

Family Elements Associated with Learning Disabilities of Children: A Review

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Abstract

Learning disabilities describes as Specific Learning Disabilities in ‘The Right of Persons with Disabilities Act-2016, which has mentioned under the 21 disabilities. It is identified that approximately 5% of all public school students have learning disabilities (Mishra &Pahwa, 2018). It shows that learning disabilities effect on large number of school going children and adult. This hidden disability does not affect only the individual who has learning disability, but also affect the other family members: parents, siblings. There are very few studies conducted on how learning disabilities influence the family as a whole (Great School Staff, 2009). This review paper explored the family aspects associated with children’s learning disabilities. For literature review this paper consists of 23 numbers of studies at national and global level also. Only five research studies found significantly related with the topic. This study indicated that majorly family’s stress and social-emotional, physical, finance burden factors are the major family factors associated with children’s learning disabilities. Further, study explored more factors which influence the family experiences in a slight way.

KEYWORDS: Learning Disabilities, Family Elements, Family Stress.

Introduction

Family is a primary caregiver for a child and always supports the child in their respective aspects, social, emotional, physical, educational, intellectual and spiritual as well. As a responsible unit of the society family has a great job to help the child to face the world and adjust in the society easily. For this duty every family tried to make facilitative environment for child. It makes a large amount of burden on family like social, emotional and financial. It is responsibility of the parents to give the safety, welfare and education to child who swiftly becomes a growing, ever-changing, maturing child (Smith, 2002). For being an ideal parent very difficult in the society, it is more difficult being a parent who has special needs children. Learning disabilities of the child had stressful impact on the family members and family as whole(Barr, 2012). According to **RPWD ACT, 2016** "Specific learning disabilities" means a heterogeneous group of conditions wherein there is a deficit in processing language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself as a difficulty to comprehend, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations and includes such conditions as perceptual disabilities, dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and developmental aphasia. Due to all these learning disabilities family members face new challenges and opportunities, as child grows. Parents, siblings and other family members experience particular stress, when they find that they have to provide extra care for special need child. There is not necessarily a “cure” for learning disabilities, but there are many ways to help children and

families manage them in a way that helps children learn and thrive in life (Zubler). A friendly and stress free home environment had positive impact on the learning performance of child with learning disabilities. Family perspective also have significant role in educational remedy of child with learning disabilities (Sahu et al., 2018). Learning difficulties can be subtle, multiple, can also concomitantly with other disabilities and hard to pinpoint, it can be difficult for parents to identify whether things are normal or not (Smith, 2002). Further, parent's education, incomplete knowledge, unawareness towards learning disabilities leads behavioral problems of LD child. Because parents believed that the child's learning disability may be normal and it can be improve with age and time (Sahu et al., 2018). When a child diagnosed with learning disability/difficulty, generally parent's shows negative attitude towards learning problem and child's continuous academic failure leads high level stress, frustration, dissatisfaction on parents. Parents never try to find help for early assessment from psychologist, mental health professionals resulting delay in interventions for learning disabled children. It may encompass to various extents, including personal discomfort, financial crises and lower quality of life (Sahu et al., 2018). If somehow, child's learning disability recognized by the parent, they did not found appropriate guidance & counselling from school or others. They tried to explore the adequate guidance from themselves or other sources, special educator, relatives, neighbors, other parents or movies. Sahu et al. suggested that total 20 parents out of 30 explored the learning problem of the child by themselves or through Bollywood movie "Taare Zameen Pe- Stars on the Earth" in Indian context. (Sahu, 2018). Parents also feel bad as parent after sensing the child's learning or any other problem (Smith, 2002). It takes time for parents to understand that different learning style does not mean that child has the major disability. Learning disabled children as smart as other children, they perceive or process the information in different styles only. . Children with learning disabilities see, hear, and understand things differently. Parenting approaches includes that provide clear, concise instructions; nurturing child with their interest; continuous approval of the behavior; help children feel better and safe (Smith, 2002). Roman and Sanchez (2012) suggested that family having ADHA or LD children indicated that learning mostly affected by the contextual family elements.

At global level, there are very few studies have been conducted on family factors relate with children's learning disabilities. Even, there is a paucity of significant studies in the Indian subcontinent related with family factors associate with learning disabilities of children; it is first time to conduct an exploratory study on perception of families of children with Specific learning disabilities (Sahu et al. 2018). India is still on nascent stage in learning disability research and advocacy context (Sandhu, 2015). The present review study has explored the research on global level as well as national level also to find out that family factors relate with children's learning disabilities. There are very few significant studies have been found. This study elaborated the how learning disabilities of children effect the family members and family as whole. This reviewed study has been found five authors respectively Switzer, Great School Staff, Dyson, Grossman and Sahu et al. gave significant family factors associated with children's learning disabilities.

Switzer (1990) has given four factors: acceptance of learning problem, family management achievement behavior, parental discipline method and role of identified learning disabled child. These family factors identified through a clinical investigation. This longitudinal study collected the data from three families for three years of period.

Acceptance of learning problem: This study concluded that parents receive early help from educators, psychologist, pediatricians who had no knowledge about disability. They tried to find the adequate professional who suggests the accurate program for their children. This adaptive behavior of parents can help learning disabled children to adjust with learning problems.

Family management achievement behaviour: Adequate family engagement towards children school tasks gives positive support to the children. Even, children show more engagement in tasks. Literature shows that conducive home environments suggests that help with homework and parental delivery of rewards and punishments around learning task is associated with achievement motivation for school children in general (Dave, 1963, Henderson, 1981; Walberg & Marjoribank, 1976).

Parental discipline method: Authoritarian parents, as compared with authoritative parents, are not as successful at helping children develop the needed internal controls. Parents who are permissive or rejecting are thought to be even less successful. The disabled child who is unclear about rules is certainly at risk with respect to progress in remedial programs. Managing such children in an authoritative manner seems to contribute to their academic success.

Role of identified learning disabled child: In this factor, there is a big responsibility on learning disabled children, because all families expect increased maturity and achievement from LD child. Family members already put their efforts to accept the learning disability and in remedial programs. Rollis et al. (1973) suggested that roles in healthy family systems encourage the growth and development of the child.

Above study concluded that two factors, engagement with achievement behavior and parental discipline method have earlier recognized as having a relationship to student achievement. These are very much relative with student's success in school. Other two factors, level of acceptance of the learning problem by their parents and the child's role in the family, are closely linked to school success and remediation for the students. The LD child may have unhealthy family system, some time need individual psychotherapy before start the remedial program.

Great School Staff (2009) suggested three elements: pressure on parents, stress among siblings, family functioning. This study explored that how learning disability affects parent, siblings and the way of family functions. The family having LD child, parents often face stress and sibling's rivalry among kids.

Pressure on parents: The literature suggested that mothers of learning disabled children shows more stress as compare to mothers of non-learning disabled children (Margalit & Heiman, 1986; Fuller & Rankin, 1994; Antshel & Joseph, 2006). But mothers reported poorer interactions with children, who have non-verbal learning disabilities (Great School Staff, 2009). Dyson (1996) found greater level of stress in parents of children with learning disabilities than parents of non-learning disabilities.

Stress among siblings: Some studies reported parents found siblings to be patient & understanding the siblings with learning disabilities. Parents themselves felt guilty for negligence towards their non-LD children. Some studies shows parents reported negative

experiences with non-LD child. They often tease, show non-cooperative behavior and fear of the child with LD. Another side siblings show strong positive bond with LD children and love & affection for each other. Further study reported that difference in parent treatment for LD and their siblings has not found any strong evidence.

Family functioning: LD children family often emphasizes more control, orderliness and personal achievement & experience more family conflict than the non-LD family. Parents of LD children provide fewer chances for intellectual tasks, recreational events and less encouragement for free emotional experience and personal growth (Margalit&Almougy, 1991; Margalit&Heiman, 1986a, 1986b), and also face problem related less communication, less family cohesiveness. Studies also reported that there is no significant difference in family functioning or adjustment (Morrison &Zetlin, 1992). Despite of the problems faced by the families, Waggoner &Wilgosh (1990) found that there are significant positive effects on family like enhanced family strength & personal values.

This study has given the insight to look impact of learning disabilities on the family functioning and contributes to indulgent that may improve family experience and the well-being among family members. They found that parents face struggle with LD children, other side LD children showing great gratitude towards their families for their positive support and sacrifices which enforce them to lead successful, satisfying and personality fulfilled lives.

Dyson (2010) has given the family factors associated with learning disabilities of children.

- Family stress
- Parenting discrepancies
- Negative reactions from extended family members
- Difficulty in interacting with the school
- Mixed effects upon siblings

Grossman suggested some family matters: family relationships, the marital relationship, scapegoating the child & strengthening the bond and some keys to managing to family issues as well.

Family relationships: As family it is very much difficult for raising a child with learning disabilities. Child's problem may impact on marital relationship, parent's interactions, sibling & relations with others also.

The marital relationship: For child success and family resilience, it is important to understand the marital relationship. For successful marital relationship important to understand the concept of LD, recognize the problem, seeking help, contact with counselor and special educators for remedial program.

Scapegoating the child: Parents may divert from their inter-personal issues due to child's academic failure or behavior problems. This creates additional stress on child and then he/she become the scapegoat for family problems. Parents needs to recognize the actual problem in their marital relation such as; work stress, finances, competing interests and care for elders. Parents need to support each other and solve the problems together.

Strengthening the bond: Parent should work on team approach; they need to share their responsibilities to take care child's needs. As they managed the work, they can give more time to child & other family members, and themselves too. A supportive family approach

can help parents & other family members to develop confidence, self-respect and family resilience.

Sahu, Bhargava, Sagar & Mehta (2018) worked on lack of information, attitude towards diagnosis and burden perceived by parents. Three major themes identified after the content analysis.

Lack of information: This theme explored that parents don't have knowledge of learning disabilities and unable to recognize the signs of learning disabilities in early years. After recognition of the learning problems in children, parents suggested that it may concern of age or time. Although some parents tried to solve their children's problem, but don't have adequate guidance.

Attitude towards diagnosis: Some parents show their negative attitude towards learning disabilities. 17 parents out of 30 presented that this is difficult to accept the problem, because they require more time to adjust to the reality. Some parents take serious the learning problem and putting hard effort for helping their children.

Burden perceived by parents: Parents perceived physical, social, personal, financial and emotional burden. Parents face physical health issues include fatigue, poor quality life, and lack of sleep, because they were spending extra attention with LD child. Parents don't have time for their own social activities; even they feel frustrated and sometime lost their temper. They have to consult with counselor, special educators, psychologist; it increases the burden on expenditure in family.

Discussion

There are very few significant studies have been conducted on family experience with learning disabilities of children, Sahu et al. (2018) first time acknowledged the family perception towards children's learning disabilities from Indian subcontinent. Some more studies explored and revealed that the family which has connection with children's learning disabilities, shows hidden relation with learning disabilities. Studies explored the problem, neurologic basis, behavioral problems, parental strategies, parent education and parental attitude with the context of learning disabilities.

Authoritative parent style develop highest self-esteem, self-resilience and social competence in the children (Baumrind, 1996; Coopersmith, 1967). Changes in life and routine have been found significant effects on the family functioning (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1990; Waggoner & Wilgosh, 1990). For LD children's success, parent's role may help to create the solutions (Stevens, 1996).

Family contribute their role in school as well as out of school for framing & influencing the child's experience that directly affect the child's social development and sense of self. A study by Switzer (1990) showed that it is difficult to work with family as well as children, who have learning disabilities, children needs to join the first psychotherapy before expected the remedial program. Smith (2002) suggested the parenting strategies: addressing difficulties with time and space, addressing relationship difficulties, promoting self-esteem & cultivating parental optimism for effective and supportive parenting. Parents always confused between the child's abilities or disabilities. They needs to recognize everything related with LDs of the child such as, thinking pattern, child's problem solving strengthen, interest & area of difficulty and helps the child for the better growth & development. Research suggested that home as a context for understanding the social development of children with learning disabilities (Dyson, 2003). Despite the family, children with learning disabilities should appreciate their

family's sacrifices, positive support & give confidence to lead a successful-satisfying life (GSS, 2009). Barr (2012) reported that parents should be updated time to time for managing the new situations with children. Parents should collaborate with professional, counselor, special educators and psychologist for better guidance. For caring the child in good manner parents should know the child's condition and specific skill training. A Kowalski (2013) study concluded that parents to help the LD children for development of moral competent & be self-sufficient to enter in the society. Family has a central role in the any child's life, whether learning disabled or non-LD. Sahu (2018) reported that parents of LD experienced more psychosomatic and emotional disturbance as compare to non-LD parents. Therefore, to improve the caregiver's psycho-social wellbeing, family education about learning disabilities, remedial program & parenting techniques should be provided by clinical psychologist. In this process family, school and community should be collaborating for maximum results. Further, there should be necessary to educate the parents through remedial program and helps to familiar with child's perception, which would help in effective parenting. This study suggesting that significant study should be design to explore the relevant factors associate with LD at national as well as international level. There would be also focus on effective parenting strategies, which would help to the LD child to lead a successful and stress free life.

Conclusion

Current study indicated parents of learning disabled children have poor knowledge and understanding about learning disabilities, negative perception towards the illness, and felt burdened from care of these children. It is manifested from the above studies that majority of the family having child with LD may encounter high degree of stress, social-emotional problem and financial burden as well which adversely affect the whole family members throughout their life. To live better life, children with learning disability need regular emotional from their family members, in this way LD child will not only live their life better but can contribute to the society in many ways.

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