



## Comparisons of Self-Efficacy and Hope among Students with Learning Disabilities and without LD

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### ABSTRACT

This study compared self-efficacy and hopes in 30 elementary school (sixth grade) children with learning disabilities (LD) and 30 their peers without LD. An ex post facto design was used. Statistical population comprised of all students in elementary schools (sixth grade) in, harsin, Iran, during the 2012-2013 academic year. Students with learning disability were randomly selected. The students with LD had been diagnosed by Colorado Learning Difficulties Questionnaire (CLDQ). The student completed the Wechsler Memory scale, General Self-Efficacy Scale, and Children's Hope Scale. Data were analyzed using analysis of variance. Differences were found between the groups on the self-efficacy and hope.

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### Introduction

Student with learning disabilities (LD) form the largest group of students with special educational needs in inclusive classrooms (Clark, 1997; Clark & Artiles, 2000). Learning disability is a life-long condition that affects people differently depending on the situation. LD can affect academic functioning, daily life and social life. For example, LD can interfere with sight reading, reading comprehension, math, and writing. They can also interfere with organization, managing time, following multi-step instructions or interpreting graphs, charts and maps, for example. Some people with LD have trouble interpreting facial expressions, understanding body language, understanding tones of voice or taking turns in conversations.

According to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases (ICD10, revision in 2011), the basic learning disability is defined to emerge in reading, writing, and/or mathematics, even though the cognitive skills of these children are within normal range.

"Specific learning disability" (McCarney, 1996) refers to a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes of understanding or using language manifested in difficult performance in listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or doing mathematical calculations. The term includes conditions such as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain function, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Children who have learning problems as a result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage are not included.

On the other hand, it is not surprising that previous research has found that students with LD frequently display poor academic self-concept, avoid academic work, use few self-help strategies, and hold low expectations of future success (Ayres, Cooley, & Dunn, 1990; Chapman, 1988; Fulk, Brigham, &

Lohman, 1998). There is strong evidence that individuals with learning disabilities (LD) experience more social, emotional, and motivational difficulties than those without LD (Ayres, Cooley, & Dunn, 1990; Sridhar & Vaughn, 2001; Vaughn, Zaragoza, Hogan, & Walker, 1993). In school, students with LD have academic difficulties coupled with lower academic self-concepts (Gans, Kenny, & Ghany, 2003) and lower self-perceptions and self-esteem (Grolnick & Ryan, 1990).

In addition, it has generally been acknowledged that students with LD view their own academic skills and self-regulatory capacities as weaker than those of their normally achieving (NA) peers (Fulk et al., 1998; Klassen ;2010, Meltzer, Katzir, Miller, Reddy, & Roditi, 2004).

Research has identified a number of protective factors that help to foster resilience and well-being among kids with LD. People who have personal characteristics such as persistence in the face of adversity, flexibility to pursue alternate strategies when appropriate, and self-awareness are at reduced risk for problems. Further, Raskind et al. (1999) conducted a longitudinal study to determine predictors of success among individuals with LD. Forty-one adults with LD participated in interviews and cognitive and academic testing 20 years after they had left a treatment center for children with LD. Results indicated that the following attributes distinguished successful from unsuccessful adults: self-awareness, proactivity, perseverance, emotional stability, goal setting, and use of support systems.

Outcome research has shown that students with learning disabilities often use slow counting strategies (e.g. finger counting) to solve basic mathematical problems (Lerner & Johns, 2010). Different studies point to three main factors which may influence the development of children with disabilities, the child's characteristics, familial aspects, and the social environment (Morrison & Cosden, 1997). Indeed, students with

LD often underachieve in multiple areas, academic and other, and often with pervasive negative consequences (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009).

Only a small number of studies have examined the self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents with LD. 'Self-efficacy' is the concept delivered from the Society Education Theory of Bandura (1977). It indicates self-confidence in successfully organizing and executing tasks, and determines an individual's capacity to control the motives, recognition, and direction of their actions (Martocchio, 1994). It also includes an individual's capability to call upon the physical, intellectual and emotional resources needed for the successful accomplishment of tasks (Eden and Aviram, 1993). In his self-efficacy theory, Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as beliefs in one's abilities to carry out a desired course of action. These self-beliefs are formed from four sources: mastery experience (performance on previous similar tasks); vicarious experience (modeling, or the observation of others' performance on similar tasks); verbal persuasion (feedback from significant others); and physiological and emotional reactions (e.g., anxiety) to specific tasks (Bandura, 1997).

Schwarzer (1992) conceptualized general self-efficacy, which is concerned with more global and stable personal capability to address effectively many stressful situations. General self-efficacy is considered a personal resource or vulnerability factor that can influence a person's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. General self-efficacy reflects an optimistic self-belief of an individual. General self-efficacy also tends to help an individual facilitate goal setting, effort investment, persistence in face of barriers, recovery from setbacks, and emotional adaptiveness (Schwarzer, 1992).

In general, a high self-efficacy level indicates an affirmative sense of self and an ability to remain committed to goal achievement. Meanwhile, low self-efficacy indicates low levels of self-confidence, negative self-evaluation, and the inability to produce a planned outcome when tasks are given (Appelbaum and Hare, 1996).

On the other hand, Hope may support and enable students to meet the increased demands of the middle school environment, enabling them to set valued goals, identify the means to achieve these goals, and summon the drive to achieve them (Snyder, 2002). Recognizing the importance of goal setting for students' functioning, hope was defined as a set of beliefs that involves two ways of thinking about a goal: agentic thinking and pathways thinking. Agentic thinking involves beliefs about success in reaching goals (e.g., "I meet the goals that I set for myself"); pathways thinking involve beliefs about effectiveness when pursuing different means to obtain goals ("I can think of many ways to get what I want"). Hope, then, reflects belief in one's personal ability to pursue desired goals in the future and kindles motivation to use various pathways (Shorey, Snyder, Rand, Hockemeyer, & Feldman, 2002).

Higher levels of hope have been related to better outcomes in academic achievement and psychological adjustment (Snyder, 2002). Thus, we expect students who report higher levels of hope to invest effort in responding to their academic challenges. Hope has been examined within school settings, yet no earlier research has explored its implications for students with LD. Examining hope among students with LD may reveal an important aspect of their motivation to cope with academic challenges, regardless of difficulties and frustrations.

This study compares children with LD and their peers without LD on self-efficacy and hope. We hypothesized that children with LD would score lower on the self-efficacy and hope than their peers without LD.

## Method

### Participants and Procedures

Thirty adolescents with LD (Thirty boys, mean age 12.7 years) and thirty male without LD (30 boys, mean age 12.2 years) as a comparison group were recruited from elementary schools (sixth grade) in, Harsin, Iran. The students with LD had been diagnosed by Colorado Learning Difficulties Questionnaire (CLDQ) (Willcutt et al, 2011). Also, the diagnostic assessment included the Wechsler Intelligence Scale. Students with learning ability were randomly selected.

### Research Instruments

Colorado Learning Difficulties Questionnaire (CLDQ) (Willcutt et al, 2011), a 20-item parent-report rating scale that was developed to provide a brief screening measure for learning difficulties. CLDQ ratings were obtained from parents of children. the CLDQ included 5 subscales: 1) Reading 2) Social cognition 3) Social anxiety 4) Spatial 5) Math. The validity and reliability of this test have been reported satisfactory in different. In this study, the reliability of the test was .88.

Wechsler Memory scale: the measure of Wechsler memory (Wechsler, 1997) included 7 subscales: 1) information 2) orientation 3) mind control 4) arithmetic repeated the digits ahead 5) arithmetic repeated the digits reverse 6) total arithmetic digits and 7) visual memory. The validity and reliability of this test have been reported satisfactory in different researches. In this study, the reliability of the test was .93.

Hope. Children's Hope Scale (Snyder, 2002) consists of six statements to which students respond on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (none of the time) to 6 (all of the time). There are three agency items (e.g., "I think I am doing pretty well") and three pathways items (e.g., "I can think of many ways to get things in life"). Internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) for the overall scale ranged from .72 to .86, with a median of .77, and test-retest correlations ranged from .71 to .73 over one month. A Cronbach alpha of .87 was obtained in this study.

Self-efficacy. The General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) was administered to assess the international students' self-beliefs to cope with a variety of difficult demands in life. The scale explicitly refers to personal agency, which is the belief that one's actions are responsible for successful outcomes. Adjustment to life in a new culture requires dealing with various situations and facing many challenges and, therefore, general self-efficacy is the most appropriate way to assess factors related to international students' adjustment. The scale consists of 10 items. For each item, students will be rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = Not at all true to 4 = Exactly true). In this study, the reliability of the test was 79%.

## Results

In this research, results were analyzed with a analysis of variance (ANOVA). One-Way ANOVA were performed to assess differences between group's scores on the above measures (self-efficacy and hope).

Descriptive statistics for the Student self-efficacy and hope Scales are summarized in Table 1. Total Hope Score averages for LD were 23.70 (SD= 3.89) and for NLD were 27.83 (SD= 4.56). Total Self-efficacy Score averages for LD were 37.10 (SD= 4.38) and for NLD were 41.93 (SD= 4.63).

**Table 1. Means and standard deviations for all measures by variables**

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
<b>Hope</b>	LD	30	23.70	3.89	.71
	NLD - LD	30	27.83	4.56	.83
<b>Self-efficacy</b>	LD	30	27.10	4.38	.79
	NLD - LD	30	31.93	4.63	.84

**Table 2. Results of One-Way ANOVA Comparison of Means on the self-efficacy and hope Scales for Students With and Without Learning Disabilities**

ANOVA			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Hope	LD	Between Groups	256.267	1	256.267	14.231	.000
		Within Groups	1044.467	58	18.008		
		Total	1300.733	59			
Self-efficacy	NLD - LD	Between Groups	350.417	1	350.417	17.245	.000
		Within Groups	1178.567	58	20.320		
		Total	1528.983	59			

Note. LD = students with learning disabilities; NLD = students without learning disabilities.

One-way anova indicate that the scores are statistically significant (table 2). As can be seen in Table 2, significant differences emerge for hope between the two groups  $F(1, 58) = 14.23$ ,  $p < .001$ . In addition, significant differences emerge for self-efficacy between the two groups  $F(1, 58) = 17.24$ ,  $p < .001$ .

### Discussion

Students with LD typically experience more social, emotional, and motivational problems than students without LD (Ayers, Cooley & Dunn, 1990). Students with LD are often caught in a vicious spiral of school failure. Their learning difficulties lead to slower development of academic skills and abilities, which in turn impedes new learning (Stanovich, 1986). As a result of the repeated cycle of failure, they fall farther and farther behind. Since learning differentiated students tend to lower self-efficacy. Self-efficacy beliefs provide students with a sense of agency to motivate their learning through use of self-regulatory processes as self-monitoring, goal setting, self-evaluation, and strategy use (Zimmerman, 2000).

In addition, Since the 1950s, physicians and psychologists have pointed to the role of hope in health and well-being (Cheavens, Feldman, Woodward, & Snyder, 2006). C. R. Snyder (2002) defined hope as a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of success and claimed that people typically think in terms of goals. The theory of hope, which is part of a cognitive model, involves two main components: (a) agency (the motivation to pursue the goals) and (b) pathways (strategies and planning to meet goals).

The current study described and compared of Self-Efficacy and Hope among Students with Learning Disabilities and without LD. Significant differences emerge in the self-efficacy and hope between the two groups.

In summary, this research has indicated a distinctly lower level of self-efficacy and hope for students with LD. These results are consistent with Baer, Clever, and Proctor (1991), Chapman, & Tunmer (2003). All of whom found that the lower level of self-efficacy and hope for students with LD. The

findings have important implications for both practice and future research.

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