

A COMPARING OF THE ATTITUDE AND SELF-CONCEPT AMONG DYSLEXIC AND WITHOUT DYSLEXIC STUDENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to compare attitude and self-concept in dyslexic and without dyslexic students in Ilam, Iran. The population of the study included one hundred thirty eight dyslexic students studying in schools in Ilam, Iran. In this population the researcher selected randomly thirty students for pilot study. Therefore, eighty dyslexic students participated in this study and twenty eight parents' of dyslexic students did not allow them to participate and one hundred twenty of their peers who had no dyslexic were randomly selected. The Persian adapted of the attitude and self-concept scales were used. The reliability and validity of the scales were confirmed. The analysis showed a significant difference between the dyslexic and without dyslexic students.

Keyword: *compare, reading, attitude, self-concept, reading disability, dyslexic, normal students, elementary schools*

Introduction

In this study for assessing self-concept employed reading self-concept. In the clinical literature, students with learning disability (LD) are described as having poor reading self-concepts. It is generally admitted that the students with LD are never better than their peers in terms of positive reading self-concept, but such low self concept is only limited to their low achievements on academic tasks (Wong, 1991). According to Pollard and Hillage (2001b) "A positive self-concept is important because how one perceives and values oneself determines to a large extent how one behaves, copes with life and manages one's life". Based on Egan and Perry (1998, in Pollard & Hillage, 2001a), a poor self-concept may play a central role in causing a child to be victimized by peers, in that children who do not feel that they 'fit in' with their peer group are more likely to be anxious and respond submissively during conflict, and thus they are more likely to be bullied by peers.

A low self-concept has been associated with many serious outcomes, such as inattentiveness (Singer, 2005), poor school performance (Elbaum & Vaughn, 2003), and a higher risk of school dropout (Elbaum & Vaughn, 2003; Singer, 2005). Research into low self-concepts among children has highlighted a low academic self-concept as a causal factor in the development of antisocial and disruptive behaviors. Research has been fairly consistent in demonstrating that students with learning disability have a lower global self-concept than other students (Bryan, Burstein, & Ergul, 2004; Gans, Kenny, & Ghany, 2003). However, studies regarding lower global self-concept among older students with learning disability are somewhat equivocal (Maltzer, Roditi, Houser, & Perlman, 1998). There is a general consensus that older students with learning disability demonstrate lower self-concept on particular school-specific tasks associated with their disability, such as reading, math, or language (Gans et al., 2003; Rothman & Cosden, 1995), rather than lower global self-concept. Research among adolescents with learning disability, in particular, has demonstrated lower school specific self-concept scores. Bender and Wall (Bender & Wall, 1994) suggested that there may be a developmental trend in which children with learning disabilities demonstrate a lower global self-concept, and older students, as they mature, may learn to think more highly of themselves in general while maintaining a lower self-

concept relative to academic tasks. This type of developmental trend may explain the effects on self-concept for students with learning disability.

Based on multidimensional model of self-concept by Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976), the dimensions of self-concept are organized hierarchically with general self-concept. The fundamental self-concept includes three parts: nonacademic, mathematic academic and verbal academic self-concept. Each one of these parts is divided into specific areas. For instance, nonacademic is divided into the areas of physical, social, and emotional self-concept. Therefore, the multidimensional model of self-concept identifies the complex arrangements with the several domains of self-concept. While most researchers widely agreed with the hierarchical nature of self-concept, very few agreed about the structure of the hierarchy of the self-concept (Bracken, 1996; Harter, 1986; Marsh, 1989).

While theorists persist in debating the hierarchical structure of self-concept, some theorists contest the multidimensionality of self-concept. The presence of a multidimensional self-concept has been predictable across a variety of student age levels, including elementary school students. For instance, Marsh, Craven, and Debus (1991) found that awareness in the areas of reading, math, physical skills, and peer relationships are obviously differentiated in the level of kindergarten students. In the same way, there is a report on the presence of a differentiated self-concept between elementary students in the areas of reading, math, sports, and instrumental music (Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993). Such separation is reasonably stable during childhood. The longitudinal research in four years found that perceptions in each area (i.e. reading, math, music, sports, and social activities) stay different across the elementary school years (Wigfield & Harold, 1992).

Another variable is attitude. In this study attitude means reading attitude and for assessing attitude used reading attitude scale. According to McKenna and Kear (1995c), attitude toward reading has a vital role in the development and application of stable reading skills. Understanding the role of attitude in developing readers is important to teachers because attitude may affect the level of the student's reading skill by influencing such factors as engagement and practice. For smooth readers, reduced attitude may guide them to decide not to read when other options are available, a condition normally known as literacy.

Villaume and Brabham (2002) show that negative reading attitude can disrupt the possibility of every reading experience. A number of studies demonstrate that negative reading attitudes on the part of the students do exist (McKenna et al., 1995c; Schumm, Moody, & Vaughn, 2000). Nevertheless, others provide evidence that student reading attitude changes with the background of the reading experience (Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999). A reading attitude appears not to be constant and there appears to be conflicting evidence as to its character. Von Sprecken, Kim, & Krashen (2000) worked on 214 students in grade four. They found that even one very positive reading experience, one "home run book," could produce a reader. This statement has powerful implications for teachers, because students who have strong positive attitudes toward reading are more motivated to read (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Gambrell, 1996).

Reading attitude plays a significant role in the evolvement of reading skills. Richeck, List and Learner, (1989) believed that the reader's attitude can determine the final success of instruction. Lipson and Wixon (1992) asserted that the learner's attitude toward reading heavily contributes to reading performance. The studies conducted by Lazarus and Callahan (2000) and Polychroni, Koukoura and Anagnostou, (2006), indicate individuals with learning disability in reading possess negative reading attitudes. It is long been established that students with learning disability often experience negative affective impacts. Although there is relative agreement about the effects of learning disability, it is not fully definite whether learning disability is a result of negative attitudes, or if there is any relationship between attitudes and learning disability. However, what is definite is that constant failure of children with learning disability influences them permanently (Bryan & Pearal, 1979).

The theoretical models of ordinary attitudes toward reading have three parts: 1. Affect, which contacts emotional assessment; 2. Cognition, which contacts subjective assessments; 3. Conation, which contacts behavioral intentions (McKenna et al., 1995c). In 1994, Mathewson created a model of reading attitude as a main factor in one's intent to read. In 1995, McKenna et al. illustrated that the theory is flawed because it does not clarify the long-term effects of reading attitudes. Attitude, goals, and personality forms each consist of several components and can lead to decisions on reading. Metacognition works with attitude, goal, and individual models to determine whether the procedure of reading will persist. The important factors of attitude based on theories include five dimensions: first, positive attitudes made positive performance. It means that there is a basic relationship between attitudes and performance. Second, the intensity, value, and level of an attitude differ on a variety from negative to positive. Third, attitudes are present in structures, and attitudes in a structure are consistent. Fourth, attitudes have a continuing, constant nature; furthermore, they are based on thoughts. Achievement or failure affects thinking, which control attitudes; in that way illustrating rational associations between academic success and attitudes. Fifth, attitudes are learned from culture, mostly family members, and other people.

McKenna et al. commented that a positive universal attitude does not use a positive attitude toward every kind of reading. In the model that was designed by McKenna, three factors influence attitude: 1. thinking about the result of reading in the light of judged desirability of those results, 2. thinking about the hopes of others in the light of motivation to conform to those hopes, and 3. thinking about the results of specific events of reading. They illustrated the difficulty of thinking about the result of reading in terms of the relative importance other actions place on the life of a student as she/he progresses during the evaluations.

This study aimed to compare the reading attitude and reading self-concept of the students with dyslexia and students without dyslexia in elementary schools in Ilam, Iran. The research hypotheses as follows:

H1. There is a significant difference in reading attitude among dyslexic and without dyslexic students.

H2. There is a significant difference in reading self-concept among dyslexic and without dyslexic students.

Method

Participants

In this study, the dyslexic students in the grade four and five were identified by Dyslexia Screening Instrument, and two 100-word passages with 10 comprehension questions from the students' book were selected and were assigned to the students to read. To examine their IQ, Raven's test was performed, and the students with the average IQ higher than ninety made up the population of this research. Finally one hundred thirty eight dyslexic students in the fourth and fifth grades in Ilam, Iran were selected. In these population researcher selected randomly thirty students for pilot study. Therefore, only eighty dyslexic students participated in this study and twenty eight parents' of students with dyslexia did not allow them to participate. The researcher selected 120 normal students who had been homogenized regarding IQ, parental education level and socioeconomic status of their family and compared by the reading attitude and reading self-concept scales. The students were given oral orders on how to complete the Reading Attitude Scale and Reading Self-Concept Scale.

Pilot study

A small group of students took part in the pilot study which started on March 1st, 2010 and ended on March 10th, 2010. The Persian version of Reading Attitude scale and Reading Self-Concept scale, were employed for these students. In addition, dyslexic students completed these instruments one by one. For the pilot study, 30 dyslexic students in Ilam, Iran, with similar characteristics to those of the participants in this study were randomly selected. These students were not included in the main study. Cronbach's alpha reliabilities of the Reading Attitude, and Reading Self-concept were found to be, .79, and .80, respectively. The results of the reliability Coefficient showed a high reliability for these

instruments, suggesting that these instruments were considered as appropriate to be employed further in this study.

Measure

In this study, first all the instruments (except for the Raven's Progressive Matrices) based on the Iranian culture were translated into the Persian language. Then a pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the Persian version. After that, these instruments were sent to 10 expert psychologists to determine the content validity. It was finally employed for dyslexic and without dyslexic in elementary schools in Ilam, Iran.

Reading Attitude scale

In 1990, McKenna & Kear defined that the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) is a 20-item questionnaire that asks students to rate their attitudes toward reading; each item presents a brief, simply worded statement about reading followed by four pictures of the comic strip character, Garfield the cat in varying pictorial poses. Percentile ranks can be obtained for two component subscales: recreational reading attitude and academic reading attitude. Recreation items focus on reading for fun outside the school setting and the academic subscale examines the school environment and reading schoolbooks. A total reading attitude percentile rank can also be computed as an additive composite of the recreational and academic scores (McKenna & Kear, 1990). Cronbach's alpha, a statistic developed firstly to assess the internal consistency of attitude scales (Cronbach, 1951) was calculated at each grade level for both subscales and for the composite score. These coefficients ranged from .74 to .89 (Cronbach, 1951). In this research, scores on the scale have acceptable reliability (Attitude= .75).

Reading Self-concept Scale

The Reading Self-concept Scale (RSCS) (Chapman & Tunmer, 1999) was used as a measure of reading self-concept. The RSCS contains 30 questions, which were read aloud individually to children who responded on a 5-point Likert scale (1. Never, 2. Seldom, 3. Sometimes, 4. Often, 5. Always). The RSCS measures reading and is suitable for ages 6 and above. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient score for the scale is .80. In this study, scores on all RSCS sub scales show acceptable reliability (Total-RSCS α = .88, Attitude α = .84, Difficulty α = .71 and Competency α = .78).

Dyslexia Screening Instrument (DSI)

Dyslexia Screening Instrument (DSI) consists of checklists of basic neuropsychological skills designed by Coon, Waguespack, and Polk in 1994. This instrument is a rating scale designed to describe the cluster characteristics associated with dyslexia and to discriminate between the students who display the cluster characteristics and the students who do not. It is designed to measure "entire populations of students or students who exhibit reading, spelling, writing, or language-processing difficulties" (Coon, Waguespack, & Polk, 1994). The DSI is designed to be used with students in grade 1 through 12. Internal consistency reliability coefficients is .99 for elementary students which were determined using Cronbach's coefficient alpha; and inter rater reliability for elementary students are .86 of the DSI that was assessed by determining the homogeneity of the statements and consistency of ratings across examiners. In this study Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale was .89.

Raven's Progressive Matrices test

The Raven's Standard progressive Matrices (SPM) test was created to assess the educative component of "g" (general IQ) as defined in Spearman's theory of cognitive ability (Raven, Raven, & Court, 1998). Kaplan and Saccuzzo (1997) stated that "research supports the SPM as a measure of general intelligence. The advanced form of the matrices includes 48 items, existing as one set of 12 (set I), and another of 36 (set II). Items are again presented in black ink on a white background, and become increasingly difficult as progress is made through each set. These items are appropriate for ages 5-65. Lynn and Vanhanen (2002) summarized a number of studies based on the normative data for the test which has been collected 61 countries. The internal consistency reliability estimate for the Raven

progressive Matrices total raw score was .85 in the standardization sample of 929 individuals. In this research Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale was .83.

Reading text

Researcher developed the reading texts based on the content of fourth and fifth grade textbooks. The test included a story with one hundred relevant words understandable to each education level and it was followed by 10 questions which measured the students' level of comprehension. The students were required to read out aloud the text and answer the questions. To determine reliability, Cronbach's alpha was employed. The reliability coefficients for the fourth and fifth grades' reading tests are .87 and .90 respectively.

Results

SPSS was utilized for the analysis of the data. The findings of the study are presented in two parts: descriptive findings and the findings related to the hypotheses. In Table 1, the demographic characteristics are shown for both groups. In Table 2, means, standard deviations, t-value and significance of the study for reading attitude and subscale reading attitude (recreation and academic) are given for both groups. In Table 3, means, standard deviations, t-value and significance of the study for reading self-concept and subscale reading self-concept (competence, difficulty and attitude) are shown for both the group.

The findings related to the first research hypothesis are also shown in table 2. The first hypothesis is: There is a significant difference in reading attitude among dyslexic and without dyslexic students. Independent t-test was employed to test the first research hypothesis. It can also be seen in Table 2, totally reading attitude, $t=3.96, p<.01$, recreation, $t=4.13, p<.01$ and academic, $t=3.02, p<.01$.

The finding for the second research hypothesis is presented in table 3. The second research hypothesis is: There is a significant difference in reading self-concept among dyslexic and without dyslexic students. As it can be seen in Table 3, total reading self-concept, $t=5.16, p<.01$, difficulty, $t=5.51, p<.01$, and competence, $t=.72, p<.46$. Based on these results, the second research hypothesis is accepted but while competence subscale is not.

Discussion

The present study aimed to compare the reading attitude and reading self-concept in dyslexic and without dyslexic students, who were studying in fourth and fifth grades in Ilam, Iran, in the academic year 2010. The first research hypothesis is: There is a significant difference in reading attitude among dyslexic and without dyslexic students. The first research hypothesis was confirmed at $p<.01$. The results of the study show that difference between students with dyslexia and students without dyslexia. Students with dyslexia did not value reading for its contribution to school success and for their own enjoyment. These attitudes have been shown to predict low levels of voluntary reading (Cox & Guthrie, 2001). Despite the relative lack of evidence as about reading attitudes of children with dyslexia, these findings are in agreement with a number of studies demonstrating that task-value in learning to read associated with several components of reading performance (Wigfield, 1997). There is some evidence link positive attitudes to higher reading achievement and more frequent reading (Cox & Guthrie, 2001; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995a). In this study students with dyslexia have lower attitude to reading than students without dyslexia. Low feeling regarding reading does not correspond to a predisposition to seek out reading activities, and as a result, due to restricted access to reading material, students with difficulties are constantly left behind the students without dyslexia (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

According to Hedelin and Sjoberg (as cited in Gage & Berliner, 1998), achievement is influenced by reading attitude as well as ability. "It is a well-known psychological principle that attitude influences a person's choice of activities as well as effort and persistence at tasks" (p.126). Alexander and Filler (1976) identified several variables that seem to be associated with attitudes toward reading. These

variables are achievement, the teacher and classroom. As teachers attempt to improve students' attitudes toward reading, they should keep these ideas in mind to have a positive feeling toward the students and the students' needs should be taken into account. The teacher's awareness of student's attitudes toward reading is essential. A student's attitude toward reading materials affects the comprehension of those materials. Teachers should be well-informed that students' attitudes toward reading are formed by parents and their home environment. Studies show that reading attitude is affected by academic achievement.

According to Johnson (1981), reading attitudes are arguably formed as a result of success or failure with the task of reading; though students with good reading ability may have positive attitudes toward reading, while students who are poor readers often have to overcome negative attitudes toward reading in order to improve their reading skills. The second research hypothesis is: There is a significant difference in reading self-concept among dyslexic and without dyslexic students. The second research hypothesis is confirmed at $p < .01$. The study shows that students with dyslexia possess lower self-concept to reading than students without dyslexia. These findings are consistent with the great majority of experimental and meta-analytical studies (Bear, Minke, & Manning, 2002; Gans et al., 2003; Polychroni et al., 2006; Zeleke, 2004), which demonstrate that indeed students with dyslexia perceive themselves as less competent in academic domains such as reading. The findings show that dyslexic students have a lower self-concept than the without dyslexic students. This can provide suitable guidelines for educators and parents. Some researchers have suggested that educators be aware of the potential stigmatizing effects of the selection process for special education on dyslexic students (Ston, 2002; Valas, 1999). Individuals who work with students with dyslexia need to know how to prevent low self-concept in children with dyslexia and be aware of the interventions available to help them.

Conclusion

This study focused on a comparing of the reading attitude and reading self-concept among dyslexic and without dyslexic students in elementary schools in Ilam, Iran. Based on prior studies, the reading attitude and reading self-concept in dyslexic students is lower than normal students. This study was conformed the previous studies about reading attitude and reading self-concept in dyslexic students. Therefore, the hypotheses were accepted at $p < .01$.

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Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample by Group

Group	Mel	Female	Grade four	Grade five	Age
Dyslexia	50	30	34	46	10-12
Non-Dyslexia	60	60	50	70	10-12

Table 1 shows the gender, grade and age of the dyslexic and without dyslexic students in elementary schools.

Table 2
Attitude and subscale attitude

	<u>Dyslexia</u>		<u>Non Dyslexia</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Attitude	63.59	9.18	68.62	8.63	3.96	198	.01
Recreational	31.72	4.86	34.38	4.20	4.13	198	.01
Academic	31.86	5.45	34.24	5.46	3.02	198	.01

Table 2 shows that means and Standard Deviation for reading attitude and subscale reading attitude. This table shows that there was a significant difference in attitude and subscale attitude in the dyslexic and without dyslexic students.

Table 3
Self-concept and subscale self-concept

Measures	<u>Dyslexia</u>		<u>Non Dyslexia</u>		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Self-concept	95.88	13.39	105.82	13.43	5.16	198	.01
Difficulty	32.17	5.84	37.43	7.17	5.51	198	.01
Competence	34.55	5.16	35.10	5.25	.72	198	.46
Attitude	29.14	6.01	33.28	6.58	4.55	198	.01

Table 3 shows the means and Standard Deviations for self-concept and subscale self-concept (Difficulty, Competence and Attitude). This table confirms that there is a significant difference in the dyslexic and without dyslexic students.

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