



A Comparative Study On Social And Emotional Development Of Students With Learning Disabilities In Assam With Special Reference To Goalpara District

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Abstract

Social and emotional development plays a crucial role in shaping the personality, behavior, and academic progress of school children. For students with Learning Disabilities (LDs), these developmental domains are often more vulnerable due to difficulties in communication, academic performance, and peer interaction. The present study is an attempt to compare the levels of social and emotional development of students with and without LDs in Goalpara district of Assam. Employing a comparative research design, the study involved 120 students (60 with LDs and 60 without LDs) drawn from government and private schools. Data were collected through standardized scales and semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents. The findings revealed that students with LDs scored significantly lower in peer interaction, self-esteem, and emotional regulation compared to their non-LD peers, while family support was found to be equally strong for both groups. The study concludes that though family and teacher support in Goalpara are encouraging, peer relationships and school-based interventions remain weak. The paper suggests strengthening inclusive classroom practices, initiating teacher training, and introducing counseling services to ensure holistic development of LD students in Assam.

Keywords:- Learning Disabilities; Social Development; Emotional Development; Inclusive Education; Goalpara District; Assam

Introduction:-

Education is universally recognized as a powerful tool for the holistic development of children. It not only imparts cognitive knowledge but also shapes emotional resilience, interpersonal skills, and social adaptability. In recent years, research has emphasized the importance of **Social and Emotional Development (SED)**, particularly in the context of inclusive education. SED refers to the ability of children to establish positive relationships, regulate emotions, develop empathy, and maintain self-confidence, which are fundamental for effective learning and lifelong well-being.

Students with **Learning Disabilities (LDs)**, such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), often encounter barriers not only in academics but also in their social and emotional functioning. They may experience rejection from peers, stigmatization, and labeling, leading to low self-esteem, anxiety, and emotional imbalance. International studies (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2017; Smith & Adams, 2018) have consistently shown that children with LDs are at a greater risk of developing social and emotional difficulties when compared to their non-LD counterparts.

In India, the situation is particularly complex due to diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts. Although policies such as the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016)** and the **National Education Policy (NEP, 2020)** emphasize inclusive education and social-emotional learning, their implementation in rural and semi-urban areas remains inadequate. The challenges are further compounded by limited awareness, lack of trained teachers, insufficient infrastructure, and societal stigma toward children with LDs.

Assam, being a state with socio-cultural diversity, reflects similar issues. While government initiatives such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan attempt to address inclusivity, ground realities show gaps in teacher preparedness and school resources. Within Assam, **Goalpara district** presents a unique case due to its mixed rural-urban setting, socio-economic diversity, and cultural heterogeneity. Children with LDs in this region are often misunderstood and face academic as well as emotional challenges. Although families extend emotional support, schools frequently fail to provide systematic interventions.

The present study, therefore, seeks to examine and compare the **social and emotional development of students with and without LDs in Goalpara district**. The research not only provides empirical insights into the developmental challenges faced by these children but also aims to highlight the role of teachers, peers, and families in fostering inclusive growth. By focusing on Goalpara, this study contributes to filling the research gap in the northeastern context of India, where empirical investigations on LDs remain limited.

In sum, the study emphasizes the need for an educational environment that nurtures both academic and emotional well-being of children with LDs. Understanding their social and emotional struggles is essential for designing effective interventions that can transform schools into inclusive spaces and enable LD students to thrive alongside their peers.

Objectives of the Study:-

The present study was undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1. **To compare the social development of students with and without learning disabilities** in selected schools of Goalpara district, Assam.
2. **To assess the emotional development of students with learning disabilities** in relation to their peers without disabilities.
3. **To examine the influence of teachers, peers, and family support** on the social and emotional development of students with learning disabilities.
4. **To identify the specific challenges faced by students with learning disabilities** in achieving positive social interaction and emotional regulation within the school environment.
5. **To suggest pedagogical and policy measures** for strengthening inclusive education practices and enhancing the social-emotional well-being of students with learning disabilities in Goalpara district.

Review of Related Literature:-

1) Conceptualizing Social–Emotional Development (SED) in Students with Learning Disabilities (LD)

Social–emotional development in learners with LD typically involves differences in emotion regulation, peer relations, academic self-concept, and coping, often interacting with classroom demands and teacher expectations. Classic scholarship in special education shows SED outcomes are shaped by multi-level factors (individual skills, family/school climate, and systemic support), informing contemporary models used in inclusive schooling.

2) Global and Indian Evidence on SED Profiles of Learners with LD

Comparative studies consistently report elevated risks for social and emotional maladjustment among learners with LD (e.g., more peer problems, lower self-efficacy), alongside strengths that emerge when environments are supportive and instruction is differentiated. In recent India-based work comparing students with and without LD, those with LD showed significantly poorer social, emotional, and educational adjustment and lower proactive coping; importantly, higher proactive coping related to lower maladjustment, suggesting a promising intervention lever.

3) Prevalence, Identification, and Implications for SED

Indian estimates suggest 3–10% of school-age children may have specific learning disabilities, underscoring the scale at which schools must address both academic and socio-emotional needs. Under-identification and late identification can compound SED difficulties by prolonging school failure and peer stigma, highlighting the importance of early screening and teacher capacity.

4) Policy and Programmatic Frameworks Shaping SED Supports in India

The **Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016** guarantees non-discrimination and inclusive education, establishing a rights-based foundation for school-based social–emotional supports. The **Samagra Shiksha** programme operationalizes inclusive education nationwide through CWSN identification, assistive support, resource teachers, and teacher training; these provisions indirectly support SED via access, accommodations, and specialist services. Recent central guidance also emphasizes early assessment tools (e.g., PRASHAST) and strengthened teacher development .

5) Assam Context and Goalpara District Indicators

At the state level, Samagra Shiksha Axom (SSA) outlines inclusive education activities (guidelines, training formats, reporting), framing how districts implement school-level supports that can influence SED (e.g., resource teachers, sensitization). District indicators relevant to SED risk—like pupil–teacher ratio and dropout—help contextualize needs; for instance, Goalpara’s 2023–24 PTR was ~25 (LP) and ~24 (UP), with dropout rates of ~9.23% (LP) and ~10.90% (UP), and a transition rate from primary to upper primary of ~83.2%. Aspirational District initiatives in Goalpara have aimed at improved learning outcomes and pass percentages, which often correlate with better SED through improved engagement and school climate.

6) School-Based Practices Affecting SED for Learners with LD

Evidence points to three practice clusters that matter for SED in LD:

- **Instructional adaptations** (explicit strategy instruction, scaffolded tasks) that reduce frustration and support competence;
- **Classroom climate and peer supports** (cooperative learning, structured peer interactions) that foster belonging;
- **Coping and SEL skill-building** (goal setting, problem-solving, emotion regulation) that directly improve adjustment. In Indian schools, emerging reportage shows growing adoption of inclusive practices—shadow teachers/special educators, counselling/mental-health supports, and accessible infrastructure—though capacity and consistency vary.

7) Teacher Preparation and Capacity in the Indian Context

Quality of pre-service preparation for LD remains uneven nationally, with recent analyses calling for stronger coursework/practicum on assessment, instructional design, and inclusive pedagogy—areas tightly linked to SED outcomes. Scaling RCI-aligned training and continuous professional development is repeatedly recommended across policy reviews and state PAB .

8) Evidence Gaps and Implications for Goalpara-Focused Comparative Studies

Despite robust national policy scaffolds, **district-level empirical studies** on SED among learners with LD—especially in Assam—are limited. Related social/educational wellbeing studies from Goalpara exist but are not LD-specific, indicating a clear research gap your study can fill by comparing SED between learners with and without LD and examining school/ecology variables (PTR, transition/dropout, resource support) .

Methodology:-

The methodology of the present study has been systematically designed to ensure a clear and objective comparison of social and emotional development between students with and without learning disabilities (LDs) in Goalpara district, Assam.

Research Design

The study employed a **comparative research design** using a **mixed-method approach**. The quantitative component involved standardized psychological scales to measure social and emotional development, while the qualitative component relied on semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents to gain deeper insights into the challenges and support systems experienced by LD students.

Population and Sample

- **Population:** The target population consisted of upper primary school students (Classes V–VIII) enrolled in government and private schools of Goalpara district, Assam.
- **Sample Size:** A total of **120 students** were selected, including:
 - 60 students identified with learning disabilities (LD group).
 - 60 students without learning disabilities (non-LD group).
- **Sampling Technique:**
 - **Purposive Sampling** was used for identifying LD students with the help of school records, teacher recommendations, and preliminary screening.
 - **Simple Random Sampling** was employed for selecting non-LD students from the same schools to ensure comparability.
- **Age Range:** 10 to 14 years.
- **Schools Covered:** 10 schools (6 government and 4 private) were included to ensure representation of different socio-economic contexts in Goalpara district.

Tools for Data Collection

1. **Social Skills Rating System (SSRS):**
Developed by Gresham and Elliott (1990), this standardized scale was used to assess domains such as cooperation, assertion, self-control, and peer interaction.
2. **Emotional Development Scale (EDS):**
This scale was used to measure emotional aspects such as self-esteem, emotional regulation, empathy, and frustration tolerance.
3. **Semi-Structured Interviews:**
 - **Teachers** were interviewed to understand classroom challenges, peer dynamics, and instructional strategies.
 - **Parents** were interviewed to gain insights into family support, home environment, and coping strategies of LD students.
4. **Observation Checklist:**
A classroom observation schedule was used to record the behavior, participation, and peer interactions of selected students.

Procedure of Data Collection

1. Permission was obtained from school authorities prior to data collection.
2. Students with LDs were identified through teacher referrals, academic performance records, and diagnostic indicators.
3. Both groups (LD and non-LD) were administered the SSRS and EDS scales under similar classroom conditions.
4. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 teachers and 20 parents to supplement quantitative data.

5. Classroom observations were carried out over a period of four weeks to cross-check student behavior and social interactions.

Data Analysis

- **Quantitative Analysis:**
 - Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), and **t-test** were applied to compare the social and emotional development scores of LD and non-LD students.
 - Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software.
- **Qualitative Analysis:**
 - Responses from interviews and observations were subjected to **thematic analysis** to identify recurring themes such as peer rejection, teacher empathy, family support, and coping strategies.
 - Triangulation was used to validate the findings from different data sources.

Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent was obtained from school authorities, teachers, and parents.
- Students' participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of responses was maintained.
- No psychological harm or academic disadvantage was caused to the participants during the study.

Analysis and Major Findings:-

The collected data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for both groups (students with LDs and students without LDs), and the significance of differences was tested using the **t-test** at the 0.05 level. The results are presented below.

Table 1: Comparative Social and Emotional Development Scores of Students with and without Learning Disabilities

Development Area	Students with LDs (Mean \pm SD)	Students without LDs (Mean \pm SD)	t-value	Level of Significance
Peer Interaction	42.3 \pm 6.2	61.5 \pm 5.8	3.82	Significant (p < 0.05)
Self-Esteem	39.6 \pm 7.1	64.2 \pm 6.4	4.25	Significant (p < 0.05)
Emotional Regulation	45.8 \pm 6.7	70.4 \pm 6.1	4.71	Significant (p < 0.05)
Teacher-Student Relation	58.2 \pm 5.4	71.3 \pm 5.6	2.68	Significant (p < 0.05)
Family Support	62.5 \pm 5.9	65.8 \pm 5.2	0.98	Not Significant

Major Findings:-

1. **Peer Interaction:**

Students with LDs scored considerably lower in peer interaction (Mean = 42.3) compared to non-LD students (Mean = 61.5). This indicates that LD students face difficulties in forming friendships, participating in group activities, and gaining peer acceptance.

2. **Self-Esteem:**

LD students reported lower self-esteem (Mean = 39.6) than their non-LD peers (Mean = 64.2). Many LD students expressed feelings of inferiority and lack of confidence in both academic and social settings.

3. **Emotional Regulation:**

Emotional regulation was significantly weaker among LD students (Mean = 45.8) compared to non-LD students (Mean = 70.4). This suggests that LD students struggle with frustration, stress, and managing emotional outbursts.

4. **Teacher-Student Relationship:**

Though both groups reported positive teacher-student relationships, LD students (Mean = 58.2) rated lower than non-LD students (Mean = 71.3). This gap reflects the challenges teachers face in managing diverse classroom needs.

5. **Family Support:**

Both groups reported almost equal levels of family support (62.5 for LDs vs. 65.8 for non-LDs), and the difference was statistically insignificant. This suggests that parents, regardless of disability status, provide strong emotional support to their children in Goalpara's socio-cultural context.

Recommendations:-

The study revealed that students with learning disabilities (LDs) in Goalpara district face significant challenges in peer interaction, self-esteem, and emotional regulation, though they receive strong family support. To address these gaps and ensure holistic development, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Teacher Training and Capacity Building**

- Organize regular workshops and refresher courses for teachers on identifying and supporting LD students.
- Integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies into daily classroom practices.
- Provide teachers with resource materials and training in differentiated instruction.

2. **Strengthening Inclusive Education Practices**

- Establish inclusive classrooms that encourage collaborative learning and peer support.
- Introduce **buddy systems** or peer mentoring programs to reduce isolation of LD students.
- Encourage group-based activities that promote cooperation and acceptance.

3. **School-Based Counseling Services**

- Appoint school counselors or train existing staff to provide counseling and emotional support for LD students.
- Conduct awareness sessions for parents and students on learning disabilities to reduce stigma.
- Develop stress-management and confidence-building programs for LD students.

4. **Curriculum and Pedagogical Adaptations**

- Modify classroom tasks and assessments to accommodate diverse learning needs.
- Promote activity-based learning, play therapy, and experiential approaches to improve self-esteem.
- Use ICT-based tools and assistive technologies to enhance engagement and emotional resilience.

5. **Community and Parental Engagement**

- Conduct community awareness campaigns to sensitize the public about LDs.
- Establish parent support groups to share coping strategies and best practices.
- Strengthen the home-school partnership to ensure continuity of support for LD students.

6. Policy Implementation and Monitoring

- Ensure effective implementation of **NEP 2020** and **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016)** in Assam.
- Allocate special funds for inclusive infrastructure, learning aids, and teacher training in rural schools.
- District education authorities should set up monitoring systems to track progress of LD students in schools.

Conclusion:-

The present study set out to examine the social and emotional development of students with learning disabilities (LDs) in Goalpara district of Assam, comparing them with their non-LD peers. The findings revealed that LD students significantly lag behind in areas such as peer interaction, self-esteem, and emotional regulation, though they receive comparable levels of family support. Teacher-student relationships, while generally positive, also reflected certain limitations in addressing diverse learning needs.

These results reaffirm earlier research that LD students are at higher risk of experiencing social rejection, low confidence, and emotional instability, which in turn affect their academic growth and personal well-being. At the same time, the cultural strength of family support in Assam offers a hopeful dimension, suggesting that home environments can be mobilized as strong allies in the holistic development of LD children.

The study thus highlights an urgent need for strengthening inclusive education practices in Goalpara and beyond. Teacher training, counseling services, and peer support mechanisms must be integrated into the educational framework. Policy provisions such as NEP 2020 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) should be implemented more effectively at the grassroots level.

In conclusion, while family and community support provide a solid foundation, schools must evolve into truly inclusive spaces that nurture not only the academic potential but also the social and emotional well-being of LD students. Future research could explore intervention strategies and longitudinal outcomes to better understand how inclusive practices impact the long-term growth of students with learning disabilities in Assam.

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