

## Awareness and Knowledge of Learning Disabilities among School Teachers

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**Objective:** To investigate the knowledge and awareness of teachers regarding learning disabilities in schools in Lahore, Pakistan.

**Methodology:** This descriptive observational study was conducted at the Department of Allied Health Sciences, FMH College of Medicine and Dentistry, Lahore from September 2017 to January 2018. Secondary data was collected from The Educators, Dar-e-Arqam School, Grammar School and Beacon House School System, Lahore. A total of 106 school teachers were included and Professionals other than school teachers were excluded. Self-designed

questionnaire was used.

**Results:** Out of 106 teachers, 19 (17.9%) were males and 87 (82.1%) females. Age ranged from 20 to 41 years. The qualification of 32 (32.2%) teachers was 14 years of Education, 17 (16.0%) had 16 years of Education, and 57 (58.8%) had 18 years of Education. Only 1% teachers had adequate knowledge about learning disabilities.

**Conclusion:** School teachers had a very meagre knowledge about learning disabilities.

**Keywords:** Awareness, learning disability, school teachers.

### INTRODUCTION

Disability defines as “comparison of actual ability to normal functioning”. It refers to impairment in physical, cognitive, mental and social health. The learning disabilities are the neurological problems, in which one or more basic psychological processes are disturbed, which are involved in understanding.<sup>1</sup> Categories of learning disabilities are dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, auditory processing disorder, language processing disorder and nonverbal learning disabilities.<sup>2</sup> In 2015, Several studies have reported that only small percentage of teacher had knowledge about learning disabilities.<sup>3,4</sup>

The teachers with proper knowledge and awareness were able to identify students with learning disabilities in early stages. Early identification can only be possible if school teachers had proper knowledge and awareness regarding the learning disabilities. The objective of our study was to investigate the knowledge and awareness of teachers regarding learning disabilities in schools in Lahore, Pakistan.

### METHODOLOGY

This descriptive observational study was conducted at the Department of Allied Health Sciences, FMH College of Medicine and Dentistry, Lahore from September 2017 to January 2018. Secondary data was collected from The Educators and Dar-e-Arqam School, Lahore Grammar School and Beacon House School System, Lahore. A sample size 106 was calculated for the study with

expected rate of 11% teacher knows about the learning disabilities 5% level of significance and 5% margin of

error. The formula was  $n = \left(\frac{z}{e}\right)^2 P(1 - P)$  Whereas  $z = 1.645$ ,  $e = 5\%$  and  $p = 11\%$ .<sup>5</sup>

School teachers were included in the study and Professionals other than school teachers were excluded. Self-designed questionnaire was used to collect information. Questionnaire was designed by expert opinion and literature review.

**Statistical Analysis:** The data were analysed using SPSS version 21.

### RESULTS

Out of 106 teachers, 19 (17.9%) were males and 87 (82.1%) females. Out of 106 teachers, 53 (50%) teachers age range was 20 to 30 years, 39 (36.8%) 31 to 40 years and 14 (13.2.7%) above 41 years. Out of 106 teachers, the qualification of 32 (32.2%) teachers was 14 years of Education, 17 (16.0%) teachers had 16 years of Education, and 57 (58.8%) people had 18 years of Education. It was found that 41% teachers scored between 0 – 7 range showed that have very low knowledge and level of awareness, 57% scored > 7 – 12 and 0% scored > 12 – 15 (Table 1).

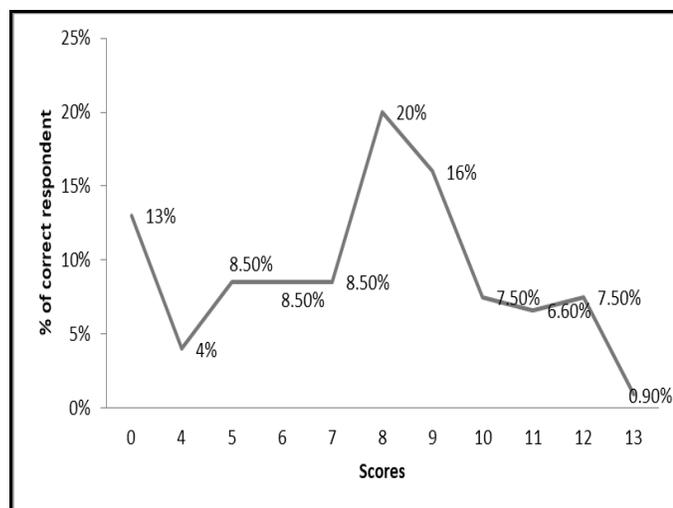
The total mark of the questionnaire was 15. Every single correct answer would get 1 mark and unanswered item a wrong answer, or more than one answer if chosen; all would receive 0 marks. The range of scores was 0 – 15. Table 2 is showing the percentage distribution of correct

**Table 1: Level of awareness of teacher.**

| Level  | Scores    | Percent of Respondent |
|--------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Low    | 0 – 7     | 41%                   |
| Medium | > 7 – 12  | 57%                   |
| High   | > 12 – 15 | 1%                    |

**Table 2: Correct responses by the teachers.**

| Raw Score | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|-----------|---------|
| 0         | 13        | 13%     |
| 4         | 4         | 4%      |
| 5         | 9         | 8.5%    |
| 6         | 9         | 8.5%    |
| 7         | 9         | 8.5%    |
| 8         | 21        | 20%     |
| 9         | 17        | 16%     |
| 10        | 8         | 7.5%    |
| 11        | 7         | 6.6%    |
| 12        | 8         | 7.5%    |
| 13        | 1         | 0.9%    |



**Fig. 1: Correct response by the teachers.**

responses that showed by respondents to the test items. We found that 13% teacher had no knowledge about learning disabilities they cannot help the child in classroom (Fig. 1). Majority of teachers had 50% knowledge about learning disabilities which is inadequate to help them identify learning disable child. Only 1 teacher out of 106 teachers scored 13 i.e. 87% knowledge about learning disabilities.

**DISCUSSION**

The study showed that only 1% teachers had adequate knowledge about learning disabilities. Earlier researches reported similar finding about school teachers.<sup>6</sup> In the learning process, teachers play an important role. They interact with students on daily basis and are more likely to observe the behavior of students.<sup>7,8</sup> They could possibly help in identifying the children those with developmental disabilities.<sup>9</sup> But there had been not enough and sufficient knowledge about these disabilities.<sup>10</sup>

The study also attempted to find the level of knowledge which school teachers had regarding learning disabilities. There was lack of knowledge about learning disabilities. This study focused on awareness and knowledge of learning disabilities. In this study, teachers were questioned about concept and 97% were aware. A study by Moothedath and Vranda showed that 100% of the teachers were aware but among those 65% had inadequate knowledge.<sup>11</sup> In our study, on asking about classification of learning disability, 8.5% of teachers knew about it. Above study showed 33.3% teachers know about it.<sup>11</sup>

In this study, when teachers were asked about neurological disorder, they showed inadequate knowledge; out of 106, only 33% teachers had knowledge that it is neurological. Shukla and Agarwal study showed that 35% people were aware of types of learning disabilities<sup>12</sup> but our study showed that 8.5% people were aware of the types of learning disabilities. Kakabaraee et al showed that only 0.3% people had highest score<sup>13</sup> but in our study, 1% people score highest. The difference in this score was due to the fact that they used multistage sampling but we were using convenient sampling.

**CONCLUSION**

School teachers had inadequate awareness and knowledge of learning disabilities. They lacked the basic understanding of learning disability. The early identification, diagnosis and management of learning disability are very important for better prognosis and betterment of individuals.

**Author contributions:**

Conception and design: Hafiza Iqra Javed, Sadia Saleem, Rabia Qamar.  
 Collection and assembly of data: Hafiza Iqra Javed.  
 Analysis and interpretation of the data: Hafiza Iqra Javed, Samia Kanwal.  
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 Critical revision of the article for important intellectual content: Statistical expertise: Asra Roheen.  
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