

Positive Strength Characteristics of Students With Learning Difficulties in the State of Kuwait

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Abstract

The current study aimed to describe the positive strength characteristics of students with learning difficulties in Kuwait. The study sample consisted of 20 participants. To achieve the goal of the study, the research constructed the scale and verified its validity and reliability. The results indicated that students with learning difficulties in Kuwait possessed positive cognitive characteristics that were better than emotional, behavioral and communicative characteristics. The study recommended that other studies should be conducted on the positive strength characteristics and the development of remedial programs for negative aspects.

Key words: Positive strength characteristics; Students with learning difficulties; The State of Kuwait

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AN INTRODUCTION

Learning disabilities are a neurological condition. The child may have learning difficulties in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and understanding mathematical concepts and general understanding (White Swan Foundation, 2015). Learning Disabilities is an umbrella

term describing a number of learning disabilities (Learning Disability Association of America (LDA), (2021). The Federal Definition of Learning Disabilities, established by the United States Government in Public Law 94-142, is adopted: "A defined learning disability means a disturbance in one or more of the basic psychological processes involving the understanding or use of language, spoken or written, and which may appear in the ability to Incomplete on listening, speaking, reading, spelling or doing mathematical calculations The term includes conditions such as cognitive impairment, brain injury, minimal brain impairment, dyslexia and developmental aphasia It also does not include children with learning problems caused primarily by visual or hearing impairments mobility, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic damage" (White Swan Foundation, 2015). Some symptoms of learning disabilities include difficulty distinguishing right from left reversing letters, words, or numbers after the first or second grade, difficulty recognizing patterns or sorting items by size or shape, difficulty understanding and following instructions, or staying organized, difficulty remembering what has just been said or what has just been read Lack of coordination when navigating Difficulty doing tasks with hands, such as writing, cutting or drawing Difficulty understanding the concept of time Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2021).

Learning disabilities are due to genetic and neurobiological factors that alter the functioning of the brain in a way that affects one or more of the cognitive processes related to learning. Learning disabilities can affect an individual's life outside of academia and can affect relationships with family and friends and in the workplace (Learning Disability Association of America (LDA), (2021). Children with learning disabilities may feel frustrated that they cannot master a topic despite their hard work, and they may act out, helplessly, or withdraw.

Learning disabilities can also be accompanied by emotional or behavioral disturbances, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or anxiety. The combination of problems can make it difficult for a child to succeed in school. Correct diagnosis of each disorder is critical, so that a child can receive the right kind of help for both (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), (2021). Learning disabilities should not be confused with learning problems that are primarily caused by visual, hearing or motor impairments; intellectual disability from emotional disturbances or with environmental, cultural or economic damage. In general, people with learning disabilities have average or above average intelligence. There often appears to be a gap between an individual's potential and actual accomplishments. With the right support and intervention, people with learning disabilities can achieve success in school, work, relationships, and society (Learning Disability Association of America (LDA), (2021). Students with learning disabilities are characterized by a combination of developmental, academic, personality characteristics and communicative behaviors) according to teachers' views on identifying students with learning disabilities (Firat and Koçak, 2020). Maddocks (2020) studied the cognitive characteristics and achievements of students from a national sample of gifted students with learning difficulties. The results indicated heterogeneity in performance and emphasized the importance of individual assessment and the abolition of focus on rapid academic tasks. English language learners with disabilities also reported lower levels of self-determination compared to other students, including being less likely to act independently or report behaviors related to empowerment or self-actualization (Newman, Garcia, Trainor, and Chong, 2021). Graham, Collins, and Rigby-Wills (2017) emphasized that writing is a difficult task for students with learning disabilities who face diverse challenges, especially in writing quality, organization, vocabulary use, sentence fluency, spelling conventions, grammar, handwriting, elements of gender, output and motivation. Odegard, Farris, Middleton, Oslund, imrodt-Frierson (2020) clarified that behavioral characteristics of dyslexia correlate with a school-specific dyslexia classification. Learning disabilities affect differently all areas of knowledge acquisition. These students are more prone to social and emotional problems Learning difficulties may cause frustration and anxiety Depression, peer relationships, and introversion (Stankovska and Rusi, 2014).

STUDY PROBLEM AND ITS QUESTIONS

Students with learning disabilities show a set of characteristics that distinguish them from others with disabilities or their peers. The characteristics are often related to the type of learning difficulty that the student exhibits. This study aims to describe the behavioral and

psychological characteristics among a pilot sample of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the aspects of the cognitive strength of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the aspects of the emotional strength of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the aspects of the social strength of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the aspects of the personal behavioral strength of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the aspects of the communicative strength of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Methodology

The current study used the descriptive survey method, which is a method that organizes the results in numbers.

Participants

The present study included 20 students diagnosed with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait who receive special education services in the schools they enrolled.

Study Tool

To achieve the study's goal of studying the positive strength characteristics of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher constructed the study tool based on some related studies (Shogren, Shaw, Raley, Wehmeyer, Niemiec, and Adkins, 2018; Carter, Boehm, Biggs, Annandale, Taylor, Looock, and Liu, 2015; Harpur, 2012; Kaufman, 2012). The scale consisted of 39 items which distributed on five dimensions as they are in the following table:

Table 1
Scale dimensions and items number

Dimension	Number of items
Cognitive	11
Emotional	6
Social	6
Personal behavioral	10
Communication	6

Reliability of Study Tool

The researcher used the test re-test reliability on a sample of 15 participants from outside the study. The reliability coefficient was 0.84.

Validity of Study Tool

The researcher used the content validity, as the tool was presented to 10 specialists with disabilities in the State

of Kuwait, and their opinion was surveyed about the appropriateness of the scale in terms of the items belonging to dimension and language used. 80% was adopted as an agreement percentage for the adoption of the items.

Data Collection

To collect the data, the researcher designed a link on the Internet and sent it to students with learning disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Inquiries were answered to fill out the scale by phone and using the WhatsApp application.

THE RESULTS

This part of the study presents the results of the study in the form of percentages, which are organized according to the questions.

- What are the aspects of the cognitive strength of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Table 2
Cognitive strength characteristics of students with learning difficulties

Cognitive strengths	High	Medium	Low	Not at all
Thinking of positive ways to accomplish the required tasks	70%	10%	5%	15%
Desiring and interesting in discovering things	50%	15%	20%	15%
Thinking about things from different angles without making judgment	50%	20%	15%	15%
Mastering new skills and acquired knowledge	80%	20%	0	0
Guiding and directing others in completing tasks	85%	5%	10%	0
Regulating behaviour	75%	10%	5%	10%
Awareness of acceptable things and behaviors	60%	10%	15%	15%
Possessing ideas and beliefs appropriating to values, culture and traditions	60%	15%	10%	15%
Awareness of the demands of life	55.5%	20%	15%	10%
Knowing the sources of happiness and comfort	65%	25%	5%	5%
Interpreting the emotions of others.	60%	20%	15%	5%

Percentages indicating directing others, learning new skills, and thinking positively were among the highest characteristics.

- What are the aspects of the emotional strength of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Table 3
Emotional strength characteristics of students with learning difficulties

Emotional strengths	High	Medium	Low	Not at all
Not characterized by anxiety and fear	45%	5%	25%	25%

Emotional strengths	High	Medium	Low	Not at all
Does not talk about his pain to others	50%	10%	15%	25%
Resisting life frustrations	60%	25%	10%	5%
Controlling emotions in situations of anger	55.5%	15%	20%	10%
Respecting and understands the emotions of others	60%	20%	10%	10%
Empathizing with others	55.5%	35%	5%	5%

The percentages show that resistance to frustration and understanding other people's feelings were among the highest characteristics.

- What are the aspects of the social strength of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Table 4
Social strength characteristics of students with learning difficulties

Social strengths	High	Medium	Low	Not at all
Enjoying good friendships.	65%	20%	10%	5%
Respecting the views of others in social interactions.	55.5%	25%	15%	5%
Behaving appropriately in social situations.	50%	25%	25%	0
Allowing others to speak in social situations.	55.5%	30%	10%	5%
Making and maintain new friends.	60%	30%	5%	5%
Characterized by calm and emotional balance.	70%	0	25%	5%

Data tells that the balance between emotions and making new friend were among the highest characteristics.

- What are the aspects of the personal behavioral strength of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Table 5
Personal behavioral strength characteristics of students with learning difficulties

Personal behavioral strengths	High	Medium	Low	Not at all
Does not grumble in his daily life.	55.5%	0	10%	35%
Practicing healthy life skills.	50%	10%	35%	5%
Organizing the time according to daily activities	60%	5%	30%	5%
Evaluating his behavior and experiences in terms of the pros and cons.	55.5%	25%	10%	10%
Finishing the work he starts	80%	15%	5%	0
Facing sources of failure	45%	5%	10%	40%
Does things others like	55.5%	10%	25%	10%
Treating people fairly and as appropriate	60%	0	30%	10%
Organize his daily activities	50%	5%	30%	15%
Engaging in recreational behaviours	50%	10%	35%	5%

The percentages indicate that treating people fairly and organizing the time were among the highest characteristics.

• What are the aspects of the communicative strength of students with learning difficulties in the State of Kuwait during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Table 6
Communicative strength characteristics of students with learning difficulties

Communicative strengths	High	Medium	Low	Not at all
Understanding what others are saying	65%	5%	15%	15%
Has a good language in communicating with others	40%	10%	10%	40%
Expressing himself well	55.5%	0	20%	25%
Practicing body language while communicating with others	55.5%	10%	30%	5%
Characterized by bashfulness and familiarity in communicating with others	50%	5%	45%	0
Others understand his words	60%	15%	25%	0

The percentages shows that he understands others and others understand him were among the highest characteristics.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Students with learning difficulties in Kuwait showed that they possess positive cognitive characteristics that are better than the emotional, personal, social, and communicative characteristics. This may be the result of trying to think of solutions to overcome their challenges, or that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected making them think positively, especially since during the pandemic there was quarantine, distance education, and the lack of social interaction and communication with others.

Based on the results, the researcher recommends the following:

- Understand the characteristics of the positive strengths and invest them in achieving the growth demands of the person.
- Develop remedial programs to develop negative aspects.

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