

Influence of Parental Education, and Income on The Prevalence of Learning Disabilities in Secondary School Students

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Abstract: Learning disabilities (LDs) represent a diverse group of neurological disorders that affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding, or use of verbal or non-verbal information. At the secondary education level, students with LDs often encounter heightened challenges due to increased academic complexity, social expectations, and the demand for independent learning. This paper examines the types of learning disabilities prevalent at the secondary level, their impact on academic achievement and psychosocial development, and effective intervention strategies. It emphasizes the importance of early identification, individualized instruction, and inclusive classroom practices to improve educational outcomes for these students.

Keywords: Learning disabilities, Secondary education, Inclusive education, Intervention strategies, Academic achievement.

INTRODUCTION

Learning disabilities affect approximately 5–15% of students globally, with a substantial proportion identified during primary schooling (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2022).

However, many challenges persist or emerge more prominently during secondary education, when students face abstract concepts, heavier workloads, and greater independence demands (Smith & Tyler, 2021). Common learning disabilities at this stage include dyslexia (reading difficulties), dyscalculia (math difficulties), dysgraphia (writing difficulties), and non-verbal learning disorders. If unaddressed, these conditions can hinder not only academic performance but also self-esteem, motivation, and long-term career prospects (Hallahan, Kauffman, & Pullen, 2020).

This paper explores the nature of learning disabilities in secondary school contexts, their academic and social implications, and evidence-based strategies to support affected learners.

1. Understanding Learning Disabilities at the Secondary Level

Learning disabilities are not indicative of low intelligence; rather, they involve specific neurological differences that interfere with learning processes (Lyon, Fletcher, & Barnes, 2019). At the secondary level, these differences can manifest in various forms:

- **Dyslexia:** Persistent difficulty with reading fluency, decoding, and comprehension.
- **Dyscalculia:** Challenges with number sense, calculation, and mathematical reasoning.
- **Dysgraphia:** Difficulty with handwriting, spelling, and written expression.

- **Non-Verbal Learning Disorder (NVLD):** Deficits in visual-spatial skills and non-verbal reasoning.

2. Academic Implications

Secondary education requires complex skills such as analyzing literature, solving multi-step math problems, and synthesizing information from multiple sources. Students with LDs often struggle with:

- **Processing speed:** Difficulty keeping pace with classroom instruction.
- **Working memory deficits:** Challenges retaining multi-step directions.
- **Organization and planning:** Trouble managing assignments and meeting deadlines.

Research indicates that without targeted interventions, students with LDs are more likely to have lower grades, increased dropout rates, and reduced post-secondary enrollment (Cortiella & Horowitz, 2014).

3. Psychosocial Impact

Beyond academics, LDs at the secondary level can affect social interactions, self-image, and emotional well-being. Adolescents with LDs often experience heightened anxiety, peer rejection, and feelings of isolation (Mishna, 2003). These effects can exacerbate academic difficulties, creating a cycle of frustration and disengagement.

4. Effective Support Strategies

Evidence-based practices for supporting secondary students with LDs include:

- **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs):** tailored to specific learning needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** approaches to make curriculum accessible for

diverse learners (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014).

- **Assistive technology** such as text-to-speech, speech-to-text, and graphic organizers.
- **Explicit strategy instruction** in study skills, note-taking, and test preparation.
- **Teacher professional development** to improve awareness and instructional flexibility.

5. The Role of Early Identification

While secondary schools often inherit students already diagnosed with LDs, some conditions are overlooked until academic demands increase. Screening, teacher observation, and collaboration with school psychologists are essential for timely identification and intervention (Fuchs & Vaughn, 2012).

Role of teachers in supporting students with learning disabilities (LD) at the secondary level:

1. Identification and Understanding

- Recognize early signs of LD such as persistent difficulty in reading, writing, spelling, math, or comprehension.
- Collaborate with school psychologists, special educators, and parents for proper diagnosis and support.
- Understand that LDs do not reflect low intelligence, but rather differences in processing information.

2. Instructional Adaptations

- **Differentiated Instruction:** Use varied teaching methods (visuals, audio, hands-on activities) to suit different learning styles.
- **Scaffolded Learning:** Break tasks into smaller, manageable steps with guided practice.

- **Multi-sensory Approaches:** Combine sight, sound, and movement (e.g., reading aloud with visuals).
- **Assistive Technology:** Encourage tools like text-to-speech software, audiobooks, and digital organizers.

3. Assessment and Evaluation

- Provide **alternative assessment methods** (oral exams, projects, open-book tests).
- Allow **extended time** for tests and assignments.
- Focus on mastery of concepts rather than rote memorization.
- Use **formative assessments** to track progress and provide feedback.

4. Classroom Environment

- Create an inclusive and non-judgmental atmosphere where students feel safe to take risks.
- Use peer support systems (study buddies, group work) with sensitivity.
- Provide clear instructions both orally and in writing.
- Minimize distractions and maintain structured routines.

5. Guidance and Motivation

- Build self-confidence by celebrating small successes.
- Encourage self-advocacy: teach students to express their learning needs.
- Support social and emotional development, as students with LD may struggle with self-esteem or peer relationships.
- Offer career and vocational guidance tailored to strengths and interests.

Table 1 Level of Learning Disabilities of Standard IX students with regard parent's Education

Parent's Education	Low		Moderate		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Illiterate	4	8.16	36	73.47	9	18.37
School	14	7.41	152	80.42	23	12.17
College	5	8.06	52	83.87	5	8.06

From the above table, it is inferred that 8.16% of students whose parent's are illiterate have low, 73.47% of them have moderate and 18.37% of them have high level Learning Disabilities. 7.41% of students whose parent's having school education have low, 80.42% of them have moderate and 12.17% of them have high level Learning Disabilities. 8.06% of students whose parent's are degree holders have low, 83.87% of them have moderate and 8.06% of them have high level Learning Disabilities

Table 2 Level of Learning Disabilities of Standard IX students with regard to Family Monthly Income

Mother's Education	Low		Moderate		High	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Illiterate	3	3.80	65	82.28	11	13.92
School	13	9.22	110	78.01	18	12.77
College	7	8.75	65	81.25	8	10.00

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From the above table, it is inferred that 3.80% of students whose parents are occupied for daily wages have low, 82.28% of them have moderate and 13.92% of them have high level Learning Disabilities. 9.22% of students whose parents are private employees have low, 78.01% of them have moderate and 12.77% of them have high level Learning Disabilities. 8.75% of students whose parents are government employees have low, 81.25% of them have moderate and 10.00% of them have high level Learning Disabilities

CONCLUSION

Learning disabilities at the secondary level present unique challenges that require a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach. Early identification, individualized supports, and inclusive teaching practices can significantly improve both academic and psychosocial outcomes for affected students. Collaboration among educators, families, and specialists is key to ensuring these learners can achieve their full potential.

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