STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND FORMULATION OF HYPOTHESES

Organic involvement or minimal brain damage or minimal cerebral dysfunction was mainly implied in the causation of learning disabilities (LD) in the early definitions. However, as a result of multidimensional research in the definition and identification of learning disabilities, the later definitions laid emphasis on the presence of psychological and environmental factors also among the etiological causes. Several psychological investigators in the recent past have thrown light on the problems of the LD children in the areas of perception, attention, memory, associative learning, information processing, school going behaviour, emotional disposition etc., and consequently these children were also labeled as hyperactive, impulsive and easily distractable and such disabilities were identified as hyperactive child syndrome, psychoneurological learning disabilities, perceptual handicaps, and currently the specific learning disorders.

Review of previous studies revealed poor negative attitude of the parents and teachers towards the learning disabled child. Such attitudes are known to interfere in the performance of the child in school settings. Various specific intervention programmes designed in the Western studies involving the parents, teachers and children were reportedly fruitful in improving the performance of
children with specific learning disabilities. However, Indian studies on learning disabilities are very sporadic. Research in this area is still in its infancy. Even estimates of the approximate incidence of learning disabilities among pupils in Indian schools are not available in records, let alone research in the area. The seriousness of the problems posed by learning disabilities in terms of the distress they caused the children and their parents and teachers lies unrealized. Every year considerable number of children fail to benefit from the learning opportunities provided in the schools and the efforts of the educators and the Government are at loss.

It is against the aforementioned background that a modest attempt was made to examine whether there are any differences in the personality characteristics of the learning disabled (LD) and the non-learning disabled (NLD) children and also to test the effect of implementing intervention programmes developed specifically for parents, teachers and the LD children in improving the academic performance of children with varied learning disabilities. Thus, the study was planned with the following major objectives, viz.,

1. To identify the children with various learning disabilities viz., reading, writing, and arithmetic, in the ages of 8, 9 and 10 years, that is, in the 3rd 4th and 5th grades,

2. To examine the differences in the personality characteristics of the LD and NLD children,

3. To assess the attitudes of the parents and the teachers towards their LD children,

4. To study the effect of intervention programmes in remedying the learning disabilities.

In order to realize the above objectives the following hypotheses were formulated.

Several western studies (Adams, Forest, Hunter, Johnson, Owen, Stolz and Fisher, 1971; Rosenberg, 1984) showed significant differences in the personality characteristics of LD and Non-LD children.
Few empirical studies made on learning disabled children reported significant gender differences in emotional dispositions like leisure time activities and play preferences (Algozzine and James, 1982; Jackson and Nichols, 1972; Jackson, 1981).

However, studies showing age differences in the personality characteristics of LD children are very rare.

Paucity of Indian studies in this regard indicate a need to examine the personality characteristics among the LD and NLD children and age and gender differences among the LD children. Hence, it was hypothesized that,

1. There are significant differences between the learning disabled (LD) and the non-learning disabled (NLD) children in certain factors.
2. There are gender differences in the personality characteristics of the LD children, and
3. There are age differences in the personality characteristics of the LD children.

A Review of related literature shows that parents have negative attitudes towards their LD children (Bryan, 1982; Leslie, Stephanie, 1986). Parental attitudes (Drews and Teahan, 1957), Home discipline (Davis and Kent, 1955) and parental involvement (Kramer, David and Fleming, 1966) were found to be significantly related to childrens' academic achievement. Intervention programmes which involved parents also were found to be successful in helping the LD children overcome their specific learning disabilities to a large extent (Jewell, 1986; Kronick, 1978; Mcwhirter, 1976; Philage, 1975; Shapero, 1981; Switzer, 1985).

Taking hint from the above the following hypotheses were formulated that,

4a. There are significant differences in the parental attitudes of the LD and NLD children.
4b. As a result of intervention there are significant differences in the Parents' pre and post intervention attitudes towards their LD children.
Teachers were also reported to have negative attitudes regarding the school behaviour and academic achievement of the LD pupils (Siperstein, 1985; Stephanie, 1986). Positive change in the attitudes of the teachers in their dealings with the LD pupils, their committed co-operation while implementing remedial educational programmes to the disabled children were found to have great impact in the success of intervention programmes meant for the LD children (Cohen, 1981; Hilton, 1985; Jewell, 1986; Towle, 1975).

No known concerted efforts were made to bring about positive change in the attitudes of teachers towards their LD pupils in Indian Context. Therefore, it was hypothesized for the present study that,

5a. There are significant differences in the attitudes of the teachers towards their LD and Non-LD pupils.

5b. As a result of intervention there are significant differences in the teachers' pre and post intervention attitudes towards their LD pupils.

Western literature on learning disabled children is replete with studies reporting marked improvement in the scholastic achievement of the LD children with the implementation of proper remedial educational programmes. Several approaches/strategies have been advocated in the improvement of scholastic attainment of the LD children. However, studies which attempted to bring about positive change in the academic achievement of the LD children with the implementation of intervention programmes, suited to Indian children in general and to the Telugu speaking subjects in particular, were almost not there. Therefore, improvement in the scholastic achievement of the LD pupils was tried out. It was hypothesised that,

6. As a result of intervention (educational, parental and teachers) there are significant changes in the pre and post interventional Achievement test performance of the learning disabled children.

Examination of the above mentioned hypotheses required collection of data using the specifically developed tests of Achievement Spelling Dictation Test (Sp.Ach.), Oral Reaching Achievement Test (O.R.Ach.), Reading Comprehension Test (R.C.Ach.), and Arithmetic Achievement Test (Ar.Ach.), Child Personality
Questionnaires (CPQ), Parental and Teachers' Attitude Questionnaires (PAQ & TAQ), Intervention programmes to modify the attitudes of the parents and teachers, and Educational Intervention programmes for the Learning disabled children. The data collected were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques like ANOVA, Duncan's Range Test, ANOVA for Randomized Group Design, and 't' tests.