



## Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers

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### Abstract

The study aims to find out the awareness on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers. The sample for the present study consisted of 500 elementary school teachers of Kerala. In this study the investigator used an Awareness Test on Learning Disabilities to measure the Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers. The study reveals that elementary school teachers possess an average level of Awareness on Learning Disabilities and also that there exist significant difference in the mean scores of Awareness on Learning Disabilities with respect to gender, locale, type of management but no significant difference exist in the mean scores of Awareness on Learning Disabilities with respect to teaching experience and also that there exist significant difference in the awareness on different dimensions on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers such as as Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia.


**Keywords:** Awareness, Learning disabilities, Elementary school teachers.

### Contents

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| 1. Introduction ..... | 79 |
| 2. Results .....      | 80 |
| 3. Conclusion .....   | 83 |
| References .....      | 83 |
| Bibliography .....    | 83 |

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## 1. Introduction

Education promotes all round development of the child, which unites the soul, in transmission of entire values. Education is the tool which is used for the realization of individual and social aspiration and for meeting personal challenges. The national policy on education (1986) has made a significant contribution towards developing educational opportunities for the disabled children. Students of today are the citizens of tomorrow and they are going to be the pillars of the country. Hence it is essential to ensure that each pillar is as strong as the other is. Moreover, one cannot think of bringing about optimum human resource development without uplifting all categories of backward students. In India around 13-14% of all school children suffer from learning disorders (Krishnakumar, 1999). Unfortunately, most schools fail to lend a sympathetic ear to their problems. As a result, these children are often branded as failures. There has been an increasing awareness and identification of children with learning disabilities in the last two decades. Despite this growing interest, we still do not have the exact estimate of the prevalence of the problem in India.

Learning disabilities are very big challenge for schools and teachers. If the learning disabilities are ignored, unnoticed and unanswered such children's needs are not met in regular class rooms or special education within the school; we can't fulfill the aim of universalization of elementary education and equalization of educational opportunity (Lokanadhareddy, 2005). Individuals differ from each other in their physical, intellectual, emotional and behavioral traits. Teacher is an artist who moulds and shapes the physical, intellectual and moral power of the children. To accomplish their task effectively a teacher should be highly competent. The progress of a country depends up on the quality of its teachers and for this reason teaching is the noblest among all professions.

Identification of a learning disabled child is the first step to prevent learning disabilities. Then only the teacher is able to distinguish between normal students and learning disabled students. Therefore the teacher should possess awareness of learning disabilities in children. Better awareness on the part of the teachers, about the concept, causes, characteristics, identification and assessment of instructional materials and guidance and counseling needs helps to modify the teaching environment.

Teachers are the child's first contact after school entry and the ideal person to detect a learning problem. Unfortunately, most either ignore the deficiency or blame it on the child's personality branding it as laziness, an attitude problem or aggression. The child continues to graduate from one class to the other totally inept at handling the pressure of the higher classes. This also leads to behavioral problems. Hence, there is a need to generate awareness regarding the problem amongst teachers.

This study aims to identify the level of awareness on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers. The teachers should realize that all children are special and that they have both strengths and weaknesses. To meet their learning requirements effectively, the teacher should have a thorough understanding of the nature of disabilities/abilities. For this, teacher should be familiar with the concept, causes, teaching method, guidance and counseling of learning disabilities. The present study intends to analyze the awareness on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers with respect to gender, locale, and type of management and teaching experiences. It also helps to improve the quality of education and good learning environment and help the teachers for identification of children with learning disabilities in their class room and provide good learning materials, guidance and counseling to children with learning disabilities. So the investigator selected the study to identify the Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

The present study is aimed at finding out the Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers and to test whether there exist significant difference in the Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers with respect to Gender, Locale, Type of management and Teaching experience. The present study is entitled as "**Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers**".

### 1.2. Definition of Key Terms

**Awareness.** Awareness is, 'having knowledge of something / realizing something and also as interested in and knowing about something'.

In the present study, the word 'awareness' is referred to the elementary school teachers' knowledge about various aspects of learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia.

**Learning Disabilities.** "Learning disabilities are a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorder manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction" –National joint Committee for Learning Disabilities (NJCLD).

In the present study learning disabilities includes dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia. It is an imperfect ability to read, write, speak, spell, co-ordinate or to do mathematical calculation.

**Elementary School Teachers.** Elementary school teachers are those teachers teaching in one to seven classes.

### 1.3. Variables of the Study

#### 1.3.1. Criterion variable

Awareness on learning disability

#### 1.4. Classificatory Variables

- Gender
- Locale
- Type of management
- Teaching Experience

### 1.5. Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the level of Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers
2. To compare the Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers based on
  - a) Gender
  - b) Locale
  - c) Type of management
  - d) Teaching Experience
3. To compare the Awareness on Different Dimensions of Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers based on
  - a) Dyslexia
  - b) Dysgraphia
  - c) Dyspraxia
  - d) Dyscalculia

### 1.6. Hypotheses of the Study

1. There exist different levels in the Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers.
2. There exists significance difference in the Awareness on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers based on
  - a) Gender
  - b) Locale
  - c) Type of management
  - d) Teaching Experience
3. There exists significance difference in the Awareness on Different Dimensions of Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers such as
  - a) Dyslexia
  - b) Dysgraphia
  - c) Dyspraxia
  - d) Dyscalculia

### 1.7. Method of the Study

**Method adopted.** The investigator used survey method for the present study.

**Sample selected for the study.** The sample for the present study consisted of 500 elementary school teachers from various schools. The investigator used stratified random sampling technique. The present study was carried out in Palakkad, Thrissur and Malappuram districts of Kerala state.

**Tools used for the study.** Awareness Test on Learning Disability

**Statistical techniques used.** The statistical techniques used for analyzing the data are:

- Descriptive statistics like mean, median, mode and standard deviation were employed to know the nature of distribution
- Skewness and Kurtosis were worked out to establish the normality in the distribution
- Percentage analysis was done to find the level of awareness on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers
- Test of significance of difference between two means (t-test) was done to find out the significance in the difference between two mean scores of awareness on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers
- One way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was done to find out the significance in difference between more than two mean scores
- Test of significance of difference between two proportions used to find out the significance of difference in the awareness on different dimensions on learning disabilities

### 1.7. Procedure

After administering the tool to elementary school teachers the responses were scored carefully and subjected to statistical analysis. Percentage analysis, t test and ANOVA were the statistical Techniques used.

## 2. Results

Classification of elementary school teachers according to their awareness on learning disabilities is given in Table 1. The table also contains the number and Percentage of elementary school teachers with different levels of awareness on learning disabilities.

**Table-1.** Number and percentage of Elementary School Teachers falling in to different levels of Awareness on Learning Disabilities Groups (High, Average and Low)

| Variable                           | Group   | Score    | n   | %     |
|------------------------------------|---------|----------|-----|-------|
| Awareness on Learning Disabilities | High    | ≥ 28     | 72  | 14.4% |
|                                    | Average | 18 to 28 | 369 | 73.8% |
|                                    | Low     | <18      | 59  | 11.8% |

From the above table it is evident that that 14.4% of the total sample of elementary school teachers have high level in awareness on learning disabilities, 73.8% have average level in awareness on learning disabilities and 11.8% have low level in awareness on learning disabilities. From the above table it can be concluded that majority of elementary school teachers possess average level of awareness on learning disabilities.

To find out whether there is any significant difference in the mean scores of awareness on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers with respect to gender, locale t test was used. ANOVA was used to find out the significant difference in the mean scores of awareness on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers with respect to type of management and teaching experience.

Comparisons of the mean scores of different subsamples on the awareness on learning disabilities are presented under the following heads.

### i. Between Male and Female Elementary School Teachers

**Table-2.** Represent the data and results of the test of significance of difference between the mean awareness on learning disabilities for Male and Female elementary School teachers.

| Sample | N   | Mean  | Standard deviation | t value |
|--------|-----|-------|--------------------|---------|
| Male   | 180 | 21.24 | 4.517              | 7.799** |
| Female | 320 | 24.52 | 4.518              |         |

Source:\*\* Significant at 0.01 level

The critical ratio for the test of significance of difference in the mean score of awareness on learning disabilities of male and female teachers is found to be 7.799. Hence the obtained critical ratio (7.799) is greater than the table value (2.58) at .01 level of significance.

Thus it may be concluded that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of awareness on learning disabilities of male and female teachers.

### ii. Between Elementary School Teachers of Urban and Rural School

Table 3 represents the data and results of the test of significance of difference between mean awareness on learning disabilities for Urban and Rural elementary School teachers.

**Table-3.** Data and result of Test of Significance of Difference between Mean Scores of Awareness on Learning Disabilities on the basis of Locale

| Sample | N   | Mean  | Standard Deviation | t value |
|--------|-----|-------|--------------------|---------|
| Rural  | 230 | 23.85 | 4.609              | 2.211*  |
| Urban  | 270 | 22.91 | 4.890              |         |

The critical ratio for the test of significance of difference in the mean score of awareness on learning disabilities of rural and urban teachers is found to be 2.211. Hence the obtained critical ratio (2.211) is greater than the table value (1.96) at .05 level of significance. Thus there is significant difference in the awareness on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers based on locale.

### iii. Between Subsamples Based on Type of Management

Summary of one way ANOVA for awareness on learning disabilities of the subsamples based on type of management is presented in Table 4

**Table-4.** Data and Result of Test of Significance of Difference between Mean Scores of Awareness on Learning Disabilities on the basis of Type of Management of School

| Source of variance | Sum of squares | Df  | Mean squares | F        |
|--------------------|----------------|-----|--------------|----------|
| Between group      | 1909.193       | 2   | 954.597      | 49.956** |
| Within group       | 9497.007       | 497 | 19.109       |          |
| Total              | 11406.200      | 499 |              |          |

Source:\*\* significant at 0.01 level

Table 4 it is revealed that the scores of awareness on learning disabilities of government, aided and unaided schools teachers is significant at 0.01 level since the calculated F value (49.956) is greater than the table value (2.58). This indicates that, there is a significant difference in the mean scores of awareness on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers belonging to different management institutions.

Further, to find out type of management where the teachers were having significant mean scores, Scheffe's Post Hoc test was used. The details are given in Table 5

**Table-5.** Scheffe Post Hoc Test for identifying the Awareness on learning Disabilities among Elementary school Teachers based on Type of management

| Type of management | N   | Subset for alpha=0.5 |       |       |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-------|-------|
|                    |     | 1                    | 2     | 3     |
| Unaided            | 95  | 19.52                |       |       |
| Aided              | 145 |                      | 23.31 |       |
| Government         | 260 |                      |       | 24.75 |

Thus the test reveals that government school teachers are more awareness on learning disabilities than aided and unaided school teachers. Their mean score (24.75) is higher than aided (23.31) and unaided (19.52) school teachers. As per the result of ANOVA it is proved that the differences between these mean scores are significant even at 0.01 levels.

#### IV. between Subsamples Based on Teaching Experience

Summary of one way ANOVA for awareness on learning disabilities of the subsamples based on teaching experience is presented in [Table 6](#)

**Table-6.** Data and Result of Test of Significance of Difference between Mean Scores of Awareness on Learning Disabilities on the basis of Teaching Experiences

| Source of variance | Sum of squares | Df  | Mean squares | F     |
|--------------------|----------------|-----|--------------|-------|
| Between group      | 59.680         | 2   | 29.840       | 1.307 |
| Within group       | 11346.520      | 497 | 22.830       |       |
| Total              | 11406.200      | 499 |              |       |

The critical ratio for the mean difference in the scores of awareness on learning disabilities among teachers of below 10 yrs, 10-20 yrs and above 20 yrs teaching experience is not significant at 0.05 level since the calculated F value (1.307) is less than the table value of (1.96).

**Awareness on different dimensions of learning disabilities among elementary school teachers such as Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia and Dyscalculia.**

Percentage of awareness in different dimensions on learning disabilities is given in the [Table 7](#)

**Table-7.** Percentage of Awareness in Different Dimensions on Learning Disabilities among Elementary School Teachers

| Sl no | Dimension   | Mean score | Obtained value |
|-------|-------------|------------|----------------|
| 1     | Dyslexia    | 6000       | 3347           |
| 2     | Dysgraphia  | 4500       | 2367           |
| 3     | Dyspraxia   | 5500       | 2962           |
| 4     | Dyscalculia | 5000       | 3122           |

[Table 7](#) shows that elementary school teachers have more awareness in dysgraphia (59.18%) and less in dyspraxia (53.85%). In order to compare the significant differences between these proportion. Test of significance of difference between proportions is used. The  $z$  value obtained for the test of significance of difference between proportion are given in [Table 3](#)

**Table-8.** Significance difference between proportions of different dimensions on learning disabilities

| Dimensions                                    | Z scores |
|---|----------|
| Dyslexia – Dysgraphia<br>(55.78%) (59.18%)    | 3.358**  |
| Dyslexia – Dyspraxia<br>(55.78%) (53.85%)     | 2.076**  |
| Dyslexia – Dyscalculia<br>(55.78%) (56.76%)   | 2.059**  |
| Dysgraphia - Dyspraxia<br>(59.18%) (53.85%)   | 5.519**  |
| Dysgraphia – Dyscalculia<br>(59.18%) (56.76%) | 2.349**  |
| Dyspraxia – Dyscalculia<br>(53.85%) (56.76%)  | 3.068**  |

From [Table 8](#) it is revealed that the elementary school teachers are more awareness in dysgraphia and less awareness in dyspraxia. The Z score of dysgraphia -dyspraxia (5.519) is higher than dyslexia-dysgraphia (3.358), dyslexia-dyspraxia (2.076), dyslexia-dyscalculia (2.059), dysgraphia- dyscalculia (2.349) and dyspraxia-dyscalculia (3.068). As per the result of significance difference between proportions it is proved that the differences between these Z scores are greater than the table value (2.58). Hence difference in the awareness on different dimension on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers such as Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia and Dyscalculia is significant at 0.01 level of significance.

#### 2.1. Educational Implications

Based on the findings of the present study, the following suggestions are put forth for improving the existing educational practices

- From the present study, it is noticed that awareness on learning disabilities among elementary school teachers is average. The study point out the need for improving their awareness on learning disabilities
- Teachers need to understand the concept, features and symptoms of different types of learning disabilities. Teacher should be aware of the characteristics of children with learning disabilities and also about the difficulties faced by them
- Teachers should provide appropriate guidance for those children with learning disabilities
- Early identification of children with learning disabilities is a must. Only teachers with awareness on learning disabilities can do it at elementary level
- The increasing identification of children with learning disorders highlights the particular need for guidance and counseling services within school to respond to individual students in distress.
- Guidance and counseling centre's should be made an essential part of the school system
- A special education teacher should be appointed in schools for the services of differently abled students



- The study suggests proper curriculum planning and implementation of learning disabilities related content in pre service teaching programmes for prospective teachers to develop a thorough knowledge on learning disabilities
- Awareness programmes on learning disabilities can be conducted state wide for all school teachers
- Organize seminars, workshops and special training programmes in every school for teachers dealing children with learning disabilities every year
- Teachers who are providing special service in this sector should be highly acknowledged and awarded by educational planners and authorities
- Humanitarian approaches in the education of children with learning disabilities should be taken as a slogan by all

### **3. Conclusion**

The study shows that elementary school teachers possess Average level of awareness on learning disabilities. From the study it is evident that elementary school teachers possess an average level of Awareness on Learning Disabilities and also that there exist significant difference in the mean scores of Awareness on Learning Disabilities with respect to gender, locale, type of management and, but no significant difference exist in the mean scores of Awareness on Learning Disabilities with respect to teaching experience

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