Assessing the Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of School Teachers Regarding Dyslexia, ADHD and Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Karachi, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Background:
Learning impairments in children consist of a spectrum of disorders that are under diagnosed in Pakistan. Most learning disorders have long term consequences for a child and early detection is thus imperative. Teachers may be able to play a key role in such identification. The objective of our study was to survey knowledge, attitudes and practices of school teachers regarding dyslexia, Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autistic spectrum disorder, and assess their ability to identify learning disabilities.

Methods:
A Cross-sectional study was conducted with 233 primary school teachers from Karachi using a self-administered questionnaire.

Results:
Mean scores for the knowledge test and the ability to identify learning-impaired children were 58.8% and 53.3%, respectively. Better qualified teachers scored significantly more on the knowledge and ability to identify learning impairments sections. Most teachers believed that these students should study in mainstream schools with special educators. Majority of the teachers belonged to schools where children with learning disabilities were detected using teachers’ judgment. Most teachers manage these children by involving them in discussions, seating them at the front of the class, and giving them extra time.

Conclusion:
Knowledge about learning disabilities is very low amongst school teachers, which may limit their ability to identify learning impairments.