

Assesment on identification of learning disabilities among kindergarten children in selected primary schools

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Abstract

Background:

Learning disabilities refer to a heterogeneous group of disorders with various learning problems like reading, writing, doing calculations or understanding directions/information. Kindergarten teachers are in the best position to catch early signs and symptoms of learning disabilities and to identify the children who are at risk for struggles in learning at school in their early stages.

Aim:

To screen the kindergarten children for any learning disabilities in selected primary schools at kolar

Objectives:

1. To identify the kindergarten children with learning disabilities at classroom level.
2. To screen the characteristics of learning disabilities in kindergarten children.
3. To find out the association between the kindergarten children with learning disabilities and selected socio-demographic variables of kindergarten children.

Methodology:

A descriptive survey approach with non-probability convenient sampling technique was instituted. The sample size was 100. The study was conducted on kindergarten children at R.L Jalappa central school, Kolar & Sugana International School, Tamaka, kolar. A modified observational checklist on learning disability by Sheldon with 36 items on various domains was used to identify and screen the children by interview method with the help of their class teachers. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results:

In regards to socio-demographic variables, majority 65% of the kindergarten children were in the age group 05 years; Related to gender 60% were male children; Most of the children 51% were studying in UKG; And regarding academic performance of the children for the last six-month progress, 36% of them are with average performance. In relation to identification of learning disabilities; Out of 100 kindergarten children 30% of them had learning disabilities and 70% them don't have any learning disabilities. In terms of characteristics of learning disabilities 36% had problems with reading skills and 50% of them writing skills and majority 61% had some difficulties in simple mathematics.

Conclusion:

The findings support that kindergarten children have to be identified at the earliest by the teachers and share their observations with parents and other school specialists, since they are the first line defense in helping the kindergarten children to receive special attentions for further academic achievements.

Key Words: Learning disabilities; kindergarten children; primary schools

Introduction

Today's children are tomorrow's responsible citizens of the world. 35 to 45 percent constitutes the young children of total world's population. The future of our country depends on the health of young people.[1] The term "learning disabilities", sometimes referred to as specific learning disabilities, or learning disorders, are an umbrella term for a wide variety of learning problems. The most common types of learning disabilities involve problems with reading, writing, math, reasoning, listening, and



speaking.²

Broadly speaking, these disorders involve difficulty in one or more, but not uniformly in all, basic psychological processes: [1] input (auditory and visual perception), [2] integration (sequencing, abstraction, and organization), [3] memory (working, short term, and long term memory), [4] output (expressive language), and [5] motor (fine and gross motor).[3] Learning disabilities vary from individual to individual and may present in a variety of ways. Kindergarten teachers are in the best position to catch early signs and symptoms of learning disabilities and to identify the children who are at risk for struggles in learning at school in their early stages. [4]

Need for the Study:

Teachers play an important role in any educational system where in every classroom they will have one or two children with learning disabilities. [5] Often, the children with learning problems fail to succeed in their education and eventually quit school early. If these disabilities are not recognized, unnoticed, ignored in classrooms, we cannot fulfill the aim of universalization of elementary education and equalization of educational opportunity. So, at kindergarten level the teachers should play a vital role in identifying children with LD [6]. The right type of teacher with good amount of knowledge and competencies can do better justice to the children with learning disabilities than teacher with general pedagogy backgrounds.[7] Thus it made the investigators to find out the kindergarten children with learning disabilities which become more imperative as on today.

Statement of the Problem:

“A descriptive study on identification of learning disabilities among kindergarten children in selected primary schools at Kolar”.

Objectives:

- ❖ To identify the kindergarten children with learning disabilities at classroom level.
- ❖ To screen the characteristics of learning disabilities in kindergarten children.
- ❖ To find out the association between the kindergarten children with learning disabilities and selected socio-demographic variables of kindergarten children.

Materials and Methods:

A descriptive survey research approach with non-experimental research design was adopted. The study was conducted on kindergarten children at R.L Jalappa central school, Tamaka, kolar and Suguna International school at kolar. The samples were selected by using non-probability convenient sampling technique with the sample size of 100 kindergarten children studying in L.K.G and U.K.G who fulfills the selection criteria with the extension of support with their class teachers. A learning disability checklist by Sheldon H Horowitz and Deanna sticker from National Centre for Learning Disabilities with 36 items with

different domains on attention, gross and fine motor skills, language reading, writing, mathematics was used to collect the data. The score was interpreted as if it is above 18 it is considered as children not having learning disabilities and if the score is below 18 it is considered as children with learning disabilities.

Formal permission was obtained from the institutional ethics committee of the institution and concerned approval was taken from the authority of the school, the group members explained the purpose of the study to the primary school teachers as well as to their class teachers and obtained written informed assent from the subjects. With the support of the class teachers the kindergarten children were screened for any learning disabilities by collecting the information about the students' progress in academic and as well as with other functional skills. Each study subject's information was collected on one to one basis through interview method. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained during the process of data collection. Later the data was coded and preceded for statistical analysis by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results:

1: Socio-Demographic Variables:

With regard to socio-demographic variables of kindergarten children majority of the children 65% are in the age group of 5 years and only 35% are in 4 years. On gender 60% are male children and 40% are female children. In regard to religion most of them 89% belongs to Hindu religion and only 03% of them belongs to Christian religion. The places where they reside, 63% are from urban area and 37% were from rural area in Kolar district.

Majority of the kindergarten children 51% were studying in U.K.G class and remaining 49% were studying in L.K.G. The language which was spoken commonly at home by the children where 74% in Kannada, 18% Telugu and 06% in Hindi.

In connection with the data on their academic performance into school for last six months, the documented date reveals that 56% of the kindergarten children were with average performance of 32% of them perform good and only very bad 12% of them were found to be below average performance.

2: Identification of Kindergarten Children with Learning Disabilities:

With regard to identification of kindergarten children with learning disability at class room level, the data states that 30% of the children are identified to have learning disabilities and remaining 70% of the children do not have any form of learning disabilities and found to be with good performance at classroom level.

Sl. No	Study Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Kindergarten children with learning disability (<18)	30	70



2	Kindergarten children without learning disability (>18)	70	30
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Table 1: Frequency and percentage distribution of learning disabilities in kindergarten children N=100.

3: Distribution of Characteristics of Learning Disability In Kindergarten Children:

On screening the characteristics of learning disabilities in kindergarten children for various aspects like attention, speaking, listening etc. The findings reveal that 30% of the children were having lack of attention where remaining 70% are found to have good attention span. With gross and fine motor skills 28% of the kids are having some little developmental delays in performing some gross and fine motor skills and 72% of them were good in those skills.

With regard to communication domain, language 30% of the children has some difficulties in expressing the words and sentences whereas 70% of the children don't have any problem associated with communication or languages.

In connection with their reading skills 36% of the children have problem in reading, 50% in writing expression and 39% of them in doing simple mathematics calculation and finally 37% of the children have some problems in socio-emotional and relationships with others.

Sl.No	Characteristics of Learning Disabilities	Children without learning disability		Children with learning disability	
		Frequency (f)	Percentage (f)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (f)
1	Attention	70	70	30	30
2	Gross and fine motor	72	72	28	28
3	Language	70	70	30	30
4	Reading	74	74	36	36
5	Socio-emotional	63	63	37	37
6	Writing	50	50	50	50
7	Mathematics	61	61	39	39

Table 2: Frequency and percentage distribution on characteristics of learning disabilities in kindergarten children. N-100

4: Overall Mean Score, Sd And Range of Learning Disabilities in Kindergarten Children:

The total number of statements in the screening checklist of learning disabilities was 36 with the maximum score obtained was 34 and minimum score as 10, so the range falls between 34-10. The overall mean score was 13.88 with standard deviation (SD) of 7.91 respectively.

5: Association Between Identification of Learning Disabilities in Kindergarten Children And Their Selected Socio-Demographic Variables:

The findings reveal that there is no statistically significant association found between the learning disability in kindergarten children and their selected socio-demographic variables at P<0.05.

Discussion:

Learning disabilities which are encountered commonly in the school setting are found to affect the educational process of the children. The major results of the study states that 30% of the kindergarten children had learning disability and 70% of the kindergarten children don't have any learning disability. This finding was similar to a study conducted by G.Sridevi, A.G George, D.Srivani, K.Rangaswamy (2015) states that 19% children are suffering from learning disability and only 11% children were not having any kind of learning disability.⁸ On the characteristics of the learning disability the present study findings reveals that 36% had problem with reading skills and 50% in writing expression and 39% of them in simple mathematics. This findings also stated in the similar study of G.Sridevi (2015) at 18.6% of the students were having reading and writing difficulties such as substitutions, omissions, distortions in there spellings and were also not able to write within lines were suspected for learning disabilities.^{8,9}

Implications:

1. The findings of the current study have certain implications, such as the need for intensive in-service training for primary school teachers on identification of children who are at risk for learning disabilities.
2. The importance of sensitizing teachers and parents through awareness programmes to deal with the myths and misconceptions related to learning disabilities,
3. The urgency of appointing specially trained professionals like counselors and special educators to work along with the teachers in schools

Limitations:

1. The primary school teacher's ratings of learning progress were obtained for screening learning disabilities in kindergarten children.
2. The whole information was provided by the teachers not able to access the parents.
3. The study is limited to only identification of learning disabilities on kindergarten children not on specific learning disabilities and its severity of impact.

Conclusion:

The findings support that kindergarten children have to be identified at the earliest by the teachers and share their observations with parents and other school specialists, since they are the first line defense in helping the kindergarten children to receive special attentions for further academic achievements.

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Conflict of Interest: None

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