

Academic and Psychological Correlates of Self-Concept in Learning Disabled Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study was to assess and analyze the relationship between self-concept, locus of control and academic achievement among learning disabled adolescents aging 12-18 years. A sample of 30 participants was chosen through purposive sampling from special educational institutions with mean age of 15.2 years. They were administered the Self-Concept Questionnaire (Dr. Raj Kumar Saraswat), and Locus of Control Scale (Km. Roma Pal), and academic achievement was assessed as per classroom percentage scores. The results indicated that adolescents with learning disabilities had average Total self-concept and average locus of control. Furthermore, in social, educational and intellectual domains of self-concept adolescents with learning disabilities scored below average. The findings revealed a significant relationship between self-concept and locus of control. The results also indicated a significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement. Adolescents with low academic scores had below average self-concept. The findings are helpful for the educators and care givers to provide suitable education for learning disabled students to inculcate positive attitude and wholesome development.

Keywords: *Learning Disability, Self-Concept, Locus of Control, Academic Achievement.*

Children and adolescents with learning disabilities experience developmental difficulties which impact negatively on their mental capital and well-being, and are dramatically increased by dysfunctional self-perception.

Self-concept is a crucial component of our lives and it shapes how we develop during childhood and affects who we become as adults. As such, it is important for adolescents to develop a positive self-concept and high self-esteem in order to better their chances for a happy and satisfying adulthood. Learning Disabled (LD) students encounter a more challenging adolescence than many others. Research shows that students with learning

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Received: August 9, 2018; Revision Received: September 5, 2018; Accepted: September 23, 2018

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disabilities commonly have more negative self-concept than student without learning disabilities.

Changes in dimensions of self are also influenced by academic outcomes and control beliefs. A child's view of his/her academic performance will certainly affect his self-evaluations. Locus of Control, a construct related to attribution, refers to the way people explain the cause of bad or good event involving themselves. Individuals who believe that their success or failure result from their own behavior possess an internal locus of control. Individuals who attribute their success or failure to something incongruent with their own behaviour possess an external locus of control. This research work is an effort to investigate the role of academic achievement and Locus of control in the shaping of self-concept of learning disabled adolescents.

Learning disabilities

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA,2004) defines "Specific learning disabilities as a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written languages. Skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing, and/or mathematics may be negatively affected."

Specific learning disability (SpLD) is a group of neuro-developmental disorders which manifest in childhood as persistent difficulties in learning to efficiently read (dyslexia), write (dysgraphia), or do simple mathematical calculations (dyscalculia) despite normal intelligence, conventional schooling, intact hearing and vision, and adequate motivation and socio-cultural opportunity. Information about SpLD incidence and prevalence in Indian children is scanty due to lack of data, incomplete assessment because of lengthy testing, and little communication between state educational authorities and data collecting private organization and NGOs. The incidence of dyslexia in primary school children in India has been reported to be 2-18%, of dysgraphia 14%, and of dyscalculia 5.5%. However, awareness that SpLD is an important cause of academic underachievement has recently increased. In the year 1996 the state government of Maharashtra was the first in India to formally grant children with SpLD the benefit of availing the necessary provisions to enable them to complete education in regular mainstream schools. In December 2016, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, for the first time added Speech and Language Disabilities and Specific learning disability to the list of 21 disabilities under Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

Self-Concept

Self-concept is a multi-dimensional construct that refers to an individual's perception of "self" in relation to any number of characteristics, such as academics (and non-academics), gender roles and sexuality, racial identity and many other. Self-concept is defined by Eccles et al. (2005) as people's general composite or collective view of themselves across multi-dimensional sets of domain specific perceptions. These perceptions are based on self knowledge& evaluations of value or worth of one's own capabilities formed through

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experiences with and interpretations of the environment. It is important to consider the negative effects of LD, especially during adolescents as they are the formative years of one's life. Hughes & Baker (1990) indicate that children who have experienced rejections, humiliation, and failure generally have feelings of low self-worth & vulnerability. Many children with LD experience these emotions more often than students without LD. Using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, it has been shown that students with LD scored significantly lower on the subscale of Intellectual and school status (Gans, Kenny, & Ghany, 2003). Jamie Sternke (2010) in a research paper reviewed self-concept and self-esteem in LD students and concluded that students with LD have more negative self-concept and self-esteem. He also suggested that pairing students within the general classroom on the basis of instructional level and individual needs positively influenced the self-concept and self-esteem of students with LD.

Academic Achievement

Achievement has been referred to (Jung, 1978) as a result of a certain intellectual or physical activity defined according to individual and/or objective organizational prerequisites i.e. proficiency. An increasing amount of evidence supports the theory that there is a correlation between self-concept and achievement in school (Bell & Ward, 1980). This relationship is even stronger when one looks specifically at children's evaluations of themselves as students, which could be called their "academic self-esteem." Again we can't be certain whether high self-esteem causes good grades or vice versa, but causality probably operates in both directions. A child's view of his or her academic performance will certainly affect his self evaluations. Conversely, a phenomenon known as a "self-fulfilling prophecy" suggests that an individual's beliefs about himself will have a strong impact on how well he performs in spite of his actual abilities.

Stretch and Lash (1979) write: "A significant relationship among such things as academic achievement, school satisfaction, and self-esteem has been reported for individuals at all grade levels from primary grades through college". Black (1974), for example, found learning disabled children to be generally lower in self-concept than peers, and that the estimate of self-concept was directly related to the amount of underachievement (that is the lower the level of achievement, the lower the level of self-concept). Saracoglu (1989) used a self report questionnaire and found that university students with learning disabilities reported significantly poorer self-esteem, academic adjustment and personal emotional adjustment than non-learning disabled students. G.C.Mahakud and R. Joshi (2016) studied the relationship between academic achievement and self-concept of school going children by conducting a comparative study between skilled learners and children with learning disabilities. The results revealed that children with learning disabilities were poor in their self-concept and showed poor academic performance as compared to skilled learners.

Locus of Control

The concept of "Locus of Control" was first derived from Julian B. Rotter's social learning theory (1954), as the way in which individuals perceive source of control over events in their

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lives; whether they perceive that reinforcements are contingent upon certain aspects of their own behaviour or somehow come by fate, chance, or other outside force beyond their control. Studies of the self-concept and locus of control of learning disabled children indicated the learning disabled children are more likely than nondisabled children to have negative self-concepts, to believe their successes are the result of luck or other people (external causes); and that their failures are insurmountable (Bryan and Pearl, 1979). Furthermore, it has been found that these maladaptive attitudes and attributions are established by about nine years and become increasingly more negative with age. Ruth Pearl (1982) examined children's attributions for success and failure and indicated that successes are not always interpreted by LD children as reflecting something positive about themselves. At the same time failure is not necessarily viewed as something that can be overcome with effort.

Rogers and Saklofske (1985), examined general and academic self-concepts, general and academic locus of control beliefs and academic performance expectations. The LD children were significantly different from the normally achieving children and displayed lower self-concepts, more external locus of control orientations and lower performance expectations. Academic locus of control and academic self-concept also contributed significantly to the prediction of the extent to which LD children (enrolled in resource room programs for six months) were academically successful. LD children were found to be more negative about themselves relative to normally achieving students on the perceived competence scale for children (PCSC) in a longitudinal study by Rogers and Osborne (1987). A study exploring the relationship between academic self-concept, academic self-efficacy beliefs and students with comorbid ADHD (LD/ADHD) reported significantly lower scores on all these variables than typically achieving peers. However, no significant differences were found between students with LD and LD/ADHD (Tabassam and Grainger, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

Objective

- The purpose of the study was to assess the self-concept and find its relationships with academic achievement and locus of control among learning disabled adolescents.

Hypotheses

1. There will be significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement of learning disabled adolescents.
2. There will be significant relationship between self-concept and locus of control of learning disabled adolescents.

Material

Self-concept questionnaire (SCQ) developed by Raj Kumar Saraswat (1992) was used to measure the self-concept of adolescents. It consists of 48 items with 5 alternative responses to each item and covers 6 dimensions, namely-physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual. The questionnaire is highly standardized with reliability coefficient of ($r=0.91$) for the total self-concept measure, and reliability coefficients vary from 0.67 to 0.88 of its various dimensions.

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Locus of Control – Revised (for Adolescents and adults) by Roma Pal (1983) was used to measure locus of control of adolescents. It consists of 35 items with two alternative statements to choose from. The test is highly standardized with a test-retest reliability coefficient of 0.80 calculated by Spearman-Brown prophecy formula, and a validity coefficient of 0.77.

Sample

The sample of the study is 30 students with learning disability such as dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalculia aged between 12 to 18 years. The sample is drawn adopting purposive sampling technique from special educational institutions and inclusive schools for learning disabled students.

Procedure

After sample selection a rapport was established with the subjects and the questionnaire was administered personally under the guidance of trained professionals with permission from the concerned authorities. The test was administered with proper instructions. Academic achievement is assessed as per the classroom percentage scores.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, the sample comprised of 30 Learning Disabled students of mean age 15.2 years. Out of the 30 students, 11 were female (36.6%) and rest were male (63.3%). Most of the students with learning disabilities showed average total self-concept, i.e, 53.35% (16 out of 30 students). 40% (12 out of 30 students) of the students had below average total self-concept and 6.66% (2 students) of the students scored above average on self-concept questionnaire. (Table: 1)

Table 1: Description of subjects of study by self-concept

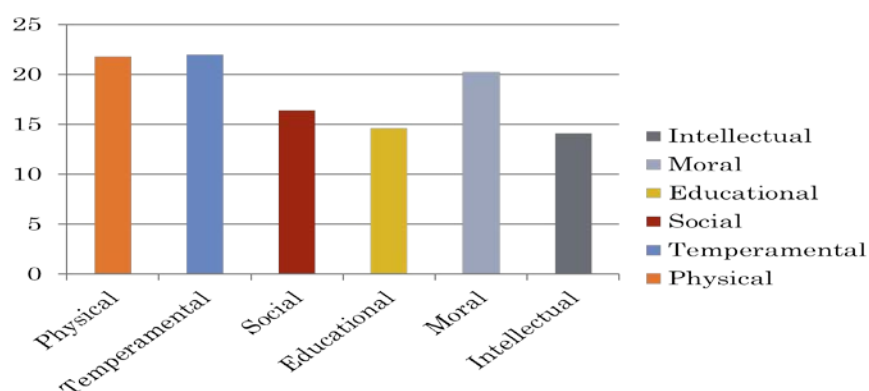
	Self-Concept			Total
	Below Average	Average	Above Average	
Frequency Percentage	12	16	2	30
Percentage	40%	53.33%	6.66%	100%

Mean score of students with learning disabilities on the self-concept questionnaire was the found out to be average, i.e. 109.23. The Total self-concept is a summation of scores on six dimensions, namely physical, social, temperamental, educational, moral and intellectual. The mean score on each dimension is physical(21.8),social(16.43), temperamental (22), educational(14.6), moral(20.26) and intellectual(14.1). Students with learning disabilities scored average on three dimension namely physical, temperamental and moral. On the other three dimensions namely social, educational, and intellectual the mean scores were found out to be below average. (Table: 2)

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Table 2 : Showing dimensional scores of Self-Concept

Dimension	Mean score	S.D.	Interpretation
Physical	21.8	4.35	Average
Temperament	22	4.17	Average
Social	16.43	3.38	Below average
Education	14.6	4.02	Below average
Moral	20.26	3.31	Average
Intellectual	14.1	2.78	Below average
Total	109.23		Average



Graph-1 Showing dimensional scores of Self-concept

X-axis :Dimensions of Self-Concept **Y-axis :**Score

The findings indicate that students with learning disabilities hold a poor self –concept of their social, educational and intellectual capabilities. However, they hold a positive perception of their physical, moral and temperamental characteristics. (Graph-1)

The Academic Achievement of students with learning disabilities was assessed on the basis of their yearly classroom percentage scores. They average percentage score of the sample of 30 students with learning disabilities was 63.8.

The coefficient of Correlation among scores of self-concept questionnaire and classroom percentage was calculated to be 0.6035, which shows a moderately positive correlation. This indicates that students with high percentage score in class also tend to have above average and high scores on self-concept .and students with low academic score tend to have below average self-concept and particularly low score on its social, educational and intellectual dimension. The mean score of students with learning disabilities on the locus of control scale was found to be 51.8 which falls in the average category.

Table 3 : Description of subjects of study by loci of control.

	Locus of Control			
	High External	Average	High Internal	Total
Frequency	11	17	2	30
Percentage	36.66%	56.66%	06.66%	100%

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The coefficient of correlation among scores of self-concept questionnaire and the locus of control scale was calculated to be -0.5896 . It shows moderately negative correlation and indicates that students with high internal locus of control tend to have a more positive self-concept, whereas, students with high external locus of control tend to have a negative self-concept. Coefficient of determination was 0.3476 .

Further, investigating the relationship between locus of control and academic achievement revealed that individuals with high academic achievement tend to have more internal locus of control. Pearson's correlation co-efficient between locus of control and academic achievement is found to be -0.4021 , which shows a weak negative relationship.

Individuals having low academic achievement tend to have more external locus of control and consequently believe their academic scores are a result of fate, luck or teacher's biased evaluations.

Table 4: Inter-correlation Matrix of Variables of LD adolescents (N=30)

Variable	Self-Concept	Academic Achievement	Locus of Control
Self-Concept	1	0.6035**	-0.5896**
Academic Achievement		1	-0.4021*
Locus of Control			1

Note : * Significant at 0.05 level of significance

** Significant at 0.01 level of significance.

The inter-correlation matrix results of self-concept questionnaire scores with academic achievement (classroom percentage) was ($r=0.6035$) followed by self-concept questionnaire scores with locus of control scores was ($r=-0.5896$) and academic achievement score with locus of control score was ($r= -0.4021$). The result indicates that self-concept and academic achievement are significantly correlated and adolescents with high annual classroom percentage showed positive self-concept. Individuals with positive self-concept also held an internal locus of control. The results also indicated significant relationship between academic achievement and locus of control. (Table-4)

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the study, it can be concluded that most of the students with learning disabilities had average total self-concept. Learning disabled students had below average score particularly on social, educational, and intellectual dimensions. Locus of control of students with learning disabilities was also average. Although a substantial number of adolescents scored below average (40%) on self-concept and showed high external locus of control (36.66%), the results seem to portray a more positive picture as an increasing number of adolescents are realising that though learning disability is a lifelong problem & everyday struggle in educational settings it doesn't necessarily have to hold you back. Proper diagnosis, appropriate resourceful classrooms, inclusive and responsive education, love & support of family, friends, teachers and peers can help learning disabled adolescents life. The correlations between self-concept, academic achievement and locus of control also put

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emphasis on the need of the hour to pay attention towards better understanding of the psychological & behavioural factors that are imperative towards the development of positive mental capital of LD students for a happy & successful life.

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Acknowledgements

The authors profoundly appreciate all the people who have successfully contributed in ensuring this paper is in place. Their contributions are acknowledged however their names cannot be able to be mentioned.

Conflict of Interest

The authors colorfully declare this paper to bear not conflict of interests

How to cite this article: Sonthwal, A & Jain, M (2018). Academic and Psychological Correlates of Self-Concept in Learning Disabled Adolescents. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 6(3), 122-130. DIP:18.01.072/20180603, DOI:10.25215/0603.072