disabilities and do have good knowledge about the concepts and attitudes towards the students. In this study, it is observed that teacher's experience has no effect on their knowledge about learning disability. In another study conducted by Adebowale and Moye, no significance was observed between teacher's experience and their knowledge on learning disability(6). On comparing teacher's attitude and years of experience, no significant correlation was observed between the two. This finding is in agree with the study of Chopra who found that no significant difference between teacher's attitude and their number of years of experience(9). The study done by Emam and Mohamed found that teachers with more years of teaching experience showed less positive attitudes than teachers with fewer years of experience. Regarding correlation between years of experience of teachers and practices, there was positive significance in this study. Teachers who had more experience practice inclusive education than teachers having less years of experience. This results are consistent with another study conducted by Hanan Abo and Amaal Mohammed who observed that, teachers experience are significant with their practices(14).

## V. CONCLUSION

The result of this study revealed that primary school teachers have fair knowledge about learning disability. Since the condition is most commonly noted first by primary school teachers, the Teacher Training curriculum must provide them with sufficient knowledge to identify a child with learning disability, to train and support them effectively. Special educational strategies like teaching with audio records, video report and counselling may be helpful in educating the child. Hence teachers must practice these types of teaching methods for the betterment of the child. Since conducting workshops increase the awareness of learning disabilities, more number of workshops can be implemented during each academic year, so as to update the knowledge on learning disabilities.

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