ABSTRACT

The ability to read and write are signs of literacy. Reading is one of the basic, essential and central skills, permeating most of what goes on in school, required for almost all school tasks and absolutely necessary for succeeding in the educational system.

Many children experience difficulties in reading. Reading disability is by far the most crucial component of any learning-disability syndrome. Most children with other learning problems (E.g.: arithmetic problems) also have reading and spelling problems. Most of the studies done are on the English language and mostly on urban populations. Studies have not been done on rural population and in India's regional languages.

Thus, the main focus of the present study is to study the psychosocial correlates of reading disability in rural children and also to plan an intervention package to teach them skills to improve their reading ability.

The objectives were

(1) To develop a graded reading test in Malayalam for rural children in Kerala to assess reading ability.

(2) To determine some of psychosocial correlates of reading.

(3) To develop an effective intervention programme to improve reading ability in children who have reading difficulty.
Stage I:

Because of a lack of standardized test in Malayalam the first stage was aimed at developing a reading test to measure reading ability.

The sample consisted of 300 subjects studying in classes I to X in a rural school with 15 boys and 15 girls in each standard.

Stage II:

In the second stage, the subjects who met the inclusion - exclusion criteria were determined. Data was collected using (1) Screening interview with subject’s mother or any significant others from the family to elicit relevant social and demographic details and to screen out mental retardation in the index child (2) Administration of psychological tests and interview of the index child who was assessed for reading ability and other psychological correlates of reading and (3) Rating of the index child by the teacher on possible behavior problems of the subject.
The sample for the main study consisted of 1152 children between the age of 8 and 12 years. These children were drawn from rural and semi-urban areas. On the whole 1200 children were drawn from the areas. Out of these 48 who scored high on the mental retardation scale were deleted.

The various tests and questionnaire that were used were:

(1) The WHO household questionnaire (WHO 1986) used in developing countries, to assess the demographic and other personal details.

(2) The TQ (Ten questions) (Belmont, 1984) to screen the sample for mental retardation.

(3) The Rutter’s A2 and B2 parents and teachers completed translated into Malayalam (Hackett Latha & Richard, 1988-89) to assess behavior problems at school and at home.

(4) The graded reading test, developed in the I stage to measure reading ability.

(5) Vocabulary test.

(6) The coloured progressive matrices as a test of general Intelligence (Raven et. al 1990)


Stage III

The data obtained from different sources were analyzed to determine the psycho-social correlates of reading ability in this stage.
Stage IV

In the fourth stage the sample for the intervention package was determined depending on the results of the reading test. Subjects who scored low and fitted the criteria adopted were contacted for further testing and for allotment to the experimental group.

The tests used were: (1) The number cancellation test as a test of concentration. (2) NIMHANS index of specific learning disabilities and (3) Informal Reading Assessment to grade and allot the children in different group according to their ability.

Stage V

The fifth stage consisted of the intervention programme. The programme was to teach reading skills to enable the child to learn to read.

The sample consisted of 58 children. They were divided into 2 groups.
(1) Experimental group which consisted of 41 subjects (27 males and 14 females) and

(2) Control group which consisted of 17 subjects (9 males and 8 females). The programme was group based. The experimental group was further divided into 9 groups based on their ability.

Stage VI

The efficacy of the intervention programme was assessed using the pre-post research design in the final stage.
Appropriate statistics were used to verify the hypotheses. The techniques used were multiple regression, ‘t’ test and correlation.

The results obtained indicate that:

* Personal factors like school, age, sex and standard of class influence reading ability.

* That girls have better reading ability than boys. In short there were more number of boys who were reading disabled than girls.

* That intelligence has an influence on reading ability. Thus subjects with higher IQ perform better in reading than subjects with lower IQ. However, the precise reason cannot be firmly stated as intelligence is genetically inherited.

* Vocabulary is also found to be positively related to reading ability. Thus subjects with better reading have higher vocabulary.

* Motor proficiency or neuropsychological development influences reading ability. It was found that subjects with poor neuropsychological development showed reading problems.

* Behaviour problems as rated by parents and teachers correlates with reading ability, thus indicating that children with behavior problems have reading disability too.

* In the home front, informant’s reading (whether parent or any ‘significant other’) influences the subjects reading ability. It was found that children with reading disability also had parents who were poor readers.
* The speech of the subject influences his reading ability. It was found that subjects with problems like stammering and other speech disorders were poor readers.

* Auditory discrimination was found to be related to reading. This indicates that better the auditory discrimination better is the reading. Thus it can be said that auditory discrimination is one of the factors that influences reading ability.

* Concentration influences reading. It was found that an adequate level of concentration was required to enhance reading ability. Thus lesser the concentration higher is the reading disability.

* Variables that influence reading in the rural children are different from those that influence reading of the semi urban children.

* Intervention programme has a positive effect on improving the reading ability of the subjects who were reading disabled. It was found that the intervention package was successful at teaching the subjects reading skills that could help them improve their reading ability.

Summing up it was found that there were various psychosocial correlates - demographic, parental and other psychological factors which influenced reading ability. It was also found that the intervention has to be part of any programme/survey on reading disability. Intervention has had a positive effect on children’s performance in reading.
I Dedicate this work to my Parents (Bappa & Amma) who have always with me as a source of encouragement and inspiration.