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and without attention deficit
hyperactivity disorder

Waheeda Tabassam
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**EXPLORING AND ENHANCING THE SELF-CONCEPT OF
STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES, WITH
AND WITHOUT ATTENTION DEFICIT
HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER.**

**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

from the

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

By

Waheeda Tabassam

M.Sc Applied Psychology

Department of Psychology

2001

DECLARATION

I, Waheeda Tabassam, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of Psychology, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Waheeda Tabassam

7 March 2001.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	VI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	VIII
ABSTRACT	IX
INTRODUCTION	1

CHAPTER 1: LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER.

1.1 Learning disabilities: definition and prevalence.....	12
1.2 Assessment of learning difficulties.....	16
1.3 Placement of students with learning difficulties.....	17
1.4 Types of learning difficulties.....	18
1.4.1 Reading difficulties.....	18
1.4.2 Mathematics difficulties	20
1.5 The links between learning difficulties and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.....	21
1.6 The description of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)	22
1.6.1 Prevalence of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.....	24
1.6.2 Etiologies of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder	25
1.7 Comorbidity between LD and ADHD.....	25
1.8 The nature of relationship between LD and ADHD.....	27
1.9 Social and emotional characteristics of children with ADHD	29
1.10 Social and emotional characteristics of children with LD.....	30
1.11 The self-perceptions of students with LD.....	31

CHAPTER 2: SELF-CONCEPT, ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLE AND SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS OF STUDENTS WITH LD AND STUDENTS WITH ADHD

2.1 The significance of self-concept.....	36
2.2 The definition of self-concept.....	37
2.3 The multidimensional model of self-concept	40
2.4 Self-concept of students with learning difficulties	41
2.5 The literature on the self-concept of students with LD	42
2.6 Self-concept of students with ADHD.....	45
2.7 Attributional Style	47
2.8 Attributional style of students with LD	49
2.9 Attributional style of students with ADHD	52
2.10 Students with comorbid LD and ADHD are at significant risk.....	54
2.11. Learned helplessness as an attributional style in students with LD and ADHD.....	56
2.12 Self-efficacy beliefs in students with LD and ADHD.....	58
2.13 The relationship between self-concept, self-attributions and self-efficacy beliefs.....	59

CHAPTER 3: SELF-CONCEPT ENHANCEMENT INTERVENTIONS.

3.1 The importance of self-concept enhancement	67
3.2 Self-concept enhancement programs	67
3.3 Meta-analyses of the studies on self-concept enhancement	71
3.4 The self-concept enhancement approaches	72
3.4.1 Direct enhancement approach	73
3.4.2 Indirect enhancement approach	75
3.5 Attributional retraining techniques	76
3.6 The relationship between attributions, self-efficacy beliefs and self-concept	80
3.7 Recent contributions to self-concept enhancement research	82

CHAPTER 4: ASSESSMENT OF SELF-CONCEPT, ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLE AND SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS

4.1 Assessment of self-concept	89
4.1.1 Unidimensional approach to measuring self-concept	90
4.1.2 Multidimensional approach to measuring self-concept	92
4.2 The structure and the dimensions of the Self-description Questionnaire-1	93
4.2.1 The administration and scoring procedure for the SDQ-1	95
4.2.2 The reliability and validity of the SDQ-1 instrument	97
4.2.3 Utilizing the SDQ-1 in the present investigation	97
4.3 Assessment of attributional style	99
4.4 Instruments for the assessment of children's attributions	100
4.4.1 The Children's Attributional Style Questionnaire	101
4.4.2 The Sydney Attributions Scale	102
4.4.3 The Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Scale	102
4.4.4 Development of an instrument for the academic attributional style of children	103
4.5 Assessment of self-efficacy beliefs	104
4.5.1 Measuring self-efficacy in the educational context	105
4.5.2 The need to develop a measure for the academic self-efficacy beliefs of children	106

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR ISSUES IN THE PRESENT INVESTIGATION

5.1 An overview of the key issues in the present investigation	109
5.2 The organization of this thesis	113
5.2.1 Stage One: The development of the instruments	114
5.2.2 Stage Two: A comparison between LD, LD/ADHD and normally achieving students on self-perceptions	114
5.2.3 Stage Three: Self-concept enhancement of students with LD and with LD/ADHD	115

**CHAPTER 6: STAGE ONE: DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTRUMENTS
FOR ACADEMIC ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLE AND ACADEMIC
SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS OF CHILDREN.**

6.1 Rationale 117

6.2 Method..... 118

 6.2.1 Sample 118

 6.2.2 Procedure 119

6.3 Development of the Academic Attributional Style Questionnaire 119

 6.3.1 Development of the items for the Academic Attributional
 Style Questionnaire..... 121

 6.3.2 Scoring procedure for the Academic Attributional
 Style Questionnaire..... 122

 6.3.3 Factor analysis of the Academic Attributional
 Style Questionnaire..... 123

 6.3.4 Cluster Analysis of the Academic Attributional
 Style Questionnaire..... 126

 6.3.5 Reliability of the Academic Attributional
 Style Questionnaire 126

 6.3.6 Construct Validity of the Academic Attributional Style
 Questionnaire 127

6.4 Development of the Academic Self-efficacy Beliefs Scale..... 129

 6.4.1 Development of the items for the Academic Self-efficacy
 Beliefs Scale 129

 6.4.2 The administration and scoring for the Academic
 Self- efficacy Beliefs Scale..... 129

 6.4.3 Factor Analysis of the Academic Self-efficacy Beliefs Scale 130

 6.4.4 Cluster analysis of the Academic Self-efficacy Scale 131

 6.4.5 Reliability of the Academic Self-efficacy Beliefs Scale 133

 6.4.6 Construct validity of the Academic Self-efficacy Beliefs Scale ... 134

6.5 Reliability of the SDQ-I measure employed in the present study 134

**CHAPTER 7: STAGE TWO: COMPARISON OF STUDENTS WITH LD,
STUDENTS WITH COMORBID LD/ADHD AND NORMALLY ACHIEVING
PEERS ON SELF-CONCEPT, ATTRIBUTIONAL STYLE AND SELF-
EFFICACY BELIEFS**

7.1 Rationale..... 138

7.2 Hypotheses..... 136

7.3 Method..... 142

 7.3.1 Sample 145

 7.3.2 Characteristics of the sample..... 148

 7.3.3 Instruments 151

 7.3.4 Procedure 153

7.4 Results 154

 7.4.1 Group differences on self-concept 156

 7.4.2 Group differences on academic attributional style..... 163

 7.4.3 Group differences on academic self-efficacy beliefs 165

7.4.4	The relationship between academic self-concept, academic attributional style and academic self-efficacy beliefs.....	167
7.4.5	Gender related and grade related differences.....	170
7.5	Discussion.....	174
7.5.1	The academic self-concept of students with LD and LD/ADHD..	175
7.5.2	The academic attributional style of students with LD and LD/ADHD	182
7.5.3	The academic self-efficacy beliefs of students with LD and LD/ADHD	184
7.5.4	The relationship between academic self-concept, academic attributional style and academic self-efficacy beliefs.....	185
7.5.5	Gender related and grade related differences in self-perceptions .	187

CHAPTER 8: STAGE THREE: SELF-CONCEPT ENHANCEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

8.1	Rationale.....	191
8.2	Hypotheses	194
8.3	Method.....	198
8.3.1	Sample.....	198
8.3.2	Instruments.....	198
8.3.3	Procedure	199
8.3.4	Research design.....	199
8.3.5	The intervention strategies	200
8.4	Results	203
8.4.1	Pre-existing group differences on the dependent variables.....	203
8.4.2	The intervention's effects during the waitlist, experimental and follow-up periods.....	205
8.4.3	Changes in the dependent variables during the waitlist control	208
8.4.4	Changes in the dependent variables during the experimental	209
8.4.5	Changes in the dependent variables during the follow-up period .	209
8.4.6	The intervention's effects on the targeted and non-targeted areas of self-concept.....	210
8.4.7	The intervention's differential effects for the students with LD and LD/ADHD	214
8.5	Discussion.....	216
8.5.1	Changes in the dependent variables during experimental stages ..	218
8.5.2	The intervention's effects for the targeted areas of self-concept ..	219
8.5.3	The intervention's effects for students with LD and LD/ADHD.	224
8.5.4	The effectiveness of attributional retraining in the enhancement of academic self-concept	225
8.5.5	The major findings of the study	228

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION.....230

9.1	The significance of the research	239
9.2	Limitations of the research	241
9.3	Suggestions for future research	243

REFERENCES246

APPENDICES.....275

APPENDIX A- Instruments277

APPENDIX B- Instruments developed for this research282

APPENDIX C- Intervention program293

APPENDIX D- Reading and Mathematics Task- sheets.....298

APPENDIX E- Consent forms326

LIST OF TABLES

Table 6.1: Corrected item- total correlation, Means, Standard deviations and factor loading (unrotated factor matrix) for each of the 10-item Positive and Negative scales on the AASQ 125

Table 6.2: Corrected item-total Correlation, Means, Standard Deviations and factor loading of items for each of the 7-item Reading Self-efficacy and Maths Self-efficacy scales on the ASEB-Scale 132

Table 6.3: Internal consistency coefficients for the SDQ-1 (Marsh, 1990) with study sample. Normative sample values are reproduced from the manual for the SDQ-1..... 135

Table 7.1: Characteristics of the students in normally achieving, LD, and LD/ADHD groups 148

Table 7.2: The percentage of male and female students in each Grade in the three groups 149

Table 7.3: Means and Standard Deviations for the educational and occupational level of the parents of the participants in three groups..... 151

Table 7.4: Means and Standard Deviations of the three groups on self-concept, academic attributional style and academic self-efficacy beliefs..... 155

Table 7.5: Means and Standard Deviations on self-concept scales for the normally achieving, LD, and LD/ADHD groups 157

Table 7.6: Means and Standard Deviations on sub-scales of academic and non-academic self-concept for normally achieving, LD, and LD/ADHD groups 159

Table 7.7: Percentile scores on self-concept scales for normally achieving, LD and LD/ADHD groups..... 162

Table 7.8: Means and Standard Deviations for the normally achieving, LD, and LD/ADHD groups on the Positive and Negative attribution scales of the AASQ 164

Table 7.9: Means and Standard Deviations for the normally achieving, LD and LD/ADHD groups on the Reading and Mathematics self-efficacy beliefs of the ASEB-scale..... 166

Table 7.10: Correlation between the facets of self-concept measured by the SDQ-1, dimensions of academic attributional style measured by the AASQ and the dimensions of academic self-efficacy beliefs measured by the ASEB-Scale, for the study sample 169

Table 7.11: Means and Standard Deviations for girls and boys in three groups, on different scales of self-concept, academic self-efficacy belief and academic attributional style..... 171

Table 7.12: Means and Standard Deviations for the normally achieving, LD and LD/ADHD groups, on the dependent variables across all Grades 172

Table 8.1: Means and Standard Deviations for Self-concept, Academic Attributional Styles and Academic Self-efficacy Beliefs assessed at pre waitlist, pre intervention, post intervention and follow-up for LD and LD/ADHD subjects204

Table 8.2: Means and Standard Deviations for the dimensions of self-concept, academic attributional style and academic self-efficacy beliefs, assessed at pre waitlist, pre intervention, post intervention and follow-up for the combined sample (n = 36)206

Table 8.3: Means and Standard Deviations for the dimensions of self-concept, assessed at pre waitlist, pre intervention, post intervention and follow-up for the combined sample (n = 36)..... 211

Table 8.4: The effect sizes for different dimensions of academic and non-academic self-concept for the combined sample (n = 36)213

Table 8.5: Means and Standard Deviations for the dimensions of self-concept assessed at pre waitlist, pre intervention, post intervention and follow-up for subjects with LD and with LD/ADHD215

Figure 8.1: Experimental stages identifying waitlist, intervention and follow up assessments201

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the self-concept, attributional style and self-efficacy beliefs of students with learning difficulties (LD) with and without attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), compared to normally achieving peers. The thesis also examines the effectiveness of the attributional retraining technique in enhancing the academic self-perceptions of students with learning and attentional difficulties.

The thesis is developed in three stages: Stage-1 is concerned with the development of two instruments for the assessment of academic attributional style and academic self-efficacy beliefs for students in Grade 3 to 6. This stage examines the factor analysis, reliability and validity outcomes of these instruments. Stage-2 concerns itself with a comprehensive examination of the self-concept, attributional style and self-efficacy beliefs of students with LD, students with comorbid LD/ADHD and normally achieving peers. Based on the existing literature, a number of hypotheses concerning the directions of the difference in the self-perceptions of students with LD and with comorbid LD/ADHD were examined. Stage-3 is concerned with the implementation and assessment of the effectiveness of an intervention program that was designed for the enhancement of academic self-concept. Students with LD and students with comorbid LD/ADHD whose academic self-concept scores fell in the lowest quartile participated in this intervention program. The intervention utilized the attributional retraining technique and the effectiveness of attributional retraining in enhancing academic self-concept of students with LD and with comorbid LD/ADHD was examined.

The results obtained from Stage-2 revealed that students with LD and students with comorbid LD/ADHD possessed significantly lowered academic self-concept compared to normally achieving peers. However the three groups (LD, LD/ADHD and normally achieving peers) did not differ significantly on non-academic self-concepts. A comparison between students with LD and students with comorbid LD/ADHD indicated that the two groups did not differ significantly on self-concept, attributional style and self-efficacy beliefs. The results obtained from Stage-3 supported the effectiveness of a cognitive model in changing maladaptive attributions and indicated that academic self-concept of students with LD and with LD/ADHD can be enhanced indirectly using attributional retraining technique.