

FACTORS INFLUENCING SLD PUPILS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The objective behind this study is to identify the problems faced by SLD (Specific Learning Disability) pupils, such as learning and writing disabilities, in Pakistan. In this particular study, a relationship between SLD pupils' and academic performance is explored. Through semi-structured interviews and survey studies, data for the paper has been drawn from teachers, principals, SLD pupils, and their parents through purposive techniques. It was found that teachers and parents do not have sufficient knowledge about dyslexia, which creates a lot of issues in identifying the SLD student at an earlier stage. The brain-based learning disability varies from person to person, which creates trouble remembering words and their spellings, phonological processing (difficult to understand speech and sounds), or it also includes rapid visual-verbal responding. Moreover, teachers and parents contribute negatively towards SLD pupils, which results in academic failure, a dropout rate, low intelligence, and low self-esteem. Due to SLD, pupils face various issues such as

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emotional neglect, loneliness, lack of attention; social maturity; hopelessness; poor self-esteem and image; and social and physical expulsion from school to universities. The study revealed that focusing on a variety of components, such as enhanced teaching approaches, early interventions, and a supportive atmosphere, did not harm their psychological and emotional well-being at the school and family levels. This not only allows for the early diagnosis of a kid with SLD, but it also allows for earlier intervention, which leads to improved academic achievement. Furthermore, parent and teacher training and awareness impact children's self-advocacy, resilience against SLD, and academic performance.

Keywords: SLD, Academic Performance, Low self-esteem, Low intelligence

Introduction

The dyslexia refer to the inept even competency of an individual in to learning, reading, spelling or even speaking is known as dyslexia. An uneven balance of talents is a characteristic feature of dyslexia. Dyslexia is a condition that is a group of related traits that differ in intensity and from person to person. These traits include both distinctive issue clusters and, sometimes, specific skills. The syndrome of dyslexia is now universally acknowledged as a particular learning disorder of neurological origin that is unrelated to a person's race or socioeconomic

background and does not indicate low IQ or poor educational capacity (Lucid, 2006).

Dyslexia is considered as several distinct learning disabilities particularly it refers to the inability of native or master language. More specifically, people have not frequent tendency to read, understand, spell or even acquiring the code for written language. The difficulties of victim in this regard can be identified as “dyslexics” if he/she unable to get phonemic awareness and jumbled up, considered as single-word decoding, not very reading fluency etc. according to studies, Although it appears that men are more likely than women to have dyslexia, the exact ratio is uncertain; the most often cited numbers range from 3:1 to 5:1. According to the data, dyslexia is genetically based in at least two-thirds of cases, although in other instances, birth defects may also be a contributing factor. The majority of specialists agree that 4% of the population is significantly affected (Lucid, 2006). Some pupils in schools are unable to live up to the standards that are set for them. These pupils are called dull, and their educational institutions conclude that they cannot learn. Many of these pupils can struggle with reading, writing, or information processing. In Pakistan, it is customary to categorize all of these learning issues as "dyslexia." Despite what could seem to be a paradox, it is also common for pupils who only experience minor learning challenges to be diagnosed with dyslexia (Ershad & Shiraz, 2020).

Some studies have shown how these cultural and structural biases, which focus on children's difficulties rather than differences, may result in "othering" young people, resulting in a reduction in self-esteem and self-worth. The cultural influence on how dyslexia is understood and contextualized is significant. Due to industrialization and professionalism, it is difficult to cope with these disabilities. Therefore, policymakers should understand how a dyslexia patient survives in these kinds of social conditions if it is not stopped. Therefore, it may be argued that we won't be able to meet all of the demands of children, leading to an improvement in self-concept and self-esteem, unless the formation of dyslexia and everything it encompasses are critically examined. According to socio-cultural theory, a person's identity and self-perception are strongly influenced by what society values, so perhaps it is crucial to see difference and diversity as critical. This will have an impact on the strategies and interventions that can best meet the needs of a variety of pupils in schools (Brien, 2020). This implies that if the shareholders (policymakers, parents, and teachers) look after the children, the children will be free of dyslexia as long as there is no medical test for examination and a culture of caring for children. The children are facing these issues and are losing self-confidence and self-worth.

Pakistan is facing a crisis in providing basic necessities to its citizens, and access to healthcare is one of the major sectors

lacking. In this regard, one of the most lacking aspects is the lack of research on children's mental health. This includes neurodevelopmental conditions like specific learning disorders (SLD), which make it difficult to learn particular academic skills that are important for academic performance. The lack of awareness leads to SLD. SLD can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including difficulties with reading, writing, spelling, and mathematics. There are eight SLD-affected areas, according to the Colorado Department of Education. For school-age children and adolescents, SLD is most prevalent in the domains of written expression, reading, and mathematics. SLD sufferers could perform well in one area while struggling in another. According to reports, one out of ten student's faces difficulty in at least one academic subject. However, reading and spelling are the most prevalent areas of difficulty. Three SLD categories have been identified by the American Psychiatric Association (APA): dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia, which are all impairments in reading and writing. It can fluctuate in intensity from moderate to severe. Dylexia affects 75 to 80 percent of pupils with SLD (Kausar, 2021).

According to Irum Mumtaz, a dyslexia remedial therapist in Pakistan, about 90% of the pupils may be free from dyslexia even in normal classes if parents and teachers timely assist and intervene. Unfortunately, most people (parents, teachers, and society at large) do not know that dyslexia is prevalent in

Pakistan (symptoms, care, and dealing). Therefore, we are forced to rely on international data, which shows that 15% to 20% of pupils in each class struggle with learning. If it is so, then this means 12 million out of 60 million children within Pakistan need assistance (Times, 2017).

Ashraf & Majeed (2011) conducted a study of pupils in grades 6 through 8 with a sample size of 500 in Lahore, Pakistan. Moreover, they were evenly divided into two groups of 250 males and 250 females. The pupils were between the ages of 11 and 17. The findings showed that 5.37% of the pupils in the entire sample had dyslexia. The sad part of the findings was that neither teachers nor parents were aware of how to discover and treat pupils with learning difficulties, even though it was more prevalent in classes 6 and 7, particularly among grade 8 female pupils. These studies argue for the need to identify dyslexia in society, especially in schools, and treat it well before it becomes a problem. Unfortunately, the majority of teachers are unaware of dyslexia and lack the proper information on issues faced by pupils and mitigating training process. Most pupils face issues in foreign languages such as English (Ashraf, 2011).

According to Irum Mumtaz “Indicators include delayed milestones, difficulty in rhyming, short attention span, not like going to school, confusion between left – right, up – down, tiring quickly when reading or writing, difficulty with buttoning up,

coloring, cutting, being late in learning to tie shoelaces or telling the time,” (Times, 2017).

Dyslexia is a fact and a disability that is carried by an individual throughout his life (Ilaria, 2022). The pupils suffering from dyslexia face various issues while learning anything. One of the most important is unable to achieve in schools and consequences as low self-esteem in childhood and subsequently in adulthood. This is the time when a student need assistance to get free from it (Reid, 2002). Teachers and parents play an important role in this regard to understanding SLD and can fix the issues of pupils by enabling them effectively from the beginning. One of the most important steps towards fixing issues is by enable the teachers to opt specific teaching techniques which are helpful for those pupils who are unable to participate in the classroom due to shyness and lack of remembering. J. Mubashrah (2019) referred Hodge (2000), who stated that dyslexic student has ability to perform all task such as oral skills, comprehension, visual spatial awareness etc. and those pupils are also talented and god gifted learners, however, they should be identified earlier and well treated (Jamil, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Achieving academic success for pupils with SLD is a matter of concern, as they have faced numerous challenges in their lives. These concerns encompass a number of variables, such as

impairments in language, cognitive processing, social-emotional development, instruction, the environment, etc. Systemic variables can also have an impact on SLD pupils' academic progress in addition to these individual considerations. A few of these variables are inadequate financing from the government and any programs related to SLD, a lack of knowledge and comprehension of SLD, and ineffective governmental interest and educational policies and procedures. The current study addresses the multifaceted difficulties encountered by pupils with SLD and how those difficulties impact their academic progress.

Research Question

What problems do children with SLD confront, and how do those problems affect their ability to learn?

Objectives of the Study

To find out the challenges confront by SLD pupils

To explore the impact of SLD on their academic progress?

Methodology

Research methodologies constitute an efficient and better way to understand and collect data. Research methodologies allow us to use better tools and techniques for the collection of data. Semi-structured interviews and survey studies were conducted on grades 6–8 pupils (N = 27) of FG's schools of Taxila and Wah in the district of Rawalpindi, Punjab. Moreover, the teachers (N = 6), principals (N = 2) of the school, and parents (N = 4) of the selected SLD pupils were also interviewed through purposive

sampling techniques. The survey allows us to identify the pupils facing SLD, while interviews have looked at how dyslexia affects prospects for academic success or failure.

Result and discussion

SLD has a significant social and emotional cost; it frequently results in poor self-esteem, diminished confidence, and heightened vulnerability to anxiety, despair, and annoyance. Social connections can also be impacted, and because of their learning disabilities, they may experience challenges and even bullying. The difficulties are made much more difficult by attention and concentration problems, which make it difficult for pupils to focus during prolonged study sessions, to stay focused on assignments, and to be quickly sidetracked. A barrier that can make it difficult to keep up with classroom activities and assignments is processing speed limits, which can also impair tasks that call for rapid replies.

It was found during the study that the SLD pupils face several obstacles that might seriously affect their academic career and mental health. However, depending on the kind and degree of their SLD, the issues differ. For example, dyslexic pupils frequently struggle with reading text issues. A common issue was finding it difficult to recognize and decode words. Some pupils mentioned that they also struggle with writing and spelling. During an interview with teachers, it was reported that pupils also face trouble understanding mathematical symbols and concepts

and having trouble with simple math, like having trouble solving problems and applying mathematical ideas. In addition, writing challenges, such as trouble with penmanship, structuring ideas, and producing a lot of spelling and grammar mistakes, are also prevalent concerns.

One of the most prevalent disorders affecting school-age children is dyslexia. It is important to note that dyslexia are rarely acknowledged in Pakistan, where parents and teachers ask SLD children to compete with other pupils. As was already stated, about 15-20% of children have a condition yet it goes undiagnosed. This condition is prevalent because parents and teachers don't have access to sufficient information, so prompt treatments aren't made, and children exhibit anxious and depressed behaviours as a result. In Pakistani society, poor self-esteem and academic success are also prevalent, which leads to school failure, dropout rates, and participation in antisocial behavior.

It was discovered that the SLD student first exhibited a number of symptoms. Not every student, though, disclosed every symptom for example, the teachers who took part in the interview noted that among other things, SLD pupils frequently struggle with pronunciation, especially when speaking foreign languages, speaking, spelling mistakes, reading textbook difficulties, mixing of sounds, matching letters to sounds, and difficulty recognizing

the sounds in words. Moreover, dyslexic people spell words phonetically.

Signs of dyslexia in preschool individuals included mispronouncing words, struggling to name familiar objects, troubled learning nursery rhymes etc. while children of k-2 face trouble in learning letter names and the sounds they make and confusing the letters that look similar. Further on the major signs shown by teens and adults are reading slowly, leaving out small words or parts of longer words when reading aloud, struggling to remember common abbreviations, often searching for words or using substitutes. Moreover, they also struggle with writing and comprehending their own writing as a student reported that if the teacher asks her to read aloud what she has written she is unable to understand her own written words.

The study discovered that pupils with SLD generally struggle with arithmetic in addition to reading difficulties. It was common for a kid with SLD to struggle to remember things and to have trouble learning basic fundamentals like multiplication tables. They can perform basic arithmetic operations like addition and subtraction, but when faced with narrative difficulties, they struggle to apply or use math principles. Teachers also reported that some pupils with SLD seem to be competent at arithmetic, but they frequently struggle to write out the stages of the problem or explain how they arrived at the correct answer. A major concern was that all these problems indicate a linguistic delay;

the pupils are just unable to comprehend or retain mathematical ideas.

The teachers acknowledged that during classroom activities they mostly ignored the issues of pupils with SLD. There are many reasons for that. For example, lack of information. Teachers are instructed to cover the course, revise and maintain the file work. Most of the teachers are more concerned and just stick with their jobs and salaries. During an interview with the principal, it was revealed that the majority of the teachers are new graduates and unfamiliar with the issues affecting pupils. Moreover, the teachers are very busy with their daily routine activities, which does not allow them to help weaker pupils by going out of the box. Furthermore, they focus on pupils who are doing well in reading and writing but ignore the weak pupils. Some of the teachers' results in academic improvements for some of the pupils. Other incompetents or SLD sufferers drop out of school. The failure experiences of SLD pupils in reading lessons, according to teachers, are to blame for the decline in children's confidence and self-esteem since they are unable to function in a situation where making mistakes is frowned upon. Parents expressed their belief that being in a class with other children experiencing similar difficulties was causing depression and low self-esteem. Which results in anger, not attending school, loneliness, bullying, misbehavior, and establishing a negative image of school and their own.

A teacher reported that initially, when they were asked to read aloud in front of the class, they are reluctant to read and make excuses such as their eyes are weak, words on the textbook are not clearly visible, headaches, requesting teachers to ask someone else, etc. Moreover, an SLD student reported that when classmates knew they were weak in reading and writing, they insisted the teacher ask them to read or write on the white board. Another student reported that as she faced great difficulties doing her homework she used to spend all her recess time doing it and that she did her best to find the help she needed however she never found one as no one was willing to grant help. Non-compliance results in the student being insulted and reported to their parents about their academic performance. A student further reported that sometimes, female teacher punished them by taking their lunch till they couldn't remember things or taunting them. A parent reported that before being aware that their child had SLD, their child experienced loneliness because "she believes that her classmates are not her friends since they mock and taunt her, and as a result, it is preferable to be alone rather than with them." Additionally, she gradually concludes that she is incapable and quits working on homework and exam preparation. Later, she justifies her absence from school by blaming her teachers for her punishment and provides an argumentative justification for why she should not attend. Another student said that I pretend to be sick to skip the school because I feel so far behind the others. The

student's self-esteem and confidence are affected by these experiences, especially when written work receive feedback for their poor presentation and errors in language, punctuation, and spelling. Moreover, SLD pupils are not only stigmatized by schoolmates, teachers, and peers in the class; they are stigmatized in the playground as well, which can lead to increased self-stigma and reduced motivation to learn.

During the study, it was discovered that pupils who struggled with SLD had negative self-perceptions, which caused them to put in less effort in academic performance and experience a drop-in self-esteem. It was also found that children's self-concepts deteriorate mostly as a result of the challenging situations they encounter throughout their schooling. Many pupils with SLD claim that educational institutions manipulate their emotions and face various behavioral issues. Therefore, academic success is given less importance by SLD pupils, and their interactions with classmates and teachers, in particular, become unsatisfactory and create bad memories in their minds. As principal of a school reported “a school for such student is said to be a location where they are put in regular classrooms, which cause lower levels of self-esteem”.

The lack of adequate diagnostic resources for SLD pupils in the pre-and post-school years is one of the key issues that persist in Pakistan. First of all, if it is discovered at an early age, the parents are reluctant to acknowledge it. It is viewed as though someone is

placing the blame on their pupils or they view someone as describing their children as medically unfit or having low intelligence. Second, because of their hectic schedules, teachers don't appear to be interested in cooperating. If parents demand, they urge them to send their pupils to special schools, but otherwise they treat them like normal pupils. Both these factors have a role in the SLD pupils' poor self-esteem and academic failure. The second problem is significantly more crucial and is connected to pupils' future professional prospects as well as the growing dyslexia epidemic. More importantly, the cost of therapy is much higher. As a consequence, the difficulties are overlooked, and it is no longer possible to see improvements in the pupils' dysfunction and suffering.

Pupils who have special learning disabilities (SLD) have a variety of challenges when it comes to their academic performance. The language-related difficulties that these pupils have can significantly impair their academic achievement since they involve difficulties with reading, writing, and communicating. Additionally, learning obstacles, including memory and problem-solving challenges, hinder pupils' ability to process and remember information, which hinders their academic advancement and retention of knowledge.

Emotional and social issues are among the main concerns. Their general well-being is greatly impacted by these problems, which include anxiety, low motivation, and low self-esteem. Therefore,

its influence on pupils' participation and performance in the classroom is substantial. To mitigate it, the efficacy and quality of the training and teaching strategies of teachers are equally important. The selection of teaching techniques is a significant factor in determining the degree to which SLD pupils are able to understand and apply the material.

Additionally, the atmosphere in which pupils' study is quite important. The academic success of pupils with special needs can be aided or hindered by variables such as class size and support from peers, teachers, and parents, due to the lack of systemic problems. Therefore, their academic progress is severely hampered by a systematic lack of knowledge and comprehension of SLD among peers and educators, inadequate financing for SLD programs, and the existence of bad educational policies and practices.

Although SLD pupils' achievements might not always line up with conventional academic standards, it's still vital to acknowledge that they can be significant and valuable. Their unique skills and abilities, like personal growth and progress, being resilient, making contributions for the betterment of society, etc., are frequently used to characterize the success of these children. According to the study, students with SLDs may have vivid imaginations and be capable of coming up with original, perceptive thoughts. They could be exceptionally talented in the arts, sciences, social sciences, politics, music, etc.

Policymakers might address these intricate issues in a number of ways. "An awareness campaign should be carried out regarding specific learning disabilities (SLD); active parental or guardian involvement; the use of assistive technology; and greater teacher preparation are all possible ways to address these problems and promote better academic results for kids with SLD."

Conclusion

The symptoms of dyslexia can vary from person to person. Some children find it difficult to spell, and some find it difficult to write and pronounce. Pupils with SLD do not learn to write and pronounce words, especially in foreign languages, quickly, and even studies found that society forces them to write with their right hand and not with their left hand. Moreover, SLD disorder continues throughout life if it is not treated timely. Moreover, it has also been observed that parents take any kind of hindrance to the child's learning very seriously, and, as a result, they start scolding. The child starts to think that they did not understand earlier. Thus, the child faces various issues such as low self-esteem, academic failure, and reluctance to participate in social gatherings. Moreover, pupils with SLD feel loneliness, hesitate to speak up, and rely on others for help. When such children are reprimanded, their self-esteem is hurt, and they become more frustrated in the process of remembering and learning, which results in depression.

Dyslexia specialists identify such children through speech therapy or conversational stages and suggest ways to correct their weaknesses, usually by getting them age-appropriate toys. Besides bringing those stories, books, and magazines with interesting, colorful pictures, they also start to recognize letters with the help of colors or shapes in games. If a child is diagnosed with dyslexia, inform the teachers about the situation and try to get the child out of it together.

People suffering from dyslexia are also very successful. We have many examples of successful people who suffered from dyslexia in their childhood. Hollywood's best actress, Jennifer Aniston, top filmmaker, Steven Spielberg, and the late legendary heavyweight boxer, Muhammad Ali, also suffered from dyslexia, but they made a name for themselves in society with their tireless work, determination, and efforts.

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