

ORIGINAL STUDY

PERSPECTIVE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER'S TOWARDS STUDENT LEARNING DISABILITIES WITH CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

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Abstract:

This study desired to determine the perspective of special education teachers towards challenging behavior among children with learning disabilities. Participants was ninety six teachers was observed ninety six students with learning disabilities, respectively the students must be attending the school of special education in the integrated program and the teachers must have experience with the students for more than 2 months. The teachers completed the Development of behavior checklist teacher version DBC-T(Einfeld & Tonge,1995). The result of this study showed that there is no significant level of challenging behavior among student with learning disabilities and there is no significant between the level of challenging behavior and age of students with learning disabilities. There is no significant between the level of challenging behavior and gender of the students. The theoretical and practical implications were discussed in this study.

Keywords: Challenging behavior, learning Disabilities, perspective of Teachers, special Education,

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ministry of Education Malaysia, students with special need care are those who have been certified by a medical practitioner or other related experts stated that the students are having any visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech impairment, physical impairment, learning difficulties or any combination of those impairments or difficulties [1]. In special education programs, there are two different programs in Malaysia which include "Inclusive Educational Program" and Special "Education Integrated Programme".

Learning disability is a neurological disorder which affects the brain's ability to receive, process, store, and respond to deliver information [2]. It is also defined as the difficulty of a person's intelligence in acquiring basic academic and functional skills. Learning disabilities can affect a person's ability to understand or use spoken or written language, do mathematical calculations, coordinate movements, or direct attention [3]. Hence, the effects of LDs may come in many ways from person to person. Learning disabilities are related to getting information into the brain which is input, making sense of this information in an organization [4]. They are also related to storage and retrieve

information memory and getting information back out output.

Other than that, LDs can be related to psychological processing to learning, which may include: 1) language processing which is how an individual can express the information using the word and understand the delivered words, 2) visual-spatial processing – the process of perceiving or organizing visual information, 3) Visual-motor – a process when an individual delivered the movement of eye-hand coordination activities. 4) Phonological processing which deals with the way an individual can manipulate and identifying the speech sounds. 5) The processing speed of taking in using or pulling out information. 6) Working memory is the storage information in mind while also using the information and lastly the executive function of planning and organization [5]. In general, the individual who is suffered from LDS can experience the effects on their learning function in daily life activities and social life. LDs are often coexisted by challenging behavior [6] [7], which are included attentional, behavior and emotional disorders, sensory impairment or other medical illness [4].

Moreover, challenging behaviors among individuals with learning disabilities are defined in various ways [8]. Meanwhile, others researcher has defined it as behavioral

such as aggression, destruction of property, self-injury and stereotypes [8][9]. Additionally other researcher has defined it as behavioral deficits such as sleep disturbance and unusual fears [10]. Challenging behaviors to increase the chance of the individual a being at risk of being physically restrained and medicated [11]. Thus, when the individual being at risk of harm, the challenging behavior can potentially impact the individual's social [8][12] and educational inclusion especially teachers in special education program [13].

Special education integrated program provides educational service to a varied group of students with mild retardation, students with autistic tendencies and student with multiple disabilities [14]. The student has been placed in special classes or in a special school with a specific teacher for special students [1]. Therefore, teachers in educational inclusion for special education programs play a major role in understanding the challenging behavior of their students and shall be knowledgeable and equipped to react with any possibilities of these cases.

Therefore, this present study is aimed to determine the challenging behavior of learning disabilities among their students by using Development Behavior Checklist-Teacher version (DBC-T) and also to find out which factor or area that may impact the perspective of special education teachers towards their student. It will also look into how the demographics of the student may affect the level of challenging behavior students with learning disabilities.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study is a cross-sectional study with convenience sampling which is used to determine the perspective of special education teachers towards challenging behavior among children with learning disabilities. The population of this were calculated using the Roasoft sample size calculation software. The commonly accepted value is 126 respondents. The questionnaires have been distributed to 10 primary schools in Klang City but only 96 respondents completely answered the questionnaire. The questionnaire has been distributed in paper pen method.

The questionnaire is to be used for this study is the Development Behavior Checklist version 2 (DBC-T). The DBC-T is the checklist that assesses a broad range of behavioral and emotional disturbance. The range of young people between 4 to 18 years old [15][16].

The special education teachers need to answer the question and their socio-demographic and development behavior checklist teacher version. There was 2 part of the questionnaire. Part one consist of socio-demographic data about participation. On part two is consist of the Development Behavior Checklist (DBC-T). The teachers must answer all 94 items with their perception of their special needs student. The questionnaire was collected one

week after the questionnaire has been distributed to the respondents.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

An independent t-test and ANOVA were conducted to analyze the result of the questionnaire answered by the respondents.

3.1. Level of variables in challenging behavior among student with learning disabilities

The Development Behavior Checklist version 2 (DBC-T) was used to assess the level of challenging behavior among student with learning disabilities from a teacher's perspective. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was conducted to determine the significant difference of teachers' perception towards the inclusion of special needs children in the level of challenging behavior. Based on histogram, the data is normally distributed for all groups. Levene's test was conducted to check the equal population variance among groups. The result of the ANOVA test done shows that p = 0.00 which is not significant. The mean (SD) of subscale challenging behavior are social relating 9.17(4.89), for disruptive 20.40 (10.63), for communication disturbance 21.54 (13.12), for self-absorbed 8.18 (4.48) and anxiety is 1.58 (0.54). Therefore, there is no significant difference in challenging behavior with learning disabilities.

Table 1: Result of challenging behavior with student learning disabilities.

| Subscale Challenging Behavior | Percentage of range score % | Frequency N | Mean (Sd) | F-Stats ² (Df) | P-Value |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------|
| Social relating | 17.3 | 96 | 9.17 (4.89) | 11.96 (6;89) | 0.00 |
| Disruptive | 4.1 | | 20.40 (10.63) | 12.61 (6;89) | |
| Communication disturbance | 2.0 | | 21.54 (13.12) | 23.76 (6;89) | |
| Self-Absorbed | 2.0 | | 8.18 (4.48) | 14.70 (6;89) | |
| Anxiety | 2.0 | | 1.58 (0.54) | 16.30 (6;89) | |

The finding showed that 96 of the students with learning disabilities are not significant with the challenging behavior of DBC-subscale. The previous study emphasized on the perception of special education teachers towards challenging behavior students with learning disabilities. A study conducted towards student with autism with challenging behavior shown that, from 16 of 32 children of autism with challenging behavior was not significant in differences existed in communication [17]. Meanwhile, my study has shown the frequency of challenging behavior in social relating was higher than others according to the

teacher's perception. Besides, other the study stated that self-injurious behavior with 35% present of the subject, 60% in stereotyped behavior, and 63% in aggressive, disruptive behavior [14]. The aggressive behavior among student with epilepsy and learning disabilities are often being problematic rather than others [18].

3.2. Level of challenging behavior with the age of the student with learning disabilities from teachers perspective

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was conducted to determine the significant difference of teachers' perception towards the inclusion of special needs children based on the level of challenging behavior. Based on histogram, the data is normally distributed for all groups. Levene's test was conducted to check the equal population variance among groups. The result is $p = 0.02$ which means not significant as the $p > 0.05$. The variances among groups are equal. The result of the ANOVA test done shows that $p = 0.07$ which is not significant. The mean (SD) of age of students 7 years old is 84.10 (20.28), 8 years old is 83.25 (22.42), 9 years old is 56.95 (49.02), 10 years old is 66.13 (30.02), 11 years old is 57.00 (30.31), 12 years old is 61.00 (40.99), 13 years old is 41.75 (33.18) and 14 years old is 60.00 (42.43). Therefore, there is no significant difference in the challenging behavior with the age of the student with learning disabilities from the teachers' perspective.

Table 2: Result of challenging behavior with the age of the student with learning disabilities.

| Age of students | Frequency n | Mean (SD) | F-stats ² (df) | P-value |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------|
| 7 | 21 | 84.10 (20.28) | 1.99 (7;88) | 0.07 |
| 8 | 12 | 83.25 (22.42) | | |
| 9 | 19 | 56.95 (49.02) | | |
| 10 | 16 | 66.13 (30.02) | | |
| 11 | 15 | 57.00 (30.31) | | |
| 12 | 7 | 61.00 (40.99) | | |
| 13 | 4 | 41.75 (33.18) | | |
| 14 | 2 | 60.00 (42.43) | | |

The finding showed that there is no significant difference in the challenging behavior with the age of the student with learning disabilities from the teachers' perspective. Despite, the challenging behavior was led to adults, the study was significant to adult [17]. A global population study of 1,102 pairs for age between 5 and 12 years, the study shows how the teachers managed the challenging behavior of student between age 5 to 12 years.

As a result, the teachers play a vital role in controlling the challenging behavior students by improving the effective time and potential to deliver their curriculum in class [19]

3.3 Level of challenging behavior between genders of the students with learning disabilities from teacher's perspective

An independent sample t-test was conducted to identify the level of challenging behavior between genders of the student with learning disabilities from the teachers' perspective. Based on histogram, the data for both groups are normally distributed. If the data is normally distributed, then data can be further analyzed. Levene's test was conducted to check the equal population variance between the two groups. The result is $p = 0.916$ which means significant. Based on the null hypothesis, equal variances are not assumed. The final result for research question 1 is mean (SD) of male students, 66.90 (0.39) and mean (SD) of female students, 66.40 (32.74). Result of t-test = 0.955, degree of freedom (df) = 94, and the mean difference is 0.427. Based on the results, the null hypothesis should not be rejected since p-value more than the significance value, 0.05. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the gender of the student with learning disabilities based on special education teachers' perspective. ($p = 0.955$, 95% CI = (-14.436, 15.289)).

Table 3: Result of gender of the student with learning disabilities based on special education teachers' perspective.

| Variables | Male (n=65) Mean (SD) | Female (n=66) Mean (SD) | Mean diff. (95% CI) | t-stats (df) | P Value |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|---------|
| Gender Students with learning disabilities | 66.90 (35.00) | 66.40 (32.74) | 0.427 (-14.436, 15.289) | 0.057 (94) | 0.955 |

Findings showed that there is no significant difference between the gender of the student with learning disabilities based on special education teachers' perspective ($p = 0.955$, 95% CI = (-14.436, 15.289)). Table 3 shows the result of the level of challenging behavior between genders of the student with learning disabilities. This study described two-thirds of all students with LDs were male students. This leads to the conclusion that there is an under-identification of female students with LDs. However, this finding is

significant with a study in England reported that male students were 2.5 times more likely than female students to be identified with special education needs [20]. This explains that a higher number of male students may be identified as they tend to exhibit more disruptive behaviors which are troublesome to adults, and expectation pressures the expectations for success in school may be greater for male students as compared to female students [20]. The study in Jordan discovered that female students performed better in attention and self-regulation, behavior, and thinking with language, while male students performed better than female students in emotions, self-esteem, and thinking with strategies [3]. A different study conducted towards LD male students showed that the result was a higher score on behavior problems related to depression, uncommunicativeness, obsessive-compulsive behavior, social, hyperactivity, and aggressiveness [21]. However, the result of this study showed that there are no differences in gender with LDs which perform in disruptive behavior, self-absorbed, communication disturbance, anxiety, and social relating. Thus, proper consideration of an appropriate intervention shall be provided in order to cater to the specific needs of each student.

4 CONCLUSION

This study involved 10 primary schools in special education integrated program with 96 number of teachers in integrated school with 96 number of students who are attending the integrated program as a respondent for this study. The purpose of this study is to determine the perspective of special education teachers towards challenging behavior among students with learning disabilities. The objective of this study is to identify the level of challenging behavior among student with learning disabilities from teachers' perspective, to identify any significant differences in challenging behavior with the age of the student with learning disabilities and to identify any significant differences in the level of challenging behavior with the gender of the student with learning disabilities. Specifically, the variables are related to challenging behaviors, a subscale of development behavioral checklist, gender and age were investigated. The finding of this study indicates that half of the students with LDs are suffering from challenging behaviors. The teachers from the special education program explained their perspective towards challenging behavior among students with learning disabilities with both positive and negative perceptions. There is no significant difference between the age, gender of student and variables of challenging behavior among students. Based on the result, 17.3% of 96 LD students had a problem with social relating with others, 4.1% with disruptive behavior, 2.0% with communication disturbance, 2.0% with self-absorbed and 2.0% with anxiety.

The limitation of this study it is lack of number for the respondent to fulfill the objective of this study. Other than that, there is also misinterpretation from the questionnaire sheet by the respondents since there are a few unfamiliar terms which create confusion for the respondent such as the specific medical conditions. This is due to the lack of knowledge and information in learning disabilities condition for the teachers involved in this program. This study only focuses on the overall total DBC-form score which indicates the overall perception of the teachers toward student challenging behavior with learning disabilities.

There are some recommendations for future research which can be done by increasing the number of respondents from teacher's perception towards the student with learning disabilities. The other recommendation is to create a comparison between the teachers in an integrated program in primary and secondary school by using DBC-teacher form. Future research that will investigate the DBC-teacher from different ages or grades is warranted. It is very critical for teachers to consider the fact that most of the students with LDs are suffering from challenging behavior and disadvantaged environment. Other than that, further research can be done by comparing the perception of general education teacher among different states in Malaysia. Further research can focus on explaining each factor such as sentiments, attitudes, and concerns of teachers toward the inclusion of special needs children. Lastly, the teacher's understanding of the environmental factors in the classroom, will enhance a good delivering lesson and create an effective setting for the learning of each student.

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