Comparison of Social, Affective, Educational Adjustment and Academic Achievement between the Students with Learning Disability and Normal Students

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Abstract

The research purpose is to draw a comparison between social, affective, educational adjustment and academic achievement between the students suffering from learning disabilities and normal students. The research employed a casual-comparative method. The statistical population included all the students suffering from learning disability and normal students studying in 3rd to 6th grades of the elementary schools located in Qom Province in the school year ran from 2012 to 2013, out of which a sample of 120 was selected through the convenience sampling and matching method. The data gathering tools included Adjustment Inventory for School Students -AISS (Sinha & Singh, 1993) and the grade point average as an indicator of academic achievement. The results of t-test indicated that there exists significant between-group difference. Moreover, the results of Mann-Whitney U test indicated that normal students score significantly higher on academic achievement as compared to the students who have learning disability. With regard the crucial importance and the role of adjustment in disable students’ academic achievement, the absolute necessity for educational and counseling intervention for the enhancement of adjustment skills can be highlighted.

Keywords: adjustment, academic achievement, learning disability, normal students.

Introduction

The world is replete with diverse changes, and every individual is required to adapt and adjust to these changes in order to benefit a balanced life. Therefore, adaption and coordination with self and surrounding environment is of sheer and vital necessity. Students suffering from learning disability are regarded as exceptional children (Narimani, 2004). The age range of elementary school students with learning disabilities garners particular attention due to the fact that in this period, learning problems emerge (Specht, 2004). In one of the most recent research in the field of children with learning disability, the prevalence rate of learning disability was reported to be 15. 17. Furthermore, the prevalence rate for writing, reading and mathematics problems is 2.5, 5.12 and 10.11, respectively (Mogasale, 2011). In this essence, one of the most important factors contributing to school dropout is learning disabilities (Dunn et al, 2004). This group of children does not demonstrate more limited intelligence as compared to their classmate, have normal appearance, height and weight, and play like other children; however, they exhibit problems in reading, writing, perceiving mathematic and completing homework assignment. These children gradually realize that other students are better than them in education setting. As a result, they experience feelings of inferiority and by degrees, are filled with hatred toward lesson and school (Ahadi and Kakavand, 2010).

Learning disabilities encompasses a very extensive range of academic problems and their full perception requires regards for behavioral, emotional and social realms of child’s life (Sideridis, 2006). The main assumption is that learning disabilities in students give rise to social, emotional and academic
problems. Social adjustment entails one’s adaptation to social environment which might be achieved through self-change or alteration of environment (Mousavi Lotfi et al, 2009). Social adjustment regarding the students suffering from learning disability is stated in terms of establishing a relationship, problem-solving, decision-making and behavior control (McIntyre, 2003, cited in Doroudiyani, 2011). Hence, these children confront interactional problems with their parents, teachers, peers or strangers (Khankhani Zadeh and Bagheri, 2012). Emotional adjustment is defined as having overall mental health, satisfaction with personal life, coordination between feelings, activities and thoughts. Put differently, emotional adjustment calls for mechanisms whereby, the individual experiences affective stability. Emotional and social abilities and competence are amongst the influencing factors of academic adjustment (Mousavi Lotfi et al, 2009). The results of various studies support the strong relationship between academic achievement, social and emotional growth (Bakker et al, 2007). Students with learning disabilities experience consecutive and successive academic failures and are thus more vulnerable to behavioral and socioemotional problems.

These students demonstrate feelings of competence and the experience of failures in consecutive school years gives rise to feelings of distress and a sense of alienation from school and adults. The research literature indicates that students with learning disabilities are faced with more emotional and affective problems as compared to normal students. A higher number of studies related to these students reveal that students with learning disabilities also exhibit socialization, emotional and behavioral problems (Sideridis, 2007).

A high percentage of students who suffer from emotional problems also exhibit learning disabilities, interpersonal skills problems (Wiener, 2004), mood and depressive disorders (Sideridis, 2007) and social information processing difficulties (Bauminger & Kimhi-Kind, 2008). Moreover, many problems in social interaction and skills (Soleimani et al, 2011), a high level of loneliness and social isolation (Estell et al, 2008), and maladjustment are observed among these individuals (Al-Yagon, & Mikulincer, 2004; Wiener, 2004; Freilich and Shechtman, 2010 and Zahed et al, 2012).

Heath & Ross (2000) and Sideridis (2006) state that students with learning disabilities report more emotional problems such as anxiety and depression. As evidenced in Mohammadi’s study (2008), inappropriate behavior, for instance, aggressive and disruptive behavior, antisocial behavior, delinquent behavior, isolation, unacceptable social behavior, stereotypy, annoying and unusual acoustic habits, hyperactive tendency and mental distress are more prevalent among students who have learning failure in arithmetic. Adolescents suffering from learning disabilities have less awareness due to their low emotional intelligence. In essence, they do not have distinct and clear perception of emotions, their advantages and disadvantages and are unable to assess and control their life events. These inabilitys cause an individual not to develop a necessary degree of insight about the self and into the environment that surrounds him and act unsuccessfully in adaptability to emotions (Zahed et al, 2012). Moreover, individuals who develop better feelings toward themselves also score better on social relationship and academic achievement (Touzzand Jani et al, 2011). According to researchers, negative beliefs and thoughts give rise to the decrease of self-esteem. One’s self-esteem is deeply influenced by his/her adjustment; therefore, low self-esteem can result in low academic, emotional and social adjustment (Crocker and Major, 1989). On the other hand, Kutz and Muller concluded that membership in groups that are not socially worthwhile makes for decreased self-esteem and the display of antisocial behaviors (Kutz and Muller, 1994). They concluded that individuals with positive perspective of themselves have higher adjustment and overall mental health. In this regard, Plata et al (2005) demonstrated that students with learning disability show indifference towards their peers, particularly in terms of academic activities. Furthermore, Abolghasemi et al (2011) contended that students with learning abilities and students with low academic achievement have lower social competence as compared to the students who have moderate to high degrees of academic achievement.

Eva (2003) investigated the school adjustment of slow learners studying in normal schools, and found out that these students have serious problems in educational adjustment. Moreover, their rate of absence and dropout is significantly higher than their normal classmates and peers. What’s more, slow learners (boys and girls) are constantly rejected by their normal classmates. Students with learning disabilities can’t typically achieve their academic goals through normal education. They betray outright contempt for education and leave school (Grant & Grant, 2010; Cited in Narimani, Rajabi, Afrouz and Samadi, 2011). The necessity for the conduction of the present research is clear with regard to the above-mentioned text and the studies carried out on adjustment and its aspects and also the importance and role of adjustment skills in the educational performance and the process of emotional and social growth among the students with learning disabilities.

The research purpose is to draw a comparison between social, affective, educational adjustment and academic achievement between the students suffering from learning disabilities and normal students.
Materials and Method

The research employed a casual-comparative method. The statistical population included all the students suffering from learning disability and normal students studying in 3rd to 6th grades of the elementary schools located in Qom Province in the school year ran from 2012 to 2013, out of which a sample of 120 was selected through the convenience sampling and matched method. The data gathering tools included the Adjustment Inventory for School Students -AISS (Sinha & Singh, 1993) and the overall average as an indicator of academic achievement.

Adjustment Inventory for School Students -AISS (Sinha & Singh, 1993) This 60 item inventory has been designed and developed to determine the students’ social, affective and educational adjustment (Narimani et al, 2011). This Inventory comprises three subscales of affective, social and educational adjustment and each subscale consists of 20 items. It’s scored on a 2-point scale of 0 and 1. High score indicates maladjustment and low score indicates the individual's good adjustment. The developers of this inventory have determined its reliability coefficient through bisection, test-retest and Kuder-Richardson which are equal to 0.95, 0.93 and 0.94, respectively. The reliability of social, affective, educational and total adjustment equaled 0.92, 0.92, 0.96 and 0.94, respectively. What's more, the content validity was confirmed by 20 psychological specialists.

Academic achievement: the educational status was measured according to the grade point average on the report card which was characterized by very good, good, acceptably and could have been better as indicators of academic progress. Subsequent to the sampling and the required bureaucracy, the adjustment questionnaire was filled up by the students suffering learning disabilities with the assistance of the examiner and parents. It’s worth mentioning that 60 normal students were asked to reply to the questionnaire using the matching method (age, gender, educational level).

Results

The data of the present research were analyzed using descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (independent t-test and Mann-Whitney U test) in order to determine the between-group difference. The results were analyzed using SPSS20.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of adjustment and its components in normal students and students suffering learning disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Children with learning disabilities</th>
<th>Normal children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total adjustment</td>
<td>20.23</td>
<td>7.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective adjustment</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social adjustment</td>
<td>6.28</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational adjustment</td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As observed in table 1, mean and standard deviation of the total adjustment in students with learning disability are equal to 20.23 and 7.88, and in normal students equaled 14.66 and 5.64, respectively. Mean and standard deviation in the component of affective adjustment in students with learning disability are 6.90 and 2.97, and in normal students are equal to 5.88 and 2.93, respectively. The mean and standard deviation of social adjustment in students suffering learning disability amount to 6.28 and 3.07 and account for 4.68 and 1.96 in normal students. Moreover, the mean and standard deviation of educational adjustment component in students diagnosed with learning abilities are 7.05 and 3.61 and in normal students, they are equal to 4.16 and 2.68, respectively.
Table 2. The results of t-test and the comparison of means in the group of students with learning disability and normal students group and its related components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total adjustment</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective adjustment</td>
<td>2.006</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>0.811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social adjustment</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational adjustment</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the findings of table 2, the t value is equal to 4.44 at 0.008 level of significance; therefore, it can be concluded that there exists significant difference between normal students and students with learning disability in the variable of adjustment. For want of a better word, students with learning disability score lower on adjustment as compared to normal students. On the other hand, the t value which is equal to 2.006 and the significance level of 0.811 indicated that there is no insignificant difference between students with learning disabilities and normal students on the affective adjustment. Moreover, with regard to the t value of 3.39 and the level of significant at 0.001, it can be stated that there exists significant difference between normal students and students with learning disabilities in terms of social adjustment. As observed in table 2, the t value is equal to 4.95 at the significance level of 0.008, which demonstrates the between-group difference in terms of educational adjustment. Hence, it can be concluded that students with learning disabilities have lower educational adjustment as compared to normal students.

Table 3. Results of Mann-Whitney U test for the difference significant between the students with learning disability and normal students in the variable of academic achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U test</th>
<th>Wilcoxon test</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>000. 735</td>
<td>2. 565</td>
<td>-6. 022</td>
<td>0. 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to the results presented in table 3, Mann-Whitney U test indicated that the rate of academic achievement is significantly lower in the students with learning disabilities as compared to the normal students (U=000. 735, p=0.000).

Discussion and Conclusion

The research purpose was to draw a comparison between social, affective, educational adjustment and academic achievement between the students suffering from learning disabilities and normal students. With regard to the research findings, there exists significant difference between normal students and students with learning disability in terms of social adjustment and educational adjustment. However, no significant difference was observed regarding the affective adjustment. In addition, support was found for the significant difference between normal and disable students in terms of academic achievement. These results are in line with the findings of studies conducted by Eva (2003), Al-Yagon & Mikulincer (2004), Estell et al (2008), Freilich and Shechtman (2010), Sideridis (2006) and Wiener (2004). The results are also consistent with the research results done by Abolghasemi et al (2011), Soleimani et al (2011) and Zahed et al (2012).

Students with learning disabilities might be regarded as individuals who have problems in the educational issues, however, social behaviors also requires education; therefore, factors that contribute to the disabilities in reading and writing skills can lead to disabilities of learning social behaviors or impeding the abilities (Hallahan, & Kauffman, 1997), most of these problems are related to difficulty in adequately and constructively responding to social settings and reading the social signs including the nonverbal ones and impulsive action regardless of identifying the consequences of behavior or others’ emotions and feelings (Sharif Daramadi et al, 2011).

Social maladjustment is of more critical importance to the teachers as compared to other affective-social problems due to the hindrance in the process of education and disorder in the class (Rezaei and Seif Naraghi, 2006). Social problems and inadequate behaviors in these students are more related to their disability and undergoing negative experience. Successive failures give rise to anxiety, indifference and aggression and thus, these students have low degree of self-worth and self-esteem (Patil et al, 2009). The personal adjustment is directly influenced by self-esteem and low self-esteem can bring about troubles with social, emotional and educational adjustment (Crocker et al, 1989). Furthermore, these
students do not learn adequate and acceptable behaviors in different social settings due to the lack of a guide at home and school or the lack of training about the merits and desirable behaviors, McIntyre, 2003; Cited in Doroudian, 2011).

Confronting problems in educational issues may give rise to emotional disorders and distressed mood (Sharifi Daramadi et al, 2011). As previously stated, no between-group difference was observed with regard to affective adjustment that is not in line with the previous studies done in this area. This could have been due to the limited sample size. Moreover, social and emotional abilities and competence are regarded amongst the determining factors of educational adjustment (Mousavi Lotfi et al, 2009). As evidenced in various studies, slow learners who acquire social skills and exhibit more desirable social behaviors have more positive self-concept which results in accurately and comprehensively assessing, perceiving and accepting (Beh Pazhouh et al, 2010). Therefore, they enter the educational with higher hope and increased motivation.

It can be stated that learning can be confronted with varying problems due to the low level of social adjustment and these problems negatively influence the educational adjustment as academic achievement and socioemotional growth are closely interrelated and subsequently educational and learning problems will follow. Doubtlessly, broadening the socioemotional skills and employing different strategies such as family training, cognitive-behavioral skills (Touzand Jani et al, 2011), role playing (Doroudian, 2011) enhancing the self-esteem and alteration of self-concept in these individuals can greatly help with their social-affective adjustment and academic achievement.

The results of this research clarify the need for special regard and timely, preventive intervention for these students as such children are at higher risk of internalized disorders including anxiety, depression and disruptive and maladaptive behaviors. The limited number of sample size is regarded as one of the limitations of the present study. It can be proposed that designing and employing the educational and therapeutic programs which are effective in the educational and emotional potentials of students with learning disabilities can be of great value. It’s also proposed that teaching these variables using proper models and strategies for students with learning disabilities can be of great value on account of the acquired nature of emotional and social skills.

References


