### CHAPTER – III : STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

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3.1 Introduction

Once the problem has been selected, stating it is an important task that has to be carried out. Defining the problem helps to specify the problem under study in a clear-cut manner. A proper definition of the research problem will enable the researcher to be on the track. This process helps the investigator to separate his/her study in careful distinction of other previous studies. It is only on careful detailing of the research problem that the researcher can work out the research design and can smoothly carry on all the consequential steps involved while doing research. Operational definition of the term helps to view the general problem in terms of more specific, measurable and observable variable.

Hypotheses are a set of suggested tentative solutions for the problem. A hypothesis is defined as a proposition or a set of propositions set forth as an explanation for the occurrence of some specified group of phenomena either asserted merely as a provision conjecture to guide some investigation or accepted as highly probable in the light of established facts (Kothari, 1985). Hypotheses of the study with specific objectives enable the researcher to identify the variables involved in the study and suggest methodological procedures to be employed. Similarly its scope and need show the urgency of the study.

This chapter deals with the title of the problem, operational definitions of the terms used in the study, objectives, hypotheses, scope, need, importance and limitations of the study.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
3.2 Title of the Problem

“Psycho-Social Variables of Elementary School Children with Learning Difficulties in Relation to their Academic Achievement”.

3.3 Operational Definition of the Terms Used in the Study

Under this subhead, the meaning and definition of the key terms used in the study along with the operational definitions of the terms used in the investigation are listed out.

**Psycho-Social Variables**

The Webster’s Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary (1996) defines ‘Psycho-Social’ as “of or pertaining to the interaction between social and psychological factors”.

The term ‘Psycho-Social’ can be used to describe the unique internal processes that occur within the individual. It refers to one’s psychological development in interaction with a social environment (Erickson,1950).

The online Oxford English Dictionary (2008) defines the term ‘Psycho-Social’ as “pertaining to the influence of social factors on an individual’s mind or behaviour, and to the interrelation of behavioural and social factors”.

In this study ‘Psycho-Social Variables’ refers to psychological and social aspects of an individual’s development. The areas included under Psycho-Social Variables in this study are;

(a) Self concept
(b) Achievement motivation
(c) Personal adjustment
(d) Social adjustment
(e) Home environment
**Self concept**

The Webster’s Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (1996) defines ‘Self concept’ as “the idea or mental image one has of oneself and one’s strengths, weaknesses, status etc”.

According to Byrne (1984) “Self concept is the perception of ourselves involving our attitudes, feelings and knowledge about our skills, abilities, appearance and social acceptability”.

In the present study ‘Self concept’ refers to how a person sees, describes, evaluates and identifies himself/herself in the environment.

**Achievement motivation**

Vidler (1997) defines ‘Achievement motivation’ as “a pattern of planning, of actions, and of feelings connected with striving to achieve some internalized standard of excellence in performance”.

In the present study, ‘Achievement motivation’ refers to the desire to meet the standard of excellence in learning academic subjects, to outperform others and to accomplish difficult task.

**Personal adjustment**

‘Personal adjustment’ has been described by Lowrey (1947) as having positive aspects, inner emotional security, feeling of personal adequacy, and of being successful and happy in personal relations, a realistic evaluation of the self, adaptability, acceptability and acceptance of one’s own limitations.

In this study, ‘personal adjustment’ refers to a state of being in which the individual is in harmonious relationship with one’s own self and to the environment
**Social adjustment**

The online Medical Dictionary (2008) defines the term ‘Social adjustment’ as “those types of relationships which involve the accommodation of the individual to circumstances in his social environment for the satisfaction of his needs or motives”.

Thompson and Gardner (1959) define ‘Social adjustment’ as “the process whereby the individual attempts to maintain his security, comfort, states or creative inclinations in the face of the ever-changing conditions and pressures of his social environment”.

The term ‘Social adjustment’ in this study refers to the extent to which an individual’s personality functions efficiently in the world of people.

**Home environment**

Home environment refers to the conducive environment provided by the parents for the success of the child in academics and in personal life. In the present study, ‘Home Environment’ refers to learning facilities at home, parental acceptance, cultural level of the family and parent-child interactions.

**Elementary School Children**

The Webster’s Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (1996) defines ‘Elementary School’ as “the lowest school giving formal instruction”.

The Oxford English Dictionary (2008) defines ‘Elementary School’ as “one in which primary instruction is given”.

Elementary school children are the children studying in class I to VII.
In this study, ‘Elementary School Children’ refers to VI standard children from selected schools of Kottayam District in Kerala State.

**Learning Difficulties/ Disabilities**

‘Learning Difficulties’ and ‘Learning Disabilities’ are used synonymously. In the Western context, particularly in European countries, the term ‘Learning Difficulties’ is used in the place of ‘Learning Disabilities’. In the American context, the term ‘Learning Disabilities’ is used in the place of ‘Learning Difficulties’. In this study ‘Learning Difficulties’ is used synonymously in the place of ‘Learning Disabilities’. Basically these two are the same in operational terms.

The Webster’s Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language (1996) defines ‘Learning Disability’ as “a disorder, as dyslexia, usually affecting school age children of normal or above normal intelligence, characterized by difficulty in understanding or using spoken or written language, and thought to be related to impairment or slowed development of perceptual motor skills”.

Samuel Krik (1963) who coined the term ‘Learning Disabilities’, defines ‘Learning Disability’ as a retardation, disorder or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language reading, writing, arithmetic or other school subjects resulting from psychological handicap caused by a possible cerebral dysfunction and/or emotional or behavioural disturbances. It is not the result of mental retardation, sensory deprivation or cultural and instructional factors.

The National Joint Committee for Learning Disabilities (1981) defines: “Learning disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning and mathematical abilities.
These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to the central nervous system dysfunction. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions, it is not the result of those conditions or influences”.

In the present study, ‘Learning Difficulties’ is the term applied to the difficulties in reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic of VI standard children.

**Academic achievement**

It is the knowledge obtained or skill developed in the school subjects, usually designed by test scores or by marks assigned by the teacher or by both (Good, 1945).

Academic achievement is conceptualized as, “that encompasses the children’s ability and performance; it is multi-dimensional; it is intricately related to human growth and cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development; it reflects the whole child; it is not related to a single instance, but occurs time and levels, through a student’s life in public school and on to post secondary years” (Steinberger, 1993).

In this study ‘Academic achievement’ refers to the marks obtained by the VI standard children in the terminal examination. District Project Office working under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) set question papers for the terminal examination for all the schools in Kerala State. The children’s achievement in the terminal examination is referred to as academic achievement in the present study.
3.4 Objectives of the Study

The study has been designed with the following objectives.

1. To develop diagnostic tests to identify a) Reading Difficulties b) Writing Difficulties c) Spelling Difficulties in English and d) Arithmetic Difficulties of VI standard children.

2. To identify the Reading, Writing and Spelling Difficulties in English of VI standard children.

3. To identify the Arithmetic Difficulties of VI standard children.

4. To find out significant difference if any, in the Reading, Writing, Spelling and Arithmetic Difficulties of VI standard children due to variation in their Gender, Community, Father’s educational qualification, Mother’s educational qualification, Occupation of father, Occupation of mother, Number of children in the family, Exposure to different media, Locale of the school, Type of management of the school and the Medium of instruction.

5. To find out the level of Achievement motivation, Self concept, Personal adjustment, Social adjustment and Home environment of children with learning difficulties.

6. To find out the relationship between Achievement motivation and Academic achievement, Self concept and Academic achievement, Personal adjustment and Academic achievement, Social adjustment and Academic achievement, and Home environment and Academic achievement of children with learning difficulties.

7. To predict to how far and to what extent the independent variables (Achievement motivation, Self concept, Personal adjustment, Social
adjustment and Home environment) are influencing the dependent variable (Academic achievement).

3.5 Assumptions of the Study

1. It is possible to develop diagnostic tests to identify the Reading, Writing and Spelling difficulties in English and Arithmetic difficulties of VI standard children.

2. The number of children with Reading, Writing and Spelling difficulties may vary.

3. The difficulty faced by the children in different components of Mathematics may vary.

4. The children may vary in Self concept, Achievement motivation, degree of Personal adjustment, degree of Social adjustment and Home environment.

5. It is possible to predict how far and to what extent the independent variables (Achievement motivation, Self concept, Personal adjustment, Social adjustment and Home environment) are influencing the dependent variable (Academic achievement).

3.6 Hypotheses of the Study

1. There exists a significant difference in the Reading, Writing, Spelling and Arithmetic difficulties of VI standard children due to variations in their Gender, Community, Father’s educational qualification, Mother’s educational qualification, Occupation of father, Occupation of mother, Number of children in the family, Exposure to different Media, the Type of management of the school, the Locale of school and the Medium of instruction.
2. There exists significant relationship between Achievement motivation and the Academic achievement of children with learning difficulties.

3. There exists a significant relationship between Self concept and the Academic achievement of children with learning difficulties.

4. There exists significant relationship between Personal adjustment and the Academic achievement of children with learning difficulties.

5. There exists significant relationship between Social adjustment and the Academic achievement of children with learning difficulties.

6. There exists significant relationship between Home environment and the Academic achievement of children with learning difficulties.

3.7 Scope of the Study

Today, the need for accommodating learning disabilities of children is gaining momentum in advanced countries. In India many people have difficulty in comprehending the problem of learning disabled children. As a result such children are rarely identified and often poorly served. Learning disability is a serious challenge in the way to universalize elementary education because it impairs the abilities to learn the basic skills of reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic. When learning disabilities are not properly diagnosed and adequately treated in childhood, these become lifelong disabilities.

The present study aims at identifying the reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic difficulties of elementary school children. For this, the study attempts to develop diagnostic tests in Reading, Writing, Spelling and Arithmetic Difficulties. Secondly, the study attempts to investigate the influence of certain variables (Gender, Community, Father’s educational qualification, Mother’s educational qualification, Occupation of father,
Occupation of mother, Number of children in the family, Exposure to different media, Type of management of the school, Locale of the school and Medium of instruction) on children’s reading, writing, spelling and arithmetic difficulties. This study mainly focuses on providing an insight into the psycho-social aspects of children with learning difficulties and the nature and extent of their relationship with Academic achievement. In other words, it focuses its attention to find out the relationship between certain psycho-social variables (achievement motivation, self concept, personal adjustment, social adjustment and home environment) and the academic achievement of children with learning difficulties. Lastly, the study aims to predict to what extent the aforesaid independent variables are influencing the dependent variable.

The study is expected to throw light on the various aspects of the most pressing issues in the present educational system. The advantages of investigating the psycho-social aspects that might affect academic achievement will help to reveal many informative findings and thereby increase the quality of knowledge regarding this condition. Further, vivid recommendations could be made to schools, families and government policy makers on different issues of this condition so that the indexed children would be helped out of their problems.

The networking of the psychologists, social workers, teachers and parents could be knitted strongly so as to provide those children a backing of primary, secondary and tertiary social support system. The findings would help those who are involved in outreach programmes to create awareness about the different aspects of learning difficulties. The study might endure as a starting for further investigations in this field.

As a conclusion the investigator hopes that the study would be of great use to the concerned children, teachers, family members and all the others who
are interested in the field of education and the welfare of children with learning difficulties.

The focus of the study has been mainly on the psycho-social aspects of learning disabled children. Since the satisfaction of psycho-social needs helps in maintaining good mental health, which is considered as the main component of academic achievement, the psycho-social aspects of the learning disabled children can by no means be ignored. It is hoped that the findings of the study would be of immense help, both theoretically and practically, in formulating guidelines for the development of the learning disabled children at primary stage.

3.8 The Need and Importance of the Study

The development of a nation depends on the nature and kinds of its human resource. All individuals, regardless of their assets and liabilities of personality and potentiality, can contribute towards national development. Exceptional children too cannot be excluded from this. Every child is precious and needs to be carefully and lovingly nurtured. Learning disability is a kind of behavioural deficit associated with academic performance that can be remedied by precise individual instructional programming. One can observe a distinct gap between the level of achievement that is expected and what is actually being achieved. Difficulties with socio-emotional skills are found to be apparent. The common components observed with learning disability are ability-achievement discrepancy, psychological process disorder and central nervous system dysfunction.

It is increasingly suspected that the longer learning disabilities go undetected the more severe the personality problems become. These problems, moreover, may be associated with, and possibly responsible for, deviant, antisocial or psychopathological behaviour in children and adults. Psychologists and educationists believe that there is a link between learning
disabilities and juvenile delinquency. Although there are numerous cultural, environmental and psychological factors seen associated with the low achievement of children with learning difficulties, the researcher had to limit her study to five broad variables namely self concept, achievement motivation, home environment, personal adjustment and social adjustment.

It has been found that self concept and the scholastic competence of children are closely related factors. Self concept is an individual’s attitude towards his physical self and his own behaviour. Scholastic performance, degree of adaptive behaviour, athletic competence and the like were found to be influenced by one’s self-perception. Hence it is essential to assess the self concept of the school going children. It gives a clear picture of the competence of the children in school activities.

Achievement motivation is the strive to achievement and is an important determinant of aspiration, effort and persistence when the individual expects that his/her performance will be rated against some standard of excellence. Achievement motivation is defined as the desire to accomplish something difficult. The desire is accompanied by action. That is, the individual makes intense, prolonged and repeated efforts to accomplish something difficult. Achievement motivation is a predictor of academic excellence. Achievement motivation has tremendous influence on approaches to study and the levels of knowledge processing. Achievement motivated children work hard to achieve success regardless of the task and the children who value the outcome put forth more effort and try more strategies to achieve the outcome.

‘Adjustment’ is a state of harmonious relation with oneself and the environment. A well adjusted person, in many respects, is ever changing and ever adapting. At the other end, the poorly adjusted person shows the signs of anxiety, aggression or disordered thinking. The term adjustment is coined by
Crow and Crow (1956). According to him an individual’s adjustment is adequate, wholesome or healthy to the extent that he has established harmonious relationship between himself and the conditions, situations and persons who comprise his physical and social environment.

Home being the first and major agency of socialization, parents play a pivotal role in shaping the child’s life. A supportive home environment is a strong determinant of the personality development of the child. Many children are denied the opportunity for a healthy all-round development. It has been observed by Pandey (2000) that most of the children who are successful in doing any task come from families where wholesome relationship exists between children and their parents.

Academic achievement can be made easier for children if the development in school and the development at home are recognised and built upon. A good home environment will provide a conducive atmosphere for the harmonious development of the child. Parents can give positive attention, especially at the time of crisis, provide nurturance, be positive role models and establish close bonds as a caretaker, friend or favourite teacher. The person ultimately responsible for the child is the parent. Without the help, cooperation, advice and understanding of parents, there will be very little long lasting remediation. Hence home environment can affect children in different ways, from the shaping of personality to the facilitation of cognitive gains.

Learning disability is a silent and enigmatic entity. Most of the children with learning disability have normal intelligence, are apparently normal in all dimensions of their daily living, yet have isolated problems in learning certain things. Unlike other disabilities, such as paralysis or blindness, learning disability is a hidden handicap. Low self concept, poor motivation and lack of confidence coupled with social rejection by peers, teachers and adults can result in emotional, social and behavioural maladjustments. In turn, it may
lead to psychological distresses, or even to chronic depression and anxiety. Educationalists have already conducted research studies to measure the nature and the extent of the relationship of psycho-social variables on academic achievement among normal children. But in the area of learning difficulties the studies are few. This study therefore, aims at providing insight on the psycho-social aspects of LD and the nature and extent of its relationship with academic achievement.

India has 340 million children between 0-14 years, about 10 percent children are identified in Indian schools with L.D, that is about 34 million children (Karanth and Rozario, 2003). A few studies on learning disabilities have shown the prevalence rate to be between 4 to 14 percent. For example, a study conducted by National Institute of Mentally Handicapped, Hyderabad, claims the incidence of learning disabilities to be 4 percent. But Podupuganti’s study (2001) revealed that there are 14 percent of children with learning disability among the primary school children in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secandarabad. Samveda (1997) in Karnataka said that he had found 15 percent children with learning disabilities. Different studies show variation in the incidence because of varying definitions and methodologies.

A survey conducted by the Institute of Neurology, Kerala (1997), covering six districts of the state, revealed that 10 percent of children were learning disabled. No other systematic attempt has been made to estimate the prevalence of LD in Kerala which is far ahead in the case of literacy when compared to other states. Every family gives priority to the education of their children without regarding their social and economic status; yet, there are some children in the regular school who manifest an educationally significant discrepancy between estimated academic potential and the actual level of academic functioning or related to dysfunction in the learning process. Practically, nothing is being done in Kerala to identify them and alleviate their problems arising from the thwarting of psychological needs.
A large number of the student population suffers from learning disability, their problem has not yet received as much attention from the government or the public as is required. No serious attempt has been made by the Government of Kerala to ameliorate the lot of these unfortunate brethren who toil hard in the classroom. In Kerala, there is hardly any research done in the field except a few sporadic studies. So the investigator has tried to conduct a research on the relationship between psycho-social factors and the academic achievement of learning disabled elementary children of Kottayam District in Kerala.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

1. The study is limited to VI standard children with learning difficulties.

2. The sample consists of 224 children with learning difficulties.

3. The bases for identification of learning difficulties are teachers’ observation, children’s academic achievement in English and Mathematics, students’ RPM percentile and scores on Reading, Writing, Spelling and Arithmetic Difficulties Diagnostic Tests.

4. The diagnostic test to identify Reading, Writing, Spelling and Arithmetic difficulties are teacher made one only.

5. Achievement Motivation Scale and Home Environment Inventory are the teacher made tools having their own reliability and validity.

6. Personal Adjustment Inventory for Upper Primary School Children, Social Adjustment Inventory for Upper Primary School Children and Self Concept Scale are teacher made and are adopted by the investigator for the present study.

7. The area of the study is limited to Kottayam district of Kerala state.

The methodology used in the study is presented in the next chapter.