

# Identification of Difficulties and Efficacy of Intervention Strategies for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities: A Mini Study

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Children with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) generally face significant challenges in academic skills, particularly in reading, writing, and arithmetic. These issues may have hampered their educational improvement, even though they have an average or higher-than-average intelligence. **Objective:** This mini-study aimed to determine the usual challenges experienced by students with SLD and to assist them by recording the effective techniques they may use to improve their academic performance. **Methods:** For the present study ten (10) participants were selected which were diagnosed by a licensed psychologist, aged 8-18, with SLD. Researchers collected comprehensive case histories on every participant and tested their academic skills using the Grade Level Assessment Device (GLAD). In order to familiarize themselves with the available support system mechanisms, data was collected through GLAD, observations and interviews with the parents and their children. **Results:** The results consistently indicated specific areas of difficulty, particularly in reading, spelling, comprehension, computation, and solving mathematical word problems. On the contrary, multiple strategies were found to be remarkably effective. The multisensory teaching approach is one of them, in which more than one sense is used to promote learning, in the segmenting of tasks into smaller, manageable steps; the utilization of visual aids in explaining information; and making repeated practice possible. The results underscore a vital conclusion an accurate, scientific evaluation is crucial. **Conclusion:** It is the absolute and first step that enables a teacher to adapt interventions successfully. This research efficiently fills the gap amid clinical diagnosis and sound workable classroom blueprints, eventually focusing on boosting learning gains and empowering students with SLD.

**Keywords:** Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Grade Level Assessment Device (GLAD), Intervention strategies

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## INTRODUCTION

Among the neurodevelopmental disorders, one of the most prevalent disorders is Specific Learning Disorder (SLD), which affects their academic performance, mainly in the areas of reading, writing, and arithmetic (Fletcher & Miciak, 2024). Despite having adequate intelligence, motivation, exposure, and effective instruction, students with specific learning disorders are characterized by determined difficulties in their academic performance. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) defines Specific Learning Disorder (SLD) as a disorder originating in the early developmental period, resulting in significant and specific impairments in academic achievement” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Sachdev, 2021; Fletcher & Miciak, 2024).

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Students with specific learning disorder (SLD) may have frequent experience with co-occurring behavioral and emotional difficulties, which may affect their further academic performance. Studies have shown that students with specific learning disabilities are at increased risk for both internal problems (depression, anxiety, withdrawal) and externalizing behaviors (aggression, hyperactivity and impulsivity). Due to academic difficulties, students were interacting with the emotional and behavioral challenges and struggling to meet the educational expectations (Aro et al., 2021). Therefore, it is very much essential to understand these interactions and design the intervention plan that not only meets the academic challenges but also the social-emotional well-being of the students (Cedilnik, 2021).

Though there is a critical in supporting students with specific learning disabilities and finding effective intervention strategies. The research shows that individualized and evidence-based approaches like remedial teaching, direct instruction, and strategy training significantly improve the learning outcomes. The studies asserted that intervention has focused on cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies to bear large effect sizes, denoting their unwavering positive impact on academic achievement (Swanson & Hoskyn, 1998). Furthermore, contemporary educational exercises emphasize the use of Assistive Technology (AT) and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) tools to assist students with SLDs in developing language, reading, and writing skills. Through these uses of technology, customized learning experiences elevate accessibility and allow students to overcome their barriers in order to address specific learning difficulties (Dumitru, 2025). Due to late identification, using insufficient teaching strategies, and intervention for students with SLDs, were experiencing underachievement and limited progress in academic performance (Fletcher & Miciak, 2024; Dumitru, 2025). Therefore, it is important to identify distinct areas of difficulty and evaluate the relative efficacy of various intervention strategies to ensure that educational practices are both evidence-based and responsive to individual needs.

The present mini-study aims to examine the identification of difficulties and the efficacy of intervention strategies for children with Specific Learning Disabilities. The research is directed at examining the nature of SLDs across academic areas, detecting problem areas in children, and evaluating the impact of intervention strategies aimed at improving performance. The current research adds to the existing debate about evidence-based practice when dealing

with children diagnosed with SLDs in regular and special education settings by means of integrating the perspectives of neuropsychology, inclusive teaching, and assistive technology.

## Need and Significance of the Study

Specific Learning Disabilities (SLDs) are frequent learning challenges that affect children's academic, social, and emotional growth. Though there are provisions for support systems, many of the students were still struggling in their academic skills like reading, writing, and mathematics (Fletcher & Miciak, 2024). Often delayed diagnosis, Traditional identification models like IQ-achievement discrepancy and newer approaches like Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI) are still evolving (Gresham, 2002). Therefore, early identification is much more important to provide accurate and appropriate intervention for holistic development, long-term emotional and academic difficulties (Aro et al., 2021).

This study is significant as it stresses identifying learning difficulties and evaluating effective intervention strategies for students with specific learning disabilities (SLD). The study supports the individualized and evidence-based methods to improve learning outcomes (Swanson & Hoskyn, 1998). In promoting inclusive education role of technologies highlights the collaborative approaches (Dumitru, 2025; Gal & Ryder, 2025). The findings will provide practical enlightenment for teachers and policymakers, strengthening early intervention, instructional activities, and inclusive education frameworks that encourage students with specific learning disorders to achieve academic and emotional success.

## Aims

The present study aims to explore the academic challenges which are faced by students with specific learning disorders (SLDs) and find out the effective intervention strategies under the research titled "Identification of Difficulties and Effective of Intervention Strategies for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities: A Mini-Study"

## General Objective

To identify key areas of academic problems among students with specific learning disabilities and evaluate the efficacy of different intervention methods to improve their academic learning performance.

## Specific Objectives

[I] To identify common academic difficulties among students with specific learning disabilities. -[II] To analyze patterns of difficulties and effective strategies for the student with specific learning disabilities. [III] To document the strategies currently used to support provides to the student with specific learning disabilities-[IV]. To provide evidence-based recommendations for classroom practice for the teachers.

## Methodology

**Research Design:** The present study adopted a descriptive quantitative research design aimed at identifying and analyzing the learning difficulties experienced by students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). The descriptive approach was considered most appropriate for this investigation, as it enables the researcher to explore the characteristics, patterns, and frequency of learning challenges among students without manipulating variables. The quantitative elements allowed for a computational picture of the challenges observed across various academic areas like reading, writing, and arithmetic and understanding of the participant's learning outline.

**Participants-** The participants of this study included ten students, between the ages of eight to eighteen years. All the participants were enrolled in Classes IV to IX in different schools at Hyderabad who came to the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID), located in Secunderabad for the purpose of assessment and intervention. The researcher has selected the participants for the study based on the teacher and parent's referrals denoting persistent academic difficulties despite their average intellectual functioning. Moreover, the selection process of participants was clinically confirmed by licensed psychologists as students having specific learning disabilities. Through the sample size it provided the in-depth understanding of each and every individual learning status and nature of their academic learning challenges faced by the students with specific learning disabilities in their educational settings.

**Tools Used-** Several assessment tools were utilized in the present study for the purpose of data collection. The researcher used a Case History form for collecting comprehensive background information of each participant. In this form, some specific areas of information are needed to know details about each student, such as developmental milestones, medical history, family background, and educational

experiences, which provide a holistic picture of the participants in their academic journey. The researcher adopted another standardized tool for assessing students' academic skills across three major areas-reading, writing, and mathematics is Grade Level Assessment Device (GLAD). This tool is very effective for identifying each student's level of competence in various learning domains and pointing out the actual difficulty areas (Narayan, 2021).

Moreover, the systemic observation was conducted to handle some behavioural aspects, attention span, and ways of task completion, skill of problem solving during the assessment session and during the classroom activities. This observation technique helped the researcher to gather qualitative insights about the students effectively. Finally, the researcher carried out parents' interviews and documented the strategies and interventions that may be used at home to facilitate learning of the students and to understand the consistency of support offered across home and the school environments.

**Procedure-**The procedure of the study was carried out in several structured stages. Initially, the participant was confirmed to have a learning difficulty by a licensed psychologist using standard diagnostic procedures and psychometric assessments. After that, the researcher started collecting data by using various tools and techniques with the participants. Firstly, the researcher has collected detailed case histories to collect comprehensive information about the participants and then proceeded to the interviews, which focused on gathering information about different areas of the students, like developmental milestones, behavioural patterns, educational background and previous intervention history, if they have ever. Afterwards, all the participants underwent assessment in academic performance through using GLAD. The assessment test was conducted in a quiet environment to ensure enough concentration and reliability of results. The tool GLAD has useful to get the detailed academic profile of the students in reading, writing and arithmetic, which are the core aspects of the data analysis.

Subsequently, the researcher has conducted observation during assessment to examine and understand the student's learning behaviors, engagement in tasks, and persistence in the academic activities. These observations were extended by interviews with parents to gain comprehensive information to understand the strategies being used to support the student's learning at home and in the classroom. It helps to collect rich and reliable data from various sources in multiple perspectives.

Once all the data were collected, by using different tools and techniques like case history forms, GLAD assessments, observation and interviews to identify common patterns of learning difficulties among the students and analysis was carried out in a descriptive way. The data was tabulated to show the percentage of students who are facing difficulties in different areas of academics, such as reading, writing and arithmetic.

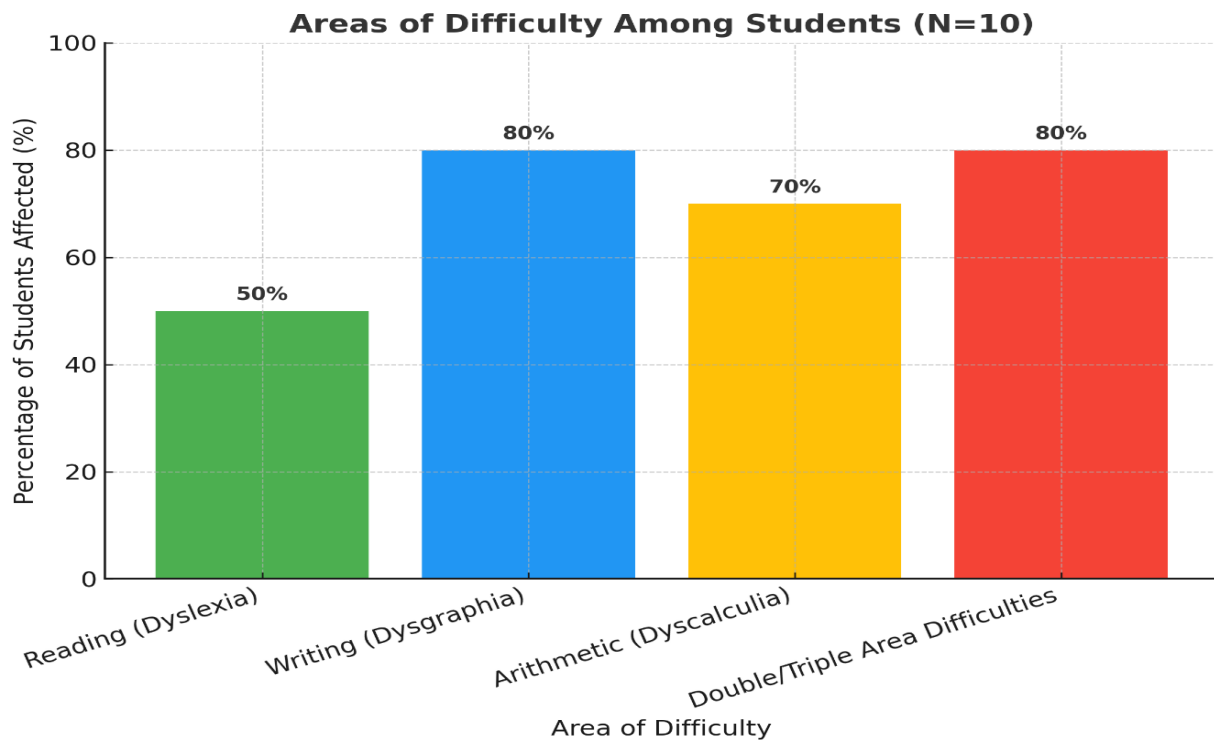
Similarly, observation techniques help to summarise the parental reports by highlighting the strategies that are mostly effectively used to addressing for the learning difficulties. The descriptive analysis supported

in identifying overlapping areas of difficulty, enabling the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions about the nature and prevalence of specific learning difficulties among students with SLD.

The methodology of this present study integrated quantitative data from the use of standardised tools and qualitative data from observation and interviews. The sincere uses of validated tools, techniques, and logical descriptive analysis of data ensured the reliable findings, which reflect the real challenges faced in academia for students with specific learning disabilities.

## 5. Results and Interpretation

| Area of Difficulty                                      | Number of Students Affected (N=10) | Percentage (%) | Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reading (Dyslexia)                                      | 5                                  | 50%            | Showed slow reading pace, poor word recognition, difficulty decoding complex or long words, weak comprehension, and frequent distractions while reading. They often required rereading or verbal prompts to understand passages.                   |
| Writing (Dysgraphia)                                    | 8                                  | 80%            | Displayed frequent spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, poor handwriting, inconsistent spacing, and difficulty framing correct sentences. Their writing was slow, lacked organisation, and required teacher scaffolding and structured practice. |
| Arithmetic (Dyscalculia)                                | 7                                  | 70%            | Showed errors in multi-step operations, difficulty understanding LCM/HCF, time concepts, fractions, and word problems. They required visual aids, manipulatives, and step-by-step teaching to solve mathematical tasks.                            |
| Double or Triple Area Difficulties (Overlapping Issues) | 8                                  | 80%            | Common combinations included writing and arithmetic problems, or difficulties in reading, writing, and math simultaneously. These overlaps were often associated with poor attention span, weak working memory, and slow information processing.   |



## Discussion

The results of the present study indicated that the majority of the students having overlapping difficulties exhibited weakness in more than one area of learning domains in reading, writing and arithmetic by students with specific learning disabilities.

Total 80% of the participants were affected in one of the three main academic areas is writing skills (dysgraphia). Due to this difficulty students were committing frequent spelling and grammatical errors, poor handwriting, limited ability to make correct sentences, grammatical corrections, irregular spacing between words, incomplete written work, and slow and disorganized writing work. Therefore, many of them need continuous guidance and support through structured writing practicing work for improving their writing skills. From this finding, it is shown that written expression remains one of the most challenging tasks for students with specific learning disabilities (SLD), where no one can escape from the writing activities in the academic journey, because evaluation has been done based on the written performance of the students in the education system.

The second finding of this study is that the students with specific learning disabilities have difficulties in arithmetic (dyscalculia), and this is the second most common area of difficulty for them, affecting 70% of

the sample. Most of the students are able to perform basic operations like addition and subtraction, but they exhibit significant difficulties in higher-order mathematical problem solutions like mixed fractions, time, LCM, HCF, and multi-step mathematical word problems. The students were struggling with real-life situations, utilizing learned concepts, poor in conceptual clarity and mathematical reasoning. These results show the importance of visual aids, manipulatives, and concrete model to abstract instructional approaches to improve mathematical skills in students who suffer from Specific Learning Disability.

Another finding of the research is 50% of the participants had reading problems (dyslexia). They had problems such as mispronunciation of difficult words, weak word recognition, slow reading speed, inability to comprehend long texts, absence of reading fluency, poor retention of content, and often became distracted from words while reading. Due to this problem, students were often prevented from following written instructions independently while doing reading-related activities. So that students having this problem required phonics instruction, guided reading, and comprehension development techniques.

The findings showed that 80% presented overlapping difficulties in two academic areas, commonly a

combination of writing and arithmetic problems. This examination suggests the overlap of learning disabilities, which rarely occur in isolation. The multiple learning challenges of co-occurrence are often linked with difficulties in working memory, attention, and speed in processing information, the ability to retain, recall, and apply in learning academic skills. Therefore, they were easily distracted, had poor task persistence with the activities, and they required constant support to perform academic activities successfully. The results also revealed a relationship between attention and academic performance. Instead of judging with their intellectual functioning based on the average intelligence, it needs to understand the difficulties of students with specific learning disabilities that why they exhibit higher level inattention and distractibility and tend to perform unexpectedly. It needs to understand that intelligence is not related to SLD but rather to specific deficits in cognitive processing, attention to perform their functions in terms of learning academic activities.

The current research examines the nature and occurrence of problems faced by learners with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), along with an examination of the usefulness of interventions suggested to improve their performance in school. The results obtained from Grade Level Assessment Device (GLAD) and behavioral observations suggest that students with SLD encounter different yet related problems with reading, writing, and math. Such results support the heterogeneity and multi-dimensionality of SLD identified in previous studies (Fletcher & Miciak, 2024; Ramaa, 2014).

### **Learning Difficulties Patterns:**

The results indicated that writing learning difficulties (dysgraphia) were the most common amongst the participants, with 80% of the sample experiencing dysgraphia. The participants made many spelling mistakes and grammatical mistakes; poor handwriting skills, poor writing speed, and poor organization of written material. These results align with previous research work conducted by Fletcher et al. (2018) and Swanson & Hoskyn (1998). They argued that orthographic processing deficit, fine motor skill deficiency, and linguistic formulation deficiencies limit writing abilities. Dysgraphia has been exaggerated in India due to the examination pattern which favors written results. This is the reason why the students suffering from dysgraphia felt demoralized. Therefore, structured writing exercises, spelling in class practices, and sensory writing exercises become important to enhance writing abilities.

### **Dyscalculia (Arithmetic difficulties):**

A total of 70% of the participants experienced difficulties in doing arithmetic operations (dyscalculia). While some of the students were able to do simple calculation, they found it difficult to carry out the logical and time-related mathematical tasks. The findings have shown that the problems in mathematical reasoning are linked to cognitive overload and limitations in working memory, implying that the learners have problems not with procedural learning but conceptual learning (Barbieri & Rodrigues, 2025). Thus, the application of mathematics in real life and the utilization of concrete-to-abstract instruction methods could be considered as helpful approaches to the problem.

### **Difficulties in Reading (Dyslexia):**

According to the present research study, 50% of the sample have reading difficulties (dyslexia). The student is having reading difficulties, which indicate a slow reading rate, decoding difficulties of unknown words, poor understanding of long texts, and mispronunciations. All of these difficulties are related to phonological awareness and working memory (Fletcher & Miciak, 2024; Stevens et al., 2021). Phonics instruction, vocabulary activities, and reading practice have been found to be beneficial for reading fluency and comprehension improvement.

The findings underscore that 80% of the students experienced overlapping difficulties across two or more domains, like writing and arithmetic problems, or reading-writing and arithmetic altogether. So, students with specific learning disabilities are affected in rare occurrences in isolation from learning difficulties and cognitive processing deficits. These results are consistent with studies by Aro et al. (2021) and Capin et al. (2025), which confirm that cognitive and emotional co-occurrences are common in students with SLD.

**Cognitive and Behavioural Correlates:** Although most of the participants have borderline intellectual functioning, their academic performance was shown to be below expectation level. This denotes that students with specific learning disabilities do not matter in terms of intelligence, and they have deficits in information processing, language, and executive functioning. Observation findings revealed impulsivity, limited self-monitoring, frequent inattention, and poor task persistence. All such significant behaviors align with the previous study and suggest that deficits in metacognitive control and executive function hamper an individual's learning (Okur & Aksoy, 2025).

Effective Intervention Strategies-Based on the analysis, for the students with specific learning disability some interventions were found effective like combination of academic, behavioral, and technological interventions. - [A] Multisensory Teaching Approaches: Some of the multisensory teaching approaches, which were used as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities simultaneously improves information retention and engagement of the students. Structured language approaches are useful evidence for improving reading and writing fluency (Stevens et al., 2021). [B] Explicit and Systematic Instruction: Before teaching the concepts, it should be broken down into smaller, sequential steps with frequent feedback and practice, and this technique has been supported to the learners with deficits in working memory and helps in foundational academic skills (Swanson & Hoskyn, 1998). [C] Use of Assistive Technology (AT): Some Assistive tools, like text-to-speech, audiobooks, speech-to-text software, and interactive math applications, enable students to access content despite their deficits. Some studies by Dumitru (2025) and Hopcan et al. (2023) confirm that AT fosters inclusion and autonomy for learners with SLD. [D] Visual and Manipulative Aids in Mathematics: For helping students in connecting with concrete to abstract mathematical ideas and improving conceptual clarification by using an abacus, fraction trips and geometric models (Barbieri & Rodrigues, 2025). [E] Collaborative Learning and Peer Tutoring: When group learning is properly planned, it motivates learners, improves engagement, and increases socialization. This strategy has proved effective in improving problem solving skills and self-efficacy among learners facing learning difficulties (Gal & Ryder, 2025; Xu et al., 2023). [F] Cognitive and Behavioural Training: The cognitive-behavioral play therapy interventions that enhance working memory, metacognitive awareness, and self-regulation have been found effective in improving academic performance (Vosoughi Kalantari et al., 2025). [G] Individualized Education Plans (IEPs): The planned educational activities specifying learning goals, instructional accommodations, modifications, and evaluation process ensure equitable participation and measurable progress. [H] Teacher–Parent Collaboration: Active collaboration between teachers and parents reinforces consistency in learning practices at school and home. Training of teachers on inclusive practices and early identification is essential (Porta & Todd, 2024).

## Implications of Findings

Early identification through standardised tools like GLAD, and following up on the progress of the

students, planned structured remediation can improve the learning outcomes. The findings underscore the need for multifaceted intervention frameworks that address the academic, cognitive, and emotional aspects of students with specific learning disabilities. Moreover, an inclusive educational environment must incorporate flexible curricula, differentiated instruction, and supportive assessment accommodations such as extended examination time, scribe assistance, or reduced workloads of the students. By bridging clinical assessment with classroom application, this study supports the importance of evidence-based practices in education. It provides empirical support for the integration of structured teaching, assistive technologies, and behavioural supports to foster meaningful learning among students with specific learning disabilities.

## Recommendations

Based on the analysis and findings from the present study, the following recommendations are proposed for practice, policy, and future research:

**[i] Instructional Strategies-** (a) In order to help students having specific learning disabilities in terms of comprehension memory, it will be essential to develop the multisensory teaching strategy. (b) In order to facilitate learners having low attention level and poor working memory skills, explicit instruction, task analysis, and scaffolding may be used. (c) In order to ensure conceptual understanding in math, it is important to use visual cues, manipulatives, and real-world examples. (d) Guidance in writing exercises can improve writing skills of students.

**[ii] Technological and Pedagogical Support-** (a) To create a learning-friendly environment for SLD, assistive technologies such as reading software, interactive math software and audiobooks will add great value. (b) Create blended and digital learning environments which offer flexibility, personalized feedback and visual support. (c) Ensure that the accessibility provisions for the diverse group of learners are created using the principles of the Universal Design for Learning.

**[iii] Curriculum and Assessment-** (a) For creation of interest among the students, Schools should have a flexible curriculum which allows choosing of subjects. (b) The accommodations need to be done in the assessment process by extending exam time, using scribes, oral assessments and reducing the writing tasks. (c) There should be screening and periodic progress assessments using standardized tests such as GLAD and NIMHANS SLD Battery.

**[iv] Teacher Preparation and Collaboration-**(a) To make early identification and evidence-based interventions for SLD, schools should conduct professional development sessions for teachers. (b) Encourage collaboration between special educators, psychologists, class teachers and parents to maintain consistency in remedial intervention. (c) A School should establish resource rooms in school where specialized instruction is done either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis.

**[v] Parental Involvement-** (a) Support measures that can be offered at home may include engaging parents via structured training such as scheduling, reading aloud, and spelling practices. (b) Encourage the parents positively through reinforcement, patience, and regular practice at home in order to build their confidence and persistence.

**Policy and Research-** (a) Longitudinal studies may be conducted to analyze the long-term effect of multisensory and assistive interventions. (b) Conduct further research for studying the neurocognitive correlates of SLD amongst Indian learners to design culture-specific assessment methods. (c) Policymakers may focus on inclusive education and remedial learning using policies such as NEP 2020 and RPwD Act (2016).

## Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, researchers will be able to deduce that children with SLD exhibit varied and mixed academic challenges mostly in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. Despite being intellectually competent, such children experience greater challenges mainly because of their inability to process language, memory problems, and poor executive functioning skills. The results demonstrate that children with specific learning disabilities (SLD) are not an indication of low intelligence but a cognitive disorder.

Therefore, this study has made a valuable contribution to the identification of learning difficulties, the preparation and implementation of the intervention plan for the students with specific learning disabilities. Furthermore, it should also place great emphasis on the need for early diagnosis, inclusive educational approaches, and pedagogical techniques so that the students with Specific Learning Disabilities can have considerable development both academically and personally. The combination of the skills of clinicians, evidence-based practices, and inclusive classrooms is definitely the key to helping the students with SLD realize their full potential.

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