



Emotional Consequences and Coping Techniques of Higher Education Dyslexic Learners in Pakistan: Multiple Case Analysis

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Abstract: The main purpose of the current study was to explore higher education dyslexic learners' (HEDLs) awareness, experiences, emotional consequences, and coping strategies for dyslexia. It was a qualitative study with a case study method. Eight dyslexic students (Male=4, Female=4) were selected through the snowball sampling (purposive sampling) technique. The participants were from higher education institutions in Punjab. A semi-structured interview guide was developed through literature and expert opinion for the collection of data. The participants were interviewed face-to-face. All the interviews were transcribed. For the data analysis, a multiple-case analysis model explaining similar and alternating themes was used. According to the findings, the participants were aware of dyslexia. They faced academic challenges, as well as family relationship problems. They had a negative effect of emotional consequences which affected their academic and personal lives. All the participants used positive and negative coping strategies to deal with their learning disabilities. Teachers should be trained and educated about teaching dyslexia students like normal students.

Introduction

Under the umbrella of inclusive education, special education aims to satisfy the unique educational requirements of all students, regardless of whether they have a diagnosed learning disability, mental illness, physical impairment, or developmental delay. The concept of inclusive education is becoming fundamental in modern societies. In developed countries, children with special needs are taught alongside typically developing peers in both public and private educational institutions. Specific learning impairments, including dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dyspraxia, are the most often reported disabilities among the growing population of students with disabilities enrolling

in HEIs around the world (Firth, Frydenberg, Steeg, & Bond, 2013).

However, in Pakistan, where inclusive education is still a novel concept, parents of children with special needs must actively seek out and select special education schools for their children (Ershad, Shiraz, & Toosy, 2020). Hence, this research focused on adult dyslexic learners who are badly impacted by their learning disabilities. The goal of this research was to assist educators in delivering an inclusive education to higher education dyslexic learners (HEDLs) by exploring their emotional consequences (EC), the emotional and psychological effects of dyslexia, and coping techniques (CT) to fulfil their needs.

Higher education students were chosen for this study as most of the studies that have been conducted in Pakistan are either on school students or teachers. There are hardly any research studies that focus on higher education students with dyslexia. Being a marginalised group whose future depends on the quality of their higher education, the researchers decided to fill this research gap by exploring the ECs and CTs of HEDLs.

For students with learning difficulties, Pakistan's educational system provides few opportunities. Although it provides assistance to students with special needs in some ways, the system gives priority to those who have physical disabilities. However, the Department of Special Education is not responsible for the education of pupils who struggle in school academically or who have developmental disabilities. Ershad et al. (2020) explained the reason for this occurrence that because dyslexia and other neurological issues are not visible to the human eye, such students may give the impression that physical health is sound and regarding this, also a lack of understanding among both the general public and parents. Parents and educators in Pakistan have a minimal degree of social awareness, which contributes to their scepticism regarding the existence of inherited learning disorders such as dyslexia. There is no screening process in place, either in schools or in society as a whole, that can identify the difficulties of students (Ershad et al., 2020).

Literature Review

Defining Dyslexia

Dyslexia is defined by Everatt (2007) as mismatches between competence and work level, knowledge and listening capacities, word recovery challenges, and reading and writing difficulties, all of which are aggravated by a lack of morphological separation of meanings.

Strong reading and writing abilities are essential for academic success, additional

education, and economic growth (Alexander-Passe, 2015). Textual access, fluency, comprehension, grammar, subject structure, instruction follow-through, and knowledge sequencing difficulties are all associated with dyslexia. Furthermore, it was observed that students with dyslexia were expected to compensate for their reading comprehension weaknesses by analysing their classmates' work, modelling knowledge in order to retain it, and utilising practical or experiential learning opportunities (Kannangara, 2015).

Symptoms of Dyslexia and its Emotional Consequences

Several academics have offered a wide range of elaborations in order to gain a better understanding of dyslexia (Pino & Mortari, 2014; Symonds & Ellis, 1945). Dyslexic people have cognitive issues that make learning to read and write challenging. This type of dyslexia is distinguished by difficulty with reading, spelling, and decoding. Although it is often overlooked in favour of social skills and broader education, phonological language insufficiency can exacerbate these issues (Barbiero et al., 2019). Dyslexia causes frustration in people, making them introverts. Dyslexics do not prefer to speak up in class as well. They also struggle with relationships.

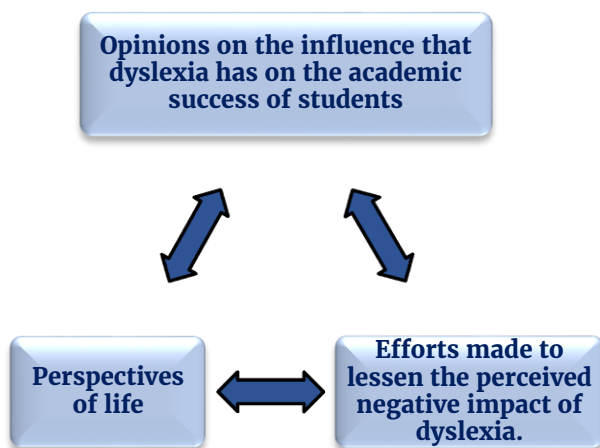
Coping Strategies for Dyslexia

Dyslexic students may resort to counterproductive coping strategies in response to their reading challenges (Moragne, 1997). Many studies of special learning disabilities, including dyslexia, have found that there is a risk of responses such as passivity or "learned helplessness" (Hargreaves & Crabb, 2016), avoidance (Locke, Alexander, Mann, Kibble, & Scallan, 2017), and disruptive behaviour (Macdonald, 2009). The degree of dyslexia predicts future performance less accurately than adaptive coping techniques (Newlands, Shrewsbury, & Robson, 2015). According to

studies on adults who positively cope with dyslexia, they reacted to stress with inventiveness (Snowling, Hulme, & Nation, 2020; Vasileiadis & Doikou-Avlidou, 2018). They were self-aware but not defined by their dyslexia; they were proactive; they set goals; they learned to deal with frustration and persevere when things got tough; they discovered where to get appropriate support and how to be adaptive in the face of obstacles; and they learned to deal with frustration and persevere when things got tough (Manitsa & Doikou, 2022). Crouch (2019) identified the following core categories of dyslexia, which serve as a theoretical framework for this study:

Figure 1

Core categories of dyslexia (Crouch, 2019).



Prevalence of Dyslexia in Pakistan

Dyslexia is a learning disability with neurologically based processing challenges in which students are unable to read properly because of their inability to relate to letters and words. Students with this kind of special need go to normal schools, both public and private. The incidence rate of dyslexia among children is between 15 and 20 percent in Pakistan, which means that over 12 million children in the country require assistance and support from their parents, classmates, and teachers (Khalid & Anjum, 2019). As a result, the goal of this research is to get a better understanding of how

higher education dyslexic students interact with their peers, educational institutions, and society.

The condition known as dyslexia has been linked to a number of undesirable psychological and societal consequences. Nevertheless, there has not been a lot of research done on how these consequences affect students, families, and society as a whole (Livingston, Siegel, & Ribary, 2018). Although there is extensive literature on dyslexia, its symptoms, and coping techniques, there is insufficient research on the emotional consequences and coping techniques of Pakistani higher-education dyslexic learners (Khalid & Anjum, 2019). Understanding the emotional consequences and coping techniques of dyslexic students can help families, educators, and policymakers to improve the academic experiences of students with such disabilities so that they can become highly efficient and confident professionals who can contribute to society.

Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To explore the awareness of HEDLs regarding dyslexia.
2. To understand the educational and societal experience of HEDLs.
3. To identify the emotional consequences (ECs) of HEDLs.
4. To analyse the coping techniques of HEDLs.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed based on the objectives of this study:

1. Are the HEDL aware of their condition and do they accept it?
2. What are the educational and societal experiences of HEDL?
3. What are the ECs of HEDLs' educational and behavioural experiences?

4. Which strategies are CTs (both negative and positive) adopted by HEDL to cope with their experiences and emotions?

Methodology

In this study, qualitative research design and case study method were used to explore the ECs and CTs of higher education dyslexic learners. Researchers can gain a deeper understanding of their respondents' viewpoints and recommend issues for future examination using a qualitative research technique (Newlands et al., 2015).

People with dyslexia are a part of a marginalized community hence difficult to locate. The snowball sampling technique, which is a type of purposive sampling, was used to identify the respondents. Higher education dyslexic learners from higher education institutions were the research study's target population. Eight dyslexic students were interviewed in total. The research included four females and four males between the ages of 18 and 25.

Individual cases had fifty percent male and fifty percent female participants, with each gender having an equal number of cases. In terms of age, 50 percent are between the ages of 21 and 25 years old, and 50 percent are between the ages of 18 and 20 years old. According to the data presented for educational levels, eighty percent of respondents are enrolled in undergraduate programs, while twenty percent are pursuing postgraduate degrees.

A semi-structured interview guide was used to acquire detailed encounters from the participants. According to de Beer, Engels, Heerkens, and Klink (2014), semi-structured interviews are conducted using an interview guide. Certain questions were written ahead of time, like, "Could you give me an example of this?" "Could you explain this a little more?" etc., as the interviewer might deviate from the interview script to offer probing questions. This

type of interviewing was chosen because it is straightforward and trustworthy; both sides can see each other; and the researcher can assist respondents who are having trouble comprehending the subject matter (de Beer et al., 2014). Participants' semi-structured face-to-face interviews enabled the study's objectives to be attained.

First and foremost, the overarching themes were reported. Moreover, after data collection from the cases, interviews were transcribed and reported them. After reporting the transcribed interviews, a multiple case analysis model was developed to explain similar and alternating themes that were found after transcription and thematic analysis of the data. Four themes were extracted from the transcription of the data: self-awareness, educational and societal experiences, emotional consequences, and coping strategies. These themes are further explained in the next section of the research findings.

Research Findings

The following are the four main themes identified after extensive thematic analysis:

Figure 2
Main themes



The above-illustrated four themes were in accordance with Crouch (2019) core categories of dyslexia (Figure 2).

The multiple case analysis has been divided into four sections according to the research

questions of this study. The themes have been explained in light of the responses of the participants. Following is the alignment of themes and sub-themes in relation to the research questions of this study.

Table 1

Alignment of Themes and Sub-theme in relation to research questions

Research Questions	Themes and Sub-themes
1. Are the HEDL aware of their condition and do they accept it?	1. Self-Awareness: - Awareness about dyslexia - Acceptance of dyslexia
2. What are the educational and societal experiences of HEDL?	2. Educational and Societal Experiences - Academic Challenges - Family Relations
3. What are the ECs of HEDLs' educational and behavioural experiences?	3. Emotional Consequences - Academic - Societal
4. Which strategies are CTs (both negative and positive) adopted by HEDL to cope with their experiences and emotions?	4. Coping Strategies - Positive Strategies - Negative Strategies

Following are the four themes and their subsequent sub-themes of the study:

Self-Awareness

According to the participants of this study, the HEDL were well aware of dyslexia and its symptoms that they encounter. All eight respondents were well aware of their learning disabilities. One of the participants reported, "I was in the same grade for almost three years when I was nine years old, and my home tutor suggested my parents get me checked by a psychologist" (Case H). All of the participants even remembered how and when they were diagnosed with dyslexia.

Awareness about Dyslexia

All of the participants were fully aware of their conditions. Case B was of the view that "My sixth-grade teacher observed that my academic performance was deteriorating and diagnosed me with dyslexia at the age of 12 in the summer of that year." Similarly, other participants were able to

recall the time they were diagnosed with dyslexia. All who responded appeared to be aware of their plight. They were accustomed to dyslexia, as they were also able to recall when they were first diagnosed with dyslexia.

Acceptance of Dyslexia

After being diagnosed with dyslexia, the majority of the participants recalled their sentiments. For example, "As a child, I was unable to fully comprehend my situation since I was too young, but I eventually came to terms with it." (Case B). Even though they were so young when they were diagnosed with dyslexia, several of the interviewees were able to recall their emotions. Upon being asked about their feelings about their dyslexia, one of the cases replied, "As soon as I was diagnosed with dyslexia, I was seized with rage, despair, and uncertainty." (Case D). As a result of their dyslexia, all of the participants experienced identical reading, writing, and learning

challenges. One of the participants was of view in following words:

At the time, I was too stupid to realize the complexities of the issue, and I just felt like a loser who could not even read because of it. I felt responsible for it all. I had a difficult time growing up (Case A)

Educational and Societal Experiences

According to the participants of the study, this theme implies the academic challenges and family relationships of HEDLs.

Academic Challenges: All of the participants expressed that they had to study extra hard as compared to the normal students. Case G explained that *"I have to put forth a lot more effort than the typical person to grasp and absorb things."* On the other hand, another participant explained, *"Despite my best efforts, I have a hard time remembering the sequence of things and events."* It was also revealed that being dyslexic is very challenging when it comes to acquiring education.

Family Relationships: Being friendly to others can be difficult for people with dyslexia. At some point in their lives, most people with learning difficulties have found a helpful and supportive individual as well. Upon being asked how their families supported them, the participants explained their experiences as being positive. One of the participants reported, *"I owe a great deal of gratitude to my family for their unwavering support throughout this difficult time."* (Case F). Hence, having family support, according to HEDLs who participated in the study, is favourable. Another participant, Case A, expressed that *"their approach was absolutely fantastic; they tried to comfort me in the appropriate manner."* As a result of the family's support HEDLs were able to overcome their learning disability as a result. No one said that their dyslexia diagnosis had a negative influence on their family life; rather,

they claimed that they were treated the same as other members of their family. Their self-esteem was always good because of the parental support they got.

Emotional consequences

Emotional consequences are taken as the negative effect on HEDLs as a result of their learning difficulty. HEDLs deal with a lot throughout their academic and personal lives. This brings a lot of emotional turmoil into their lives. These emotions consequently affect their personalities and education. These feelings are heightened by the inconsistencies associated with dyslexia. Emotional consequences were explored through academic and societal sub-themes, which are described as follows:

Academic: The participants revealed that their teachers and instructors were initially unaware of their conditions and thought that they were simply not making effort in their studies. In this regard, Case C expressed that, *"My lecturers never inquired as to why I was the last student to complete tests and frequently double-checked my answers. However, they mostly disregarded me as a "stressed out" person"*. But once they became aware, they fully supported them during their learning process, as one of the participants narrated, *"After learning about my situation, they responded in a way that was quite encouraging."* (Case F). Similarly, few HEDL participants expressed that their teachers treated them in an average manner. As one of the participants described it, *"The treatment I receive from my professors is average."* (Case H). HEDLs were concerned about their education because they had a history of becoming disoriented and failing in school. New situations may be more stressful for those who anticipate failing. People with anxiety can conquer their worries. Every single participant ultimately had a pleasant and helpful experience. This boosted their self-esteem and motivated them to employ positive coping strategies, like a strong desire to complete their task.

Societal: HEDLs revealed that they were victims of bullying throughout their lives and that it was extremely challenging for them to make good friends. In this regard, one of the participants reported, *"There should be strict action against those who bully people with these kinds of conditions as it brings their morale down."* (Case D). Moreover, the participants also revealed that they had a very hard time growing up as it was very difficult for them to interact with people. Case G expressed, *"I had a very hard time making friends as they thought I was an idiot for not being able to spell things correctly."*

Coping Strategies

This theme is about the helpful strategies that persons with dyslexia utilize. Every dyslexic has a coping mechanism in place. They have the potential to be both positive and negative. As a consequence, depending on the situation, the effectiveness of various coping mechanisms might vary. The analysis of this theme revealed that all the participants used both positive and negative coping strategies to deal with their learning disabilities.

Positive Strategies: People who are close to dyslexics may assist them in building their self-esteem by praising and encouraging them. As Case D expressed, *"We may attain the same level of self-confidence as normal people, provided they have the support of those around them."* Furthermore, working smartly, being open to new and fascinating experiences, and using the right tools are all distinct strategies for dealing with dyslexia (as well as other difficulties). Due to dyslexia, some participants sought assistance from family and friends. Self-determination is a significant aspect of some participants' coping strategies. As a coping mechanism, one of the participants noted that they took breaks before reading aloud: *"For example, I take small breaks while reading aloud, which helps me take my time to pronounce words correctly."* (Case B)

Negative Strategies: All of the participants revealed that, during some situations, they use negative coping strategies. In this regard, one of the participants explained, *"To be very honest, I have never been able to stand out in class alone. I always push my peers and friends when it is time to speak in class"* (Case B). Another participant revealed that they try to avoid class presentations. *"In presentations, I try to skip classes."* (Case H).

Discussion

Dyslexic students and their teachers were discovered to have a positive working connection. Families, coaches, and classmates all voiced their concerns and support for the children. HEDLs were aware of their learning disabilities and established a supportive environment. Because of the favourable environment, HEDL's emotional states and self-images transformed. This coping strategy, as discussed in the preceding section, helped dyslexic students overcome their issues when they were having trouble reading and writing correctly. Several developmental studies have discovered that certain characteristics of emotional intelligence play a significant role in academic success or failure (Galuschka et al., 2020). Self-efficacy, internal locus of control, and other qualities linked to success and failure are examples. By the time children with dyslexia reach puberty, it is reasonable to assume that they have formed core self-constructs regarding their perceptions (attributions) of their intellectual strengths and weaknesses, as well as a sense of self-efficacy (self-belief) in their ability to succeed at previously insurmountable tasks (Miciak & Fletcher, 2020). Children naturally desire to feel in control and rely on their understanding of effective procedures to overcome challenges, but the successful execution of these approaches is highly dependent on a child's developing sense of self (Doikou-Avliadou & Dadatsi, 2013).

The HEDL participants did not think of themselves as exceptional because of their loved

ones' continuous support. Their interactions with their relatives were great. Despite their limitations, they were able to maintain a tranquil and normal home life. Additionally, dyslexic students were aware that all dyslexics require help in order to manage their learning difficulties. They discovered that dyslexia is not an abnormality and that if their friends continue to encourage them, persons with dyslexia may have the same degree of self-confidence as those without the condition.

There are a variety of strategies for helping persons with dyslexia; nevertheless, Burns, Poikkeus, and Mikko (2013) emphasise the importance of recognising and embracing one's own learning issues as a natural part of one's personality, as well as appreciating and improving one's own unique skill set. The present study's findings are consistent with the approach used in the previous investigation. Overcoming dyslexia and their own curiosity aided in the development of self-awareness and highlighted the need for identifying, improving, and utilising one's abilities (Burns et al., 2013).

Participants praised particular characteristics in instructors who backed the project, emphasising the need for teachers to have suitable training to strengthen their therapeutic abilities. As a result, further research is needed to better understand how classroom counselling affects academic progress and social development in children with learning disabilities (Alexander-Passe, 2006). Examining a candidate's eligibility for higher education should be a top consideration for dyslexic pupils. Furthermore, due to the examiners' terrible behaviour and incorrect evaluation procedures, dyslexic students are terrified and uncomfortable while taking examinations at schools other than their own. Test administrators should do a better job of preparing test takers, and entrance tests should be more thorough (Olofsson, Taube, & Ahl, 2015).

Conclusion

In the current qualitative study, in-depth interviews with eight dyslexic university students were used to achieve the study's objectives. The study explored the emotional consequences and coping techniques of dyslexia. Four major themes were identified after transcribing the interviews. These subjects covered dyslexia and its consequences for individuals and their families. This study emphasises the relevance of emotional and social consequences in the lives of dyslexics as well as the development of self-awareness. It is further emphasised that children must be properly described as having dyslexia once they have been diagnosed. Resilience-building and self-awareness-raising prevention and intervention programmes can boost students' self-esteem and self-awareness. Moreover, teachers should be trained and educated regarding how to teach dyslexics in a way that does not make them feel alien from normal students.

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