

A Study of Adjustment and Emotional Stability Among Learning Disabled Adolescents

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Abstract

The present study was conducted with an objective to compare the adjustment and emotional stability of learning disabled and non-learning-disabled adolescents. Adjustment here refers to emotional, social and educational adjustment and emotional stability refers to stability and consistency of emotional reactions in given situations. Using Convenience sampling method, a sample of 100 adolescents, matched in age and gender was selected. It comprised of 50 Learning Disabled and 50 Non-Learning-Disabled adolescents. It was a comparative study to understand how the presence of Learning disability affects adjustment and emotional stability of learning-disabled adolescents and compare the two variables among Non-learning-disabled peers. For the purpose of data collection, Adjustment Inventory for School Students (Sinha & Singh, 1993) and Emotional stability questionnaire (Vohra, 1995) were administered on the sample. Independent sample t test and descriptive statistics were used for analysis. The results indicated a significant difference in adjustment and emotional stability of learning-disabled adolescents when compared with non-learning-disabled peers. Statistically, deficits in their adjustment and emotional stability can be attributed to the presence of learning-disability in them.

Keywords: Learning disability, Adjustment, Emotional stability, Adolescence.

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Introduction

Learning disability is a neuro developmental condition that exhibits itself prominently in the school years. It is usually screened in the school years when academic outputs show significant gaps between expectation and performance. Since difficulties arise due to different neural networks, it is also considered a disorder of biological origin. "Specific learning disabilities" is a condition in which there are deficits in spoken and written language, comprehension and processing, number difficulties, difficulties with perceptual functioning, like altered figure ground perception, difficulties with size, orientation, and perception of graphics. These difficulties are referred to as dyslexia (language difficulties), dyscalculia (number difficulties), dysgraphia (writing difficulties). (RPWD Act 2016, Gazette of India, Extraordinary, part II, Section 1, p 34).

Learning disability is primarily linked with academic under achievement, nearly 75% of LD

children show underdeveloped social skills in contrast to their counterparts (Kavale & Forness, 1996; Pearl, 1992; Wight & Chapparo, 2008). Understandably, they avoid social-interaction, and are therefore left with a few opportunities to socialize with their peers. This starts acyclic process that prevents them from trying to adjust socially and emotionally in the environment. (Bandura, 1977). Academic pressure and underachievement dispose them to develop escaping defences like school absenteeism, avoiding exams, choosing to stay back home rather than attending a family event etc. These self-defeating behaviours keep them from nurturing their strengths. Studies indicate that Learning disabled students develop social and emotional problems due to their vulnerability to anxiety, stress, depression, behavioural disorders, low self-concept, low self-esteem, loneliness and allied psychological difficulties. (Lufi et. al 2005). Having a poor self-image disposes learning-disabled adolescents at risk for

feelings of shame, loneliness, victimization, and chronic stress. (Zaher Accariya, and Khalil, 2016) If these psychological issues persist, they may adversely affect their academic and learning potentials furthermore. Thus, it becomes important to work on the non-academic areas to strengthen their coping and problem-solving skills.

Purpose: The present study aims to compare the adjustment and emotional stability of learning-disabled and non-learning-disabled adolescents.

Hypothesis: Non-learning-disabled adolescents will have a better adjustment and emotional stability as compared to learning-disabled adolescents.

Method:

For the purpose of this study, a purposive sample of 100 learning disabled and non-learning-disabled adolescents was selected. (25 Learning-Disabled girls, 25 Learning-Disabled boys, 25 Non-learning disabled girls, 25 Non-learning-disabled boys) Different Schools and child guidance centres were visited in Delhi and the purpose of the study was explained. Parents' consent was taken and all those who were willing to be a part of the study were selected.

The learning-disabled sample was assessed and diagnosed on NIMHANS Battery of Learning disabilities, by the multidisciplinary team comprising of Psychologist, Psychiatrist and special educator, from reputed hospitals in Delhi. This was confirmed by the reports presented by the parents and the school counsellors.

Participants: Among the sample of 100 adolescents, between the age of 13 to 17, (50 girls and 50 boys) were selected excluding those with severe sensory impairments and intellectual deficiency. Out of 50 learning disabled, there were 25 girls and 25 boys. Similarly, among 50 non-learning disabled, 25 were girls and 25 were boys.

Design: Ex-post-facto research design.

Measures: For the purpose of this research, the following tools were used: Adjustment Inventory

for School Students (Sinha & Singh ,1993) and Emotional stability questionnaire (Vohra S., 1995)

Adjustment Inventory for School Students:

Reliability: Coefficient of reliability determined by Split half method was .95, Test Retest method was .93 and K-R formula 20 was .94

Validity: In item analysis, validity coefficients were determined for each item by biserial correlation method. The product moment coefficient correlation between the inventory score was obtained to be .51.

Emotional Stability Questionnaire

Reliability : Split half reliability was found to be 87. Test retest reliability after seven days interval test-retest reliability was found to be .78 and after one month was .74

Validity: The construct validity of the test has an average correlation of .80

Procedure: Schools and child guidance clinics were approached, and the purpose of the study was explained. All those who were willing to be a part of the study were selected. At mutually consented time and venue, students were administered the tools. Adjustment Inventory for School Students (Sinha & Singh ,1993) and Emotional stability questionnaire (Vohra S., 1995) were used to collect data. Learning disabled students were helped with reading the instructions and the questions wherever needed. After the data collection, descriptive statistics and independent sample t-test was used for analysing the comparison among the two groups. Operationally, as per the adjustment scale used, higher scores indicate poorer adjustment (AISS, Sinha & Singh, 1993) and as per the emotional stability questionnaire, higher scores indicate higher emotional stability and vice versa. (Vohra, S 1995).

Results :

The mean and t scores of adjustment and emotional stability of the participants are recorded in Table I

Table 1: Showing Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) and significance levels (t value)

Variable	Mean		Standard Deviation		t (sig level)
	Learning Disabled N=50	Non-Learning-Disabled N=50	Learning Disabled N=50	Non-Learning-Disabled N=50	
Emotional Adjustment	12.10	5.30	1.92	2.27	16.10*
Social Adjustment	12.20	4.82	1.97	1.73	19.82*
Educational Adjustment	11.86	5.26	2.02	1.66	17.83*
Overall Adjustment	36.18	15.38	4.30	3.45	26.64*
Emotional Stability	2.74	7.22	0.44	0.95	30.12*

* $p < 0.01$

As is evident from Table 1, Non-Learning disabled adolescents were found to have a significantly better emotional adjustment ($t = 16.10$, $p < 0.01$), significantly better social adjustment ($t = 19.82$, $p < 0.01$) and significantly better educational adjustment ($t = 17.83$, $p < 0.01$) as compared to the learning-disabled peers.

Non-learning-disabled adolescents were also found to have a significantly higher Emotional stability ($t = 30.12$, $p < 0.01$) than learning-disabled adolescents. Thus the hypothesis in the study that Non-learning-disabled adolescents will have a significantly better adjustment and emotional stability than learning disabled adolescents was supported by the findings of the present research.

Discussion:

The findings of the present study indicate that presence of Learning-disability adversely affects adjustment and emotional stability of learning-disabled adolescents.

Findings of this study are in agreement with the earlier studies claiming that learning-disabled adolescents find difficulty in social adjustment and exhibit emotionally difficulties. (Accariya, and Khalil, 2016, Kavale & Forness, 1996). Studies indicate that learning disabled are prone to anxiety and show signs of social isolation and poor self-concept. (Lufi, Elner, 2005). The present era is witnessing the learning-disabled students suffering from mental health disorders and social exclusion. (Goswami U, 2008).

Our policies, legal frameworks, Sarv Shiksha Abhiyan (2000), Right to education Act (2009), emphasize universalisation of education and emphasize on inclusive education. For inclusion to become a reality, it is important to work on the psychosocial skills of students with challenges. Academic interventions do provide a good support at the academic front but Psychological interventions like life skills education, social skills training, is what is needed to strengthen their adjustment and emotional stability to foster inclusivity in the system.

Thus, psychological interventions and working on improvement of emotional quotient of the learning-disabled adolescents is the need of the hour. It will strengthen our youth and empower them to be a better adjusted and emotionally stable citizens of the country.

A longitudinal study can be conducted to understand the impact of psychosocial interventions like life skills education on the psychological attributes of learning-disabled adolescents. Sensitisation and awareness programmes can help students and general education teachers to understand the condition of learning disability and equip them to deal with it. Education boards and research personnel need to work on and modify the existing teaching modules and educational assessment structures. The recent contemporary phrase coming from the eminent educationists of the field, 'EQ is the new IQ' should be pondered upon. We need to have more interactive, emotionally enriching and accommodative system to foster socio-emotional inclusion in addition to academic inclusion to address the diverse needs of the learners.

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