

Dyslexia: emotional and psychological effects in relationship with the social behaviour of caretakers in Sindh, Pakistan

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Abstract

This qualitative study focuses on the socio-emotional and psychological aspects of children with learning disabilities starting from an early age. It includes the perception and behaviour of caretakers (parents and teachers). The paper contains first-hand information collected through semi-structured interviews of 12 parents who are also primary school teachers at a public school in Taluka Matli, rural Sindh, Pakistan. The study concludes that teachers' knowledge regarding learning disabilities is minimal, and they lack professional training to deal with such students. It also provides evidence that teachers and parents practice corporal punishment, which ultimately affects the lives of children with learning disabilities. The study presents a case study of a child with learning disorders on his father's account, which highlights other aspects of a learning disorder. This paper also focuses on the possible adverse effects of parental behaviour in Pakistani society concerning corporal punishment as social behaviour. It may help parents and teachers to identify the characteristics of learning disabilities like dyslexia or ADHD from a very early stage of childhood.

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1. Introduction

Standard terms like dyslexia, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dysgraphia, and dyscalculia are known for learning disorders in children. Among these disorders, dyslexia is a communal learning disorder, and according to International Dyslexia Association and other researchers, 15 to 20 percent of the population are dealing with it (IDA, 2013). Researchers describe it as the difficulty in reading due to the physical changes in the brain (Berlin, 1887). The reports claim that the disability involves retrieving and storing visual memories of letters and words in the brain. It is hereditary and remedial, usually found in boys than girls (Hinshelwood, 1900).

Pakistan's education structure provides little space for children with learning disabilities. Although the system somehow facilitates special children, it focuses more on children with physical ailments. However, children with learning disabilities or any developmental disorder are not the concern of the special education department. As dyslexia and other neurological disorders are invisible to the naked eye, children seem fit and fine physically. Apart from it, there is a scarcity of public or parental knowledge of such problems. Neither parents nor teachers are aware because such information has not been part of the mainstream education system, public awareness, and policies. Due to the lack of social awareness, there is rejection among Pakistani parents and teachers regarding the existence of such genetic learning disorders as dyslexia. There is also no screening system for such children for problem identification, neither in schools nor in society.

From elementary to onwards, students have to deal with difficulties and problems in academics and social life. However, schooling and parental techniques revolve around traditional practices in Pakistan. Corporal and psychological punishment is a key tool to control children. It is socially accepted because of enculturation and adoption from one generation to another. This technique is also easy to manipulate a child's behaviour and compel them to do what teachers or parents believe to be good. Learning disorders may be multifaceted. Together with academic learning, a child's whole development process may become slow or impaired. The concept of self, self-esteem, and personality development process of a child with learning disabilities may be at risk if the problem is unidentified and social behavioural techniques like corporal punishment are common.

Although the Pakistan senate passed the Dyslexia Measures Bill on 13 July 2020, it is yet to become law. It is also difficult to assess the time of its practical implementation. It mentions that there is a lack of awareness of dyslexia, parents with dyslexic children are in denial, academic institutes are not friendly regarding dyslexia, and there is shame and stigma due to the connection of learning disability with mental illness. Further, it adds that proper screening for identifying students with dyslexia and its disciplinary measures includes that no child with dyslexia and other learning disorders should be subjected to corporal punishment or any discrimination or mental harassment. Children with dyslexia should be provided proper support

and help for their specific learning needs, building their sense of dignity self-worth, and developing their personality, and strengthening their physical and mental abilities through qualified educators (Dyslexia Special Measures Bill, 2020).

2. Literature review

Samuel Orton was the first researcher who focused on the socio-emotional aspects of dyslexic children. He reported that dyslexic children are very stable and happy in their pre-school period. However, their frustrations begin when teaching methods do not match their learning requirements (Orton, 1925). The problem further accelerates when their classmates and peers go smoothly in reading, except for those with learning disorders. Such a situation will frustrate their parents also, who already have predefined expectations from their child. In a schooling system like in Pakistan, where neither parents nor teachers are aware of dyslexic children's problems, it will ultimately pressure them to attain academic targets, further frustrate their lives, and affect their self-concept.

Skinner called self a simple device that expresses the unified working system of human responses. While dealing with the data, we need to consider each unit of that system and its co-relationships, which is a common mode of action (Skinner, 1953). The ratio of a dyslexic child's mistakes will be higher than his peers and classmates. He/she will be a slow learner and make more mistakes, thus affecting the child's self-concept. According to Carl Rogers, self-concept consists of self-worth (Self-Esteem), self-image, and ideal self (Rogers, 1947). Roger clarified that self-worth is about "what one thinks about oneself." It is developed from early childhood when a child interacts with other peers and parents. He further defined that self-image is precious for psychological and emotional health. It influences inner personality because if one feels good or bad, it comes from the inner self, and how one thinks, perceives, and behaves depends upon self-image. However, the ideal self is about ambitions and goals, how one wants to see himself in the future, and varies from childhood to teenager and in the late twenties (Rogers, 1959). Roger believed that humans have one primary motive for self-actualization, which is driven by our personality with combined images and actions. Self-actualization depends on the success of a dyslexic child who has started schooling and makes mistakes. His/her self-actualization will be in jeopardy (Rogers, 1951).

The researchers explained that a child develops language from age two and uses the word "me." From the age of three to four, he/she becomes descriptive and judgmental about his self-image, and from the age five to six, a child can define himself within a group (Miller *et al.*, 2005). Before starting school, a dyslexic child is happy and normal like other children in his social group, as is confirmed by Orton above. At this stage, neither a dyslexic child nor his parents are aware of any possible issue, and everything goes normal. The problem begins when a dyslexic child starts schooling, where he is taught, observed, and examined in a certain way. His learning frequency is observed by his teachers and parents and by himself. Suppose the teachers and parents are ignorant of a child's problems. He/she faces difficulties in reading and

creating coherence between a letter/word and its sound to comprehend the concept. Thus, he/she has learning disabilities. In that case, his self-image will begin to destabilize, and feelings of guilt and inferiority might emerge. As Erik Erickson explained, the conflict between inferiority or negative self-image and positive self-image should be resolved during the early years of a child's school. His success in school will bring positivity and success in life (Erikson, 1982). If the feeling of inferiority persisted until the age of ten, it would be difficult for a child to bring back his positive self-image in life (Erikson, 1950).

As Roger defined self-esteem as “what one thinks about oneself” it depends on the weakness and strengths one has in his psyche. They are affected by the negative and positive responses they get from others (Mosley & Thomson, 1995). In Lawrence's words, a child mainly considers the opinions of his/her parents, peers, and teachers (Lawrence, 1981). One begins to construct and shape self-esteem early on through self-experiences (Stenhouse, 1994). According to researchers, including Lawrence, there is a strong correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement (Lawrence, 1981; Piers & Harris, 1964; Primavera *et al.*, 1974; Skaalvik, 1983; Van-Laar, 2000). The possibility of failure or low academic performance of dyslexic children is higher than normal. According to Morgan *et al.* (2008), low academic performance results in low self-esteem in dyslexic children who are easily involved in an inferiority complex.

A child with learning disorders with low or poor self-esteem, which the school further stimulates, adopts deviant behaviour. It is an alternative strategy for dyslexics to gain attention from their classmates and peers (Kirk & Reid, 2001; Scott, 2004). The researcher further exclaimed that low/poor self-esteem and frustration often lead to deviant and anti-social behaviour amongst dyslexics (Morgan, 1997; Peer & Reid, 2001). Due to the learning disability and poor self-esteem, their classmates and peers often bully dyslexic children, which further accelerates the poor self-esteem, as there is a strong association between bullying and poor self-esteem (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).

Due to the shame and fear of making mistakes in informal social gatherings, a person with dyslexia may not like the company of others or socialize with himself. They avoid socialization, prefer withdrawal from people, and socially isolate themselves (Shultz, 2013). The life of a person with learning disabilities as a child begins with frustrations, a vulnerable self-image, poor self-esteem, and adopted deviant and anti-social behaviour. Researchers believe those people are at high risk of social, emotional, and behavioural complexities (Martínez & Semrud-Clikeman, 2004). A slow learner making the same mistakes repeatedly, not attaining academic achievement in a normal way like his/her peers and below the teacher's and parent's expectations can further engulf child in problems and intricacies which may provoke anxiety and depression in life. Due to this, anxiety and depression are frequently found in dyslexic children and adults. Researchers have reported that children with learning disabilities are more anxious and unhappy than their peers who do not have dyslexia, despite their solid economic and educational family background (Casey *et al.*, 1992). Dyslexia is distressing for a child or

student. However, it is also distressing for the parents with a dyslexic child (Elliott & Nicolson, 2016), and they have a high level of anxiety compared to the parents of non-dyslexic children (Snowling & Melby-Lervag, 2016). The parents of a child with learning disorders have to seek help (Earey, 2013) for their children, bringing more physical and emotional problems (Rose, 2009; Delany, 2017).

3. Study method and contribution

This qualitative ethnographic study includes informal and semi-structured interviews of 12 primary teachers at public school Taluka Matli, rural Sindh, Pakistan. They were chosen randomly with a minimum experience of 12 years and a maximum of 35 years. Interviews were audio recorded first and then transcribed. These interviews aimed to assess the knowledge and identification of learning disabilities, mainly dyslexia and ADHD. It includes the observation of teachers about children with learning disabilities and their experience and techniques for dealing with such students. The study also explores the teacher's views about corporal punishment and whether they practice it. This paper includes a detailed case study of a student from the same area on his father's account. It includes many academic, social, and emotional aspects of a child with learning disabilities from toddler age to 9 years. This study will help teachers and parents identify their children with learning disabilities from a very early age and support them in their academic careers and social life.

4. Results

The teacher's knowledge is minimal regarding learning disabilities. Almost all teachers acknowledged that we had observed students with learning problems. However, only ten percent have heard the term dyslexia, especially those who are recently appointed. The term ADHD was entirely new for the teachers. All expressed that we follow provided textbooks. However, some expressed that we give extra time to slow-learning students. Knowledge regarding dealing with a child with learning problems like dyslexia or ADHD was limited and was not part of their professional training. Data also brings evidence that punishment is still widely practiced by teachers and parents. The study further argues that the developmental process of children with learning disabilities like dyslexia or ADHD will be at higher emotional and socio-psychological risks when teachers' and parental behaviour are unhelpful. Life of children with learning disorders may face complexities in all aspects of life because learning is the nucleus of the developmental process. Learning disabilities and corporal punishment are also the reasons for higher school dropouts in Pakistan.

4.1. Parental behaviour and corporal punishment

Corporal punishment is an everyday practice for parents and teachers to handle their children promptly, either intentionally or unintentionally, in many communities. It is a widespread practice in Pakistani society. The circumstances can be more awful when parents and teachers

are ignorant about such disturbing practices. Punitive behaviour can ruin a child's emotional health and impede development. The life of an unidentified child with learning disabilities, born in a society where punishment is a socially accepted norm, may perplex a child from an early age. However, the interaction of parents and teachers is supposed to be encouraging and supportive, especially with such children, which may help a child to deal with academic, emotional, and psychological complexities throughout life.

Stewart et al. rightly said that parents consider it their religious duty to nurture their children under commonly accepted social norms (Stewart & Bond, 2000). In Skinner, these social norms may be called a social law generated through individuals' behaviour, and this individual behaviour expresses group phenomenon (Skinner, 1953). He further said that punishment is the most common technique to control modern life and named it a negative reinforcement, a technique to reduce the tendency to behave in a certain way. He called it operant conditioning and explained that a positive reinforcement stimulus presentation strengthens the behaviour and tends to be repeated. Furthermore, there is negative reinforcement (Punishment or aversive) and withdrawal, which strengthens behaviour and tends to be extinguished (Skinner, 1948).

Corporal punishment is a widely practiced social behaviour in Pakistani society, and almost every child faces it from their caretakers, and in schools, including children with learning disabilities like dyslexia. It is a social behaviour of parents to control their children easily. The ignorance of parents and teachers regarding such practices and their impact on a child's emotional health and development is detrimental. This may exacerbate the lives of children with learning disabilities prone to making more mistakes. Corporal punishment is using physical force to cause pain to a child, but not an injury, for correction or control of the child's behaviour (Straus, 2001). Straus further states that it is the primary cause that brings violence into relationships (child-parent or teacher-student relationship) starting from infancy (2004). After discussing decades and constant cases of child abuse and physical punishment in Pakistan, the national assembly of Pakistan passed the bill for child abuse and protection in Feb 2021. According to Pakistan Penal Code 89, Act XLV of 1860, corporal punishment comprises flagellation, spanking, bullying, paddling, and other forms of physical and psychological punishment in schools and society (PPCA, 2013).

Many researchers and psychologists believe corporal punishment adversely affects children's sociological and emotional health (Straus *et al.*, 1997). It is associated with psychosocial problems such as depression and damaged self-esteem (Paolucci & Violato, 2004). It is allied with negative behaviour in children (Gershoff *et al.*, 1999) and injects violence and bullying into peer relationships (Ohene, 2006). Studies claim that those parents and teachers who experienced physical punishment in their childhood are more likely to use and support punishment than those individuals who did not experience it (Hyman, 1988). Children who frequently experience corporal punishment will have problems in adulthood and a sensitive reaction to the behaviour at school and at home (Kaur, 2005).

Skinner elaborated that if a child restrains himself from behaving in a wrong way through punishment, it is temporary. Suppose a child is severely and constantly punished. In that case, it will generate emotional consequences, such as using foul language, shame, and skulking manners, including fear and anxiety as its by-products (Skinner, 1953). Society uses legitimate violence to get better outcomes and reinforces approval of it, but this increases the chances for further violence, as Cultural Spillover Theory reveals (Rohner *et al.*, 1991). The association between corporal punishment and the behavioural experience of children is broadly reported by Gershoff (2002), based on eighty-eight studies. According to her results, corporal punishment relates to numerous negative behaviours. Aggression in children's behaviour due to physical punishment is widely determined; many researchers have concluded that it increases aggression in children's behaviour (Becker & Krug, 1964). It promotes an aggressive attitude that predicts violence (Brown *et al.*, 1999). Children who have experienced physical punishment are more likely to be aggressive in their relationships with peers and parents; they accept violence in their peer relationships and practice bullying (Ani & Grantham-McGregor, 1998).

4.2. Pakistan's education system

Pakistan is a culturally and linguistically diverse and largely Muslim-populated post-colonial south Asian country. Pakistan's education system is divided into public and private institutions with a first and a second language. In other words, some are known as English medium schools while others follow Urdu/Sindhi medium. Grade-wise, it is divided into five levels, primary (Grade 1st to 5th), middle (Grade 6th to 8th), high (Grade 9th to 10th), intermediate (Grade 11th and 12th), and university (under-graduation and post-graduation). There is no uniform academic curriculum, and simultaneously different academic systems are working in schools (Iqbal, 1981). Due to the British inherited education system, English is believed to be a significant and preferred language over other native languages in Pakistan. Researchers have reported that students with learning disorders face more problems learning foreign languages (Kormos & Kontra, 2008).

Researchers also noted that the academic performance of students with learning disabilities in foreign languages is low, and their language aptitude is much lower than other students (Carroll & Sapon, 1959). The situation can be vulnerable for students in countries like Pakistan, where academic career depends on foreign languages, such as English, and corporal punishment in their daily school activities. Dyslexic students also feel de-motivated due to their constant failure to adopt foreign language skills (Kormos & Kontra, 2008), and they are likely to develop language anxiety (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991) with poor self-esteem (Crombie, 1999). When a child with learning disabilities like dyslexia starts schooling in Pakistan and constantly makes mistakes, his problems are unidentified. They continue accumulating grade by grade, along with the pressure of teachers' and parents' expectations. Due to the lack of foreign language aptitude, problems and frustration may multiply when he/she reaches high school and above, where English becomes the prime language in the academic examinations.

4.3. Teachers' response towards learning disabilities

The teachers' behaviour and role are inevitable for students with learning disabilities and attaining academic achievements. No broader study in Pakistan can present the facts and figures regarding learning disabilities in children and teachers' responses to it. However, the results of available studies in Pakistan are similar to this study regarding teachers' responses. Most of it concludes that the teacher's knowledge regarding specific learning disabilities is negligible. However, they agreed on the presence of children who are either slow in learning or have problems. There are a few urban-based studies, according to one of the Lahore-based study, of 666 participants, 39 percent indicated specific learning disabilities, 33 percent had dyslexia, 48 percent had dysgraphia, and 45 percent had dyscalculia symptoms (Ashraf & Najam, 2022).

Another Karachi-based study focused on teachers' knowledge and school practices regarding dyslexia, ADHD, and Autism. The study was based on 233 primary teachers in Karachi. According to the results, fifty-eight percent of teachers had the knowledge, and 53 percent were able to identify students with learning disabilities (Lodhi *et al.*, 2016). However, the study concluded that there is a lack of awareness in teachers regarding learning disabilities. Researchers and scholars share that teachers do not often consider students' learning struggles and are more focused on their high or conflicting expectations. They offer little or no practical and emotional support (Hornstra *et al.*, 2010). A household survey in rural Punjab in 2015, based on 122 districts, concluded that children with learning disabilities are less likely to continue their education. They are slow learners having problems with the basic reading and math. The identification of children was on the observation of caretakers/mothers (Nidhi *et al.*, 2020).

During the interviews, most teachers were unaware of dyslexia or ADHD. However, their response was affirmative after enquiring about their observation regarding the students with learning disabilities and sharing common symptoms. M. Yasir, a primary teacher at the Sindh education foundation (A semi-government organization) school with 12 years of experience, explained:

“Yes, there are children who have issues in learning. Some are confused in a few digits or letters, and others have memory problems too. The younger son of Rashid, a student in class one, used to write words completely in a backward order that one could see in the mirror to check its right order. Soon he left school, and now his father engages him in minor jobs locally. He also went to Karachi and worked in a factory for some time. There was another child, the son of Mehboob Khaskheli, who had confusion in similar digits like 3 and 8, and he also used to write in perfect backward order. I have 48 students in class, and it is difficult to focus on every student in a large group of small children. Another child from the Kolhi community, Naresh, aged 14 years, left school,

but now he has joined again, but he also writes in backward order and has some issues. There are two other students with short-term memory loss. While reading after a line or two, they misread it and skip to another lesson out of nowhere. While enquiring from Yasir regarding punishment, he said, "previously, I used to keep a stick by my side, which I show them to keep discipline in the class. Now, in rare circumstances, I slap lightly to manage the situation in class, and immediately try to compensate student by engaging him with other friendly activities."

Teachers were reluctant to respond when asked about physical punishment because of recent laws and social media campaigns regarding child violence. However, some also responded unintentionally before asking. Another senior primary teacher, Abdul Aziz, with 35 years of experience in multiple schools in the region, presently working at village Piyaro Lund, expressed that:

"We were recruited in the late 80s when there was a need for teachers, and district officers were recruiting them. I was intermediate when the district education officer appointed me as a primary teacher. Now very closer to retirement. I have been part of many teacher training programs that do not focus on students' problems. I have always observed two categories of students in our system: bright and dull. Some are in the middle. Those we (teachers) label dull may have the learning problems you are discussing. Whenever I encounter such students, I try to repeat things so their minds can catch them. However, I have also observed students who do not learn, no matter how hard they try. Even if one punishes them, it makes no difference. During our schooling time, teachers used to punish us even after school timing. We were not just punished but beaten mercilessly. I can name people who left school the day after they were punished. I used to punish students in my early teaching period, but now I do not. What can we do to such students? Ultimately either they drop, or we pass them and move forward. We follow our textbooks, and it is our job."

Children with learning disorders are at more risk of experiencing physical punishment in school because they are slow in learning and make more mistakes. Such circumstances will increase the chances of dropout in children, especially with learning problems. Corporal punishment can be one of the many reasons for dropout children in Pakistan. According to the Asian Development Bank report, 44 percent of the population (23 million) from the age of 5-16 are out of school in Pakistan, which is the second highest in the world regarding dropout children (ADB, 2022). In Sindh, 52 percent of children are out of school (UNICEF, 2019).

Alarmingly, not a single teacher knew enough about learning disabilities like dyslexia/ADHD/others. Saleem Nizamani, a primary teacher, having experience of 29 years, presently teaching at village Murad Ali Chalgri, said:

“I have observed the students who get confused in the alphabet of Sindhi language. For example, “Kaaf” and “Aeen” are almost similar in writing. Similarly, some students are confused about “daal” and miswrite it. For those students, I focus on more practice and practice. I have also observed students with hearing problems who do not catch up properly, and then school becomes just a formality to them. Many parents do not care about their child's learning. I participated in two training programs, mostly outsourced by third-party institutions. They taught about children's psychology and tips about teaching children. However, there is no follow-up of applications of those lessons taught in training. Once the project ends, everything ends.”

Another primary teacher Ms. Fozia Ali /Hassan, with 32 years of experience, is presently working at village Noor Muhammad Turk girl's primary school. She explained:

“I have students with learning problems, and there is a girl who writes in backward order. She is an intelligent girl. Whenever I ask her anything from text, she responds very well, but it is not in the right order when she writes. I do not think children get confused in reading or writing. It all depends upon the teacher; some students are slow, and the teacher needs to give them more time, while others have strong catching power. I teach kindergarten to 5th-grade students, and I have 35 children. There is another girl who needs lots of time because she is confused about the basic alphabet of Sindhi and other subjects. I pass her, and she is now in 5th grade. I cannot give more time to specific children. I feel sorry for that girl, but I cannot do anything. I do not believe that there is any dull child, maybe one out of a hundred, such students need more time only. Throughout my whole professional career, I have not used punishment. Sometimes my colleague teachers practiced cheek pulling only. However, I have heard about newly appointed teachers practicing punishment in some schools. Even their parents have allowed for punishment because they want to educate their children.”

The teachers argue that it is natural whether one is bright or dull, avoiding any relationship with learning problems. While having interviews with teachers, I had to share symptoms without which teachers were unable to understand. Another teacher having experience of 28 years, Lakhi Memon, he explained:

“Children who are a student of early 1st grade and 1st grade do face problems in similar words or letters. For instance, they write 19 as 91 or 13 as 31. However, after 2nd or 3rd grade, they no longer face such problems. I have often observed children who lose their attention easily. While writing or reading, their minds quickly divert. Some students face problems in one subject but are good in others. Some students take little time to understand

while others are slow and take more time." After asking about views regarding physical punishment, the teacher said, "before, teachers used to punish students, but now the time has changed. If a teacher punishes a student one day, his parents will come and ask the teacher the second day. They do not think that the purpose of a teacher is not to punish but to teach something. I believe teachers can use punishment as a last option if all other ways have failed."

Another primary teacher with ten years of working in private school and since last 12 years, she has been working in public school. At present, Ms. Azra Maqsood works at a girl's primary in the village of Muhammad Soomro. She explained:

"Mainly, there is the issue of lack of confidence in children. Once, I had an introductory class with a simple question of 'what is your name?' and many responded well. However, there was a girl named Preet. When her turn came, other class students shouted that she did not know. All other students already knew about her. Nevertheless, she recovered her confidence slowly. Similarly, when she was studying in another school, my daughter Hawa had no confidence in class and did not show her abilities. Now she is studying in my school and is a confident child. I have observed that the major issue with children is confidence. There was a girl in a private school Matli, and other teachers always punished her. I made her a class monitor who built her confidence and improved her learning. Some students often experience punishment at home; the same happens in school. I have not been part of any training, and I do not punish students."

Similarly, Ms. Gul Falak, a primary teacher with 12 years of experience in public primary school, presently working at village Saleh Soomro shared:

"There are children in my class who have some problems. They sit in the corner and avoid getting involved in any activity. There is another girl, a very bright student, but she writes in backward order, I give her lots of time, but still, she cannot write in the right order. Some students are dull, and others have shallow confidence and avoid sharing their book exercises even if they have done them rightly. Most students are good at the Sindhi language, and some have problems with basic math. A few girls are very bright, and others are dull. I did not get a chance to attend any teacher training program. Those teachers appointed after 2010 were called for training but not us." After enquiring about school punishment, she said, "I do not punish my student. However, I have a co-teacher who punishes students, but I have constructively criticized her, and now she rarely practices."

Although teachers were unaware of specific learning disabilities like dyslexia or ADHD, they all acknowledged that there are students with learning problems. Their knowledge regarding learning disabilities is minimal. A few teachers believed that there is no existence of such disabilities and that such students only need more time. The concept of naturally bright and dull students in the classroom still prevails among teachers. There are also limited teacher training programs, focusing not on students with learning problems. Teachers' primary technique for slow learners is repeating and practicing more. Most teachers believe punishment can be used as a last option. All those teachers who participated in the interviews faced punishment during their schooling. All teachers are also parents with minimum 3 three children. Overall, teachers were not satisfied with the parent's role, and some complained that children sometimes come to school without proper dress or washing their faces. Some teachers also complained that we could not punish children because of their parents, while others shared that we punish because their parents want us to punish if students are not focused on their studies or disobey their parents."

4.4. Descriptive case study

Sahib is a nine-year-old child with the symptoms of learning disorders who belongs to a middle-class, educated family from rural Sindh, Pakistan. A case study in his father's words:

"He has been curious and interested in physical activities since toddler age. When he started mumbling and uttered the very first words, "Ama and Ami." He called his mother, Ami, and his father, Ama. In the Sindhi language, both terms are used for mother. Sahib continued to call me (his father) Ama until the age of six, even publicly, though friends and family members corrected him hundreds of times. Slowly, when he started to learn more words, he used opposite words almost for everything. In summer, when he entered the room on a hot day, he usually said, "turn off the fan. I am feeling cold." He meant to say that turn on the fan because he was feeling hot. Also, whenever he touched cold water, he used to say, "Water is hot, and vice versa." It was not that he could not differentiate or feel hot and cold, but he used opposite words for both of those feelings. Similarly, when we went on the farm, he always demanded, "I will sit on the back seat of the bike" while struggling to sit on the front.

Regarding direction, for him, the front was back, the back was front, and his understanding of direction is still unclear. The left was right for him, the right was left, slow was fast, and fast was slow. Similarly, upward was downward, and vice versa. He is also perplexed about time. For instance, it is difficult for him to differentiate between five minutes and one hour. From an early age, he has been fond of music and is a confident dancer.

He has never liked to go to school since kindergarten. Until six years of age, all his concepts of using opposite words and confusion in the time and direction were considered normal, and every family member, including me (his father), believed that he would understand everything by the time. There is no need to be worried. He started to make mistakes in school, especially

in writing 'b' as a 'd', 'E' as '3', '6' as a '9', and confusion in 7 and h were common mistakes. He also wrote from right to left. For example, writing the word cat, he wrote from right, starting from t, then ending with c. He also used the same method of writing in Sindhi letters.

Initially, I enrolled Sahib in one of the private schools in Matli. However, after not getting any results, we changed school and enrolled him in another private school which was more expensive with a better reputation. Almost two months later, when I realized that Sahib was not learning and he may have some problems, I discussed it with the head teacher. He said, "What kind of father are you? There is no such problem. He will learn by the time." Later, I talked with their higher management from Karachi, but they also had no idea about the student learning problems. I decided to enrol Sahib in the public school of the village Malhan, and I was sure that at least he would learn the Sindhi language, which is his mother tongue, and which private schools do not teach. After joining the public school, his Sindhi language is good now. However, he sometimes gets confused in 4 and 9, and in English, he is still confused, especially in the last seven alphabets. Another common problem with him is the space between letters and words. He creates either big spaces or very narrow ones. He is also not fully clear about the sounds of letters and minor issues in their identification.

Although Sahib is using a mobile phone and watching kids' videos of ABC, numbers, and colours before schooling, he is still confused about colours' identification. He can identify black and white in the Sindhi language but not English. He can identify only the yellow colour but confuse with the others. Eshan is his brother and two years younger than him, but his understanding of time, space, numbers, and colours is excellent. Both brothers are different. Eshan is not having any problems and going smoothly in school activities. Every day, when we sit together to study, and I invite Sahib for homework, immediately, he becomes teary and emotional.

While working on homework, he becomes angry and restless. He always asks me that "can we quit school?" I keep encouraging him that everything is easy and that we will learn slowly. His teacher, Sir Qadir Bux, is trying his best, due to which Sahib's skills in the Sindhi language have improved. His teacher and I had a mutual consent that for now, we will focus on the Sindhi language mainly, and there will not be the use of any punishment. One year ago, his teacher told me, "I think Sahib has some problem." I told him that I also felt the same. Recently, he complained that while working in the classroom, Sahib loses his attention very quickly, and we need to have a hard hand on him so he will be more focused. Sir gave me an example of her daughter, and he said, "My daughter had the same problem of losing attention while studying. I slapped her once when she lost her attention while studying, and now she never loses her attention." He sometimes writes that he cannot continue teaching and shares little frustration. It is not simple for a caretaker like me to assist such a child, but I try not to force my children. I am afraid that enforcement may have side effects which may ultimately create other psychological or emotional problems in his life. For me, his mental health is more important than his academic life.

It is difficult for the children like Sahib, who have symptoms of learning disabilities like dyslexia or ADHD, or any other developmental disorder, to fit into the current education structure in Pakistan. One, because the system does not welcome or provide space and opportunities for such students. Second, caretakers' behaviour (parents and teachers) limits learning opportunities and further pushes toward the paradigm of negativism due to the lack of awareness and professional training.

5. Conclusion

We as human beings acquire knowledge gradually from infancy to old age, and if there is any ability we possess intrinsically, it may be the learning ability. Dyslexia or ADHD, or other developmental disorder do not shut the door to learning. However, these children learn differently. They need a different way of teaching and behaviour, not a conventional way. A learning disorder like dyslexia may have a broader impact throughout a person's life. Apart from language learning and reading disorder, students with learning disabilities may face socio-psychological problems throughout life, starting from school. The whole developmental process, including the construction of self-image, personality building, and social and emotional life, may be affected due to the complexities of learning. A student may tackle reading and writing problems with proper support and guidance and improve academic performance over time. Still, before achieving his/her target, they must go through a psychological and emotional process. Its possible side effect and psychological frequency of action in mind may be beyond the observer's reach. The life of a child with learning disorders is not limited to the self. However, their social environment and the behaviour of parents and teachers play a pivotal role in a long-lasting positive or negative effect on the child. The law and education policymakers in Pakistan should consider this minority group, which is 15-20 percent (internationally accepted statistics), and shape a plan to facilitate such students with advanced tools and techniques. They require a separate system from mainstream schooling with multisensory and internationally approved teaching methods. Such students need teachers who have specialization in learning disabilities or are well-trained in the specific area. There is an open opportunity and need to conduct a deeper research study of child-caretakers behaviour proportionate to the development of a child's mental health.

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