

Research Article

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Exploring the Perceptions of Teachers, School Principals, and Parents about the Importance of Classifying Students with Learning Difficulties

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Abstract

Background/purpose. The study examines the perceptions of teachers, school principals, and parents regarding the implementation of a tiered classification for students with learning difficulties (LD), categorizing them into mild, moderate, and severe levels.

Materials/methods. Mixed-methods, quantitative, descriptive, and qualitative methodologies were employed in this study.

Results. Findings revealed nuanced differences in stakeholder priorities across educational and socio-cultural dimensions. Teachers and principals universally emphasize the importance of classification for LD students, but diverge in their prioritization of moderate and mild cases, reflecting role-based differences: teachers focus on classroom feasibility, while principals prioritize systemic resource distribution. Socio-culturally, teachers highlight stigma mitigation for severe LD, whereas principals emphasize equitable integration of moderate LD students. Parental interviews revealed divergent viewpoints between supporters and opponents, with supporters valuing classification for tailored interventions for classroom education, and critics warning of stigmatization and lowered expectations.

Conclusion. These results underscore the complexity of balancing academic benefits with socio-cultural risks, highlighting the need for context-sensitive strategies to align classification systems with stakeholder roles and mitigate unintended consequences.

1. Introduction

Learning Difficulties (LD) represent a contemporary subject of interest in psychology and educational sciences. Historically, attention was predominantly directed toward mental, motor, and visual difficulties. The complexity of LD lies in its subtlety and the challenges in diagnosis. Parents and educators often classify children as either typically developing or having special needs, overlooking those who face academic challenges despite not meeting the criteria for special education services. LD may be specific, affecting a particular subject area such as reading (dyslexia) or writing (dysgraphia), or more generalized, resulting in performance levels below those of peers with similar developmental profiles. Arithmetic challenges are also common, such as treating multi-digit numbers as separate digits (e.g., $42 + 59 = 911$). These challenges underscore the importance of precise identification and tailored interventions to support affected students effectively (Fletcher & Miciak, 2019; Young et al., 2022), as well as the necessity for training programs that enhance language skills (Whittaker et al., 2019; National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2016). The study by Al-Qadi (2022) underscores the critical role of these programs in supporting children at risk of LD.

Specialists in LD generally classify these challenges into two primary categories: developmental and academic LD. Some researchers have proposed a third category, encompassing pre-academic LD, which manifests in foundational skills such as readiness for reading, writing, and basic mathematics. Children may struggle to break sentences into individual words and syllables, further highlighting the barriers they encounter in acquiring fundamental skills (Al-Desty, 2018; Miciak et al., 2015). Schools must play an active role in cultivating students' thinking styles by creating an educational environment that aligns with their learning needs and activities (Borghosh, 2020; Dombrowski, 2020). With such varied expressions of LD, it is unsurprising that educators differ in their understanding of these challenges and the interventions needed. Since LD is defined without clear origins, this lack of clarity creates opportunities to explore diverse strategies for supporting students effectively (Hale, 2023).

A wide range of approaches and models have been proposed to explain learning disabilities, including (1) the Visual-Motor Theory (Getmen, 1965), which highlights the manifestations of visual-motor development and their relationship to learning. (2) Kephart's Motor Perception Theory, which emphasizes the stability of perceptual-motor development in children. (3) the Neurological Theory, which attributes learning disabilities to functional impairments or brain injury. (4) Memory Theory, which focuses on the storage and retrieval of sensory inputs and perceptions. (5) cognitive theory, which examines how sensory information is processed and distinguished by the mind. (6) the Social Learning Theory, which underscores the role of parents, teachers, and peers in shaping students' personalities and in facilitating the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and habits. (7) Wittgenstein's Language Games Theory, which stresses the central role of language as a set of practices and uses, argues that the inability to engage in language games contributes to the identification of learning disabilities (Al-Khashi & Al-Kaltham, 2024).

Tools like comprehensive achievement tests and problem-solving tasks are usually used to identify and support students with LD, tailoring interventions to their unique profiles (Maki & Adams, 2020, 2019; Lichtenstein, 2014). Broadly, difficulties are categorized as visible or invisible. Visible difficulties are those that can be objectively observed and measured, often leading to marginalization or stereotyping. In contrast, invisible difficulties do not have outward signs that alert casual observers to an individual's condition (Gutterman, 2023; Izumi et al., 2019). A more specific and widely accepted classification system focuses on symptoms and manifestations rather than the cause or source of the disability (Retief & Letšosa, 2018; Miller et al., 2016; MacKay, 2009). This system includes four primary categories: physical difficulties, which limit basic activities like mobility or sensory functions (e.g., spinal cord injuries, cerebral palsy, or visual impairments); intellectual difficulties, originating before age 18 and characterized by significant adaptive skill limitations (e.g.,

mental retardation); cognitive difficulties, which affect information access, processing, or memory (e.g., dyslexia or traumatic brain injury); and psychiatric difficulties, marked by emotional, cognitive, or behavioral dysfunction (e.g., autism or mental illness).

Classifying students with learning disabilities into levels (mild, moderate, and severe) is a modern and useful method for providing appropriate programs for them. Classifying students with learning disabilities helps teachers identify and select training programs and special educational curricula that are compatible with the abilities of students with learning disabilities, thus contributing to optimal classroom use. Classifying students with learning disabilities may also help guide parents in making sound decisions regarding their children's completion of their educational programs or transitioning to the labor market. Although studies have addressed students with learning disabilities, the reality still requires more research on their classification and the selection of programs that suit their abilities. The current study addresses the critical need to explore the perceptions of teachers, school principals, and parents regarding the classification of students with LD, as these perceptions significantly influence how such students are understood and supported. Teachers often view LD as an educational challenge requiring specialized strategies. School principals, on the other hand, may prioritize fostering an inclusive educational environment that addresses diverse student requirements while implementing effective policies. Parents, driven by concerns for their children's future, frequently seek clear information about classification processes and available support, with their anxieties potentially shaping decisions about educational resources and psychological assistance.

Consequently, the study poses three questions:

- 1- What are the perceptions of teachers and school principals regarding the implementation of a system that categorizes students with LD into levels (mild, moderate, and severe) based on their condition?
- 2- What are the perceptions of parents regarding the implementation of a system that categorizes students with LD into levels (mild, moderate, and severe) based on their condition?
- 3- What specific challenges do teachers and school principals face in addressing the needs of students with LD?

Significance of the study: This study holds significant importance for several reasons, as highlighted by insights from the search results provided and broader educational research. Understanding how different stakeholders perceive the classification of LD helps address inconsistencies in identifying students who require specialized support. For instance, teachers, school administrators, and parents often lack clarity on inclusive education definitions, leading to misalignment between their practices and internationally accepted standards. Parents frequently report gaps in communication and collaboration during the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) process, which can result in the under- or over-identification of needs. By aligning perspectives, the study can enhance diagnostic accuracy and ensure the delivery of tailored interventions, such as curriculum modifications or individualized support plans.

The study emphasizes the importance of equitable practices, including peer-mediated interventions and inclusive curricula, in promoting a sense of belonging and achievement. Moreover, teacher training: educators need clearer guidelines on LD classification and differentiated instruction strategies. Schools must adopt transparent communication channels to integrate parental observations into diagnostic processes.

2. Literature Review

Some studies have attempted to identify intellectual disabilities and learning difficulties. Bedaiwy et al. (2021) scrutinized teachers' perceptions about the inclusion of students with LD in distance learning. Researchers have focused on multiple dimensions for categorization of learning disabilities, including medical, physiological, neurological, and educational aspects (Lalouch, 2022). Numerous studies have utilized the diagnostic scale for students with learning disabilities developed by Al-Sartawi (1996). However, diagnostic and identification measures often lack precision, with challenges related to controlling variables during administration. Abu-Rub (2016) and Alfurayh & AlSowayan (2023) found that the primary obstacles in diagnosing students with learning disabilities stem from the limited accuracy of the tools employed and the difficulty of identification due to measurement constraints. Al-Sartawi & Al-Sartawi (2013) recommended the adoption of reliable, valid, and comprehensive diagnostic instruments that address all aspects of learning disabilities. Suleiman et al. (2013) emphasized the critical role of diagnostic and assessment tools in identifying students with learning disabilities and in addressing their specific needs. In addition, Mohamed & Nabi (2022) examined teachers' perspectives on common diagnostic challenges, noting that the most significant issues relate to the adequacy of screening and identification instruments. Shabib et al. (2017) identified four criteria for classifying students with learning disabilities, namely the criterion of specific excellence, the discrepancy criterion, the exclusion criterion, and the variance criterion.

Mohamed & Al-Othman (2017) examined the identification of learning disabilities among gifted and intellectually talented students in Riyadh, using Al-Sartawi's (1996) Learning Disabilities Scale to detect the type of academic difficulties. Similarly, ELSAMERY and ALGAHNY (2019) explored the challenges in identifying gifted students with learning disabilities and applied Al-Sartawi's (1996) scale for assessment. Al-Khashi & Al-Kaltham (2024) investigated the challenges faced by special education teachers in the educational diagnosis of students with learning disabilities, as well as teachers' suggestions for improving diagnostic practices. Their findings revealed that inconsistencies across standardized diagnostic and assessment tools, even those characterized by reliability, represent the most critical challenges. Al-Sa'aydeh & Al-Farah (2008) explored parental attitudes toward children with learning disabilities, considering selected demographic variables. The study found that parental attitudes fluctuated between positive and negative, depending on their awareness of the disability and the support provided by specialists or teachers. Moreover, the presence of a child with learning disabilities in the family was shown to affect parental attitudes, primarily due to psychological stress and its impact on family life. Al-Saeedi (2018) reported that teachers' attitudes in Kuwait toward students with learning disabilities were neutral, neither positive nor negative. This neutrality was attributed to the existence of Law No. 8 of 2010, which regulates the provision of public and private services for individuals with special needs. Alhassani (2015) found that the attitudes of typically developing students toward peers with learning disabilities were positive in emotional and educational aspects but negative in social aspects. These negative attitudes manifested in reluctance to initiate interaction, form friendships, or, in some cases, through ridicule. Alfifi & Ab-Jadou (2022) examined the attitudes of school leaders, teachers, and parents in Dammam toward inclusive education, which involves integrating students with learning disabilities into mainstream classrooms. The study concluded that there were no significant differences in the attitudes of school leaders and teachers toward inclusion.

Vincent (2015) registered a US Patent about genetic markers associated with intellectual disability as well as compositions, methods, and kits for screening genetic markers of intellectual disability, diagnosing intellectual disability. El-Baz et al. (2016) obtained a US Patent for a computer-aided diagnostic system and automated method that classifies a brain through modeling and analyzing the shape of the brain cortex, e.g., to detect a brain cortex indicative of a developmental disorder such as ADHD, autism, or dyslexia. Hibbs et al. (2018) registered a U.S. Patent for a system

and method to improve student learning, which includes learning materials presented to a student and a device used to acquire physiological data from the student in real-time during a learning session. The learning material can include lectures, questions asked to students, or problems or activities being completed by the students; the device directly measures the brain activity of the student to determine the student's cognitive state. Helali et al. (2024) registered a U.S. patent for an electronic device that detects and analyzes the energy emitted by the brains of individuals. This device measures and analyzes the energy emitted from brain activity, enabling the classification of students with learning difficulties based on the quantity and velocity of emitted energy. Leveraging established measuring devices, supported by computer programs akin to those utilized in electrocardiography, enables the prediction of both the quantity and speed of brain energy based on the magnetic field's intensity. By comparing the intensity of the magnetic field resulting from electrochemical energy in the brain with standard measurements for the general populace, learning difficulties can be diagnosed effectively. None of the Literature studies have addressed the perceptions of teachers, school principals, and parents about the importance of classifying students with LD in schools.

None of the previous studies have addressed teachers' and parents' perceptions of the importance of categorizing students with learning disabilities into levels (mild, moderate, and severe). This gap necessitates further research on how such classifications may contribute to the design of specialized programs tailored to each category focus that represents the central concern of the present study.

3. Methodology

This study employed a convergent parallel design, a mixed-methods approach that integrates both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The quantitative descriptive method, recognized as a structured scientific approach, facilitates the explanation and understanding of specific phenomena through the collection and analysis of standardized data sets. By engaging a broad participant base, this approach yields precise, quantifiable outcomes that can be statistically analyzed (Creswell, 2018). Conversely, the qualitative approach emphasizes the collection of non-numerical data, such as descriptive verbal statements obtained through interviews and field observations, offering in-depth insights into the contextual and experiential dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2018). A semi-structured personal interview form was employed, with questions designed to include both closed and open-ended items to ensure the elicitation of authentic responses (Al-Khalili, 2012). Content analysis and descriptive analysis methods were used. The combined use of these methodologies enables a more comprehensive analysis, allowing for the triangulation of numerical precision with rich, qualitative detail.

3.1. Study Population and Sample

The quantitative study applied a questionnaire to a sample of primary school principals and primary school teachers during the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year in Al-Ahsa, Saudi Arabia. The total study sample for the first tool consisted of 30 primary school principals and 130 primary school teachers, who were simply randomly selected from a pool of 45 principals and 1710 teachers. The qualitative study was conducted with a sample comprising parents of students with LD; the personal interviews were conducted with a sample of 25 parents individually via telephone after obtaining their verbal consent without obligation. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the interview at any time, based on their personal preferences, and the confidentiality of their information was assured. Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of the parent interview sample according to variables (gender, father's qualification, mother's qualification, mother's employment status, and child's gender).

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Study Sample

Variables	Categories	Sample %		Total
Parents Gender	Male	12	48.5%	25
	Female	13	52.5%	
Qualification	Fathers			12
	High school or below	5	20.0%	
	Bachelor's degree or higher	7	28.0%	13
	Mothers			
Mother's Employment Status	High school or below	4	16.0%	13
	Bachelor's degree or higher	9	36.0%	
	Employed	8	61.5%	13
	Homemaker	5	38.5%	
Child's Gender	Male	15	60.0%	25
	Female	10	40.0%	

Table 1 shows that 52.5% of the respondents were mothers, while 28.0% of fathers and 36.0% of mothers held a bachelor's degree or higher, which is higher than the percentage of those with a high school diploma or below for both fathers and mothers. Additionally, 61.5% of the mothers were employed, and 60% of the respondents were parents of male children with LD.

3.2. Study tools

Two data collection tools were meticulously developed. The first tool is a questionnaire designed to explore the perceptions of teachers and school principals regarding the importance of classifying students with LD. The development process involved clearly defining the objectives and dimensions of the instrument, followed by the careful formulation of its items.

The questionnaire in its initial form consisted of 25 items. The comments from the questionnaire reviewers focused on the wording of certain phrases, resulting in corrections. Specifically, three items were deleted from the first axis, and one item was deleted from the second axis. The questionnaire, in its final version, comprised two constructions: one assessing the educational significance of classifying students with LD (11 items) and another examining the socio-cultural significance of such classification (10 items), totaling 21 items. The second tool is a structured personal interview designed to capture parents' perspectives on the importance of classifying students with LD. The interview consists of a primary question and five supplementary sub-questions, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the topic.

The interview guide was developed to effectively manage the interview process and maximize the use of available time, in accordance with the procedures recommended by Rubin & Rubin (2012). The interview was structured into three distinct sections. The first section, lasting approximately two minutes, included introductory questions designed to build rapport with the participants, clarify the purpose of the interview, and prepare them for the discussion that followed. The second section, which spanned approximately six minutes, comprised the main interview question, along with five sub-questions designed to facilitate an in-depth exploration of the topic. The third section, lasting about two minutes, involved encouraging questions to elicit additional details from the participants,

followed by a concluding segment that included expressions of gratitude. Each interview lasted an average of 10 to 12 minutes. Key elements of the participants' responses were recorded verbatim during the interview. They were promptly finalized immediately afterward, ensuring that the original intent of the answers was preserved without any modification or interpretation.

3.3. Top of Form

3.3.1. Validity and Reliability

To establish the validity and reliability of both tools, a panel of nine experts from Saudi universities—each with extensive experience in LD, special education, and assessment methodologies—reviewed the questionnaire items and interview questions. The comments from the reviewers focused on the wording of some phrases, deleting three items (5, 9, 10) from the first axis, and one item (17) from the second axis. Based on their feedback, the researchers refined and reformulated some sentences of the study tools. Subsequently, a pilot test was conducted with 20 teachers and six school principals to further evaluate the first instrument. The insights and responses obtained from this pilot phase informed additional modifications to the final instrument. The second tool was validated through pilot testing with a sample of four parents (2 fathers and two mothers) who were not part of the main study. This pilot phase ensured that the interview questions were clear, free of ambiguous language, and aligned with their intended objectives, while also confirming that the interview duration was appropriate. Finally, the collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 26.

The assessment of the measurement instrument's construct validity and reliability, as described, involves several key metrics and criteria, each addressing different aspects of psychometric quality. Here's a structured summary in Table 2:

Table 2. Reliability and Validity Assessment of the Measurement Instrument

Metric	Value	Threshold	Interpretation
Reliability			
Macdonald's Omega (ω)	0.897	>0.7	High internal consistency; items reliably measure the same construct.
Composite Reliability (CR)	0.899	>0.7	Strong internal consistency; confirms scale reliability.
Validity			
Convergent Validity (AVE)	0.682	>0.5	A latent variable explains at least 50% of the variance in indicators, supporting validity.
Discriminant Validity	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}} = 0.826$	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}} > \text{inter-construct correlations}$	Constructs are distinct (per Fornell-Larcker criterion).

Table 2 shows that the instrument demonstrates strong reliability (ω and CR > 0.89) and validity (AVE > 0.5 , discriminant validity upheld). These results align with established methodological standards (AlAli, 2020), justifying trust in the instrument's psychometric properties.

4. Results

To address the first research question, "What are the perceptions of teachers and school principals regarding the implementation of a system that categorizes students with LD into levels (mild, moderate, and severe) based on their condition?", descriptive statistical analyses (means,

standard deviations, and ranks) were conducted for the instrument dimensions related to the classification system. The results are summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Perceptions of Teachers and School Principals on Classifying Students with LD

Dimension	Teachers		School Principals	
	Mean (SD)	Rank	Mean (SD)	Rank
1. Educational Significance				
Mild	4.20 (0.60)	2	4.10 (0.55)	3
Moderate	3.80 (0.70)	3	3.95 (0.65)	2
Severe	4.50 (0.45)	1	4.40 (0.50)	1
Overall (Educational)	4.17 (0.58)	–	4.15 (0.57)	–
2. Socio-Cultural Significance				
Mild	3.60 (0.80)	3	4.00 (0.60)	3
Moderate	3.90 (0.75)	2	4.20 (0.55)	1
Severe	4.10 (0.65)	1	4.15 (0.50)	2
Overall (Socio-Cultural)	3.87 (0.73)	–	4.12 (0.55)	–
Overall Average (All Levels/Dimensions)	4.02 (0.66)	–	4.14 (0.56)	–

Table 3 presents a detailed comparison of the perceptions of teachers and school principals regarding the implementation of a system that categorizes students with LD into three levels—mild, moderate, and severe—based on two key dimensions: Educational Significance and Socio-Cultural Significance. For the educational dimension, teachers assign the highest importance to the severe level (mean = 4.50, SD = 0.45, Rank 1), indicating that they perceive students with more pronounced LD as having a critical impact on educational outcomes. In contrast, teachers rate the moderate level as the lowest (mean = 3.80, SD = 0.70, Rank 3), with the mild level falling in between (mean = 4.20, SD = 0.60, Rank 2). School principals, on the other hand, also rate the severe level as most significant (mean = 4.40, SD = 0.50, Rank 1) but slightly differ in their ordering by ranking moderate as more important (mean = 3.95, SD = 0.65, Rank 2) compared to mild (mean = 4.10, SD = 0.55, Rank 3). The overall average scores for the educational significance dimension are very similar between the two groups, with teachers scoring 4.17 (SD = 0.58) and school principals 4.15 (SD = 0.57), reflecting a shared recognition of the educational importance of classifying LD.

In the socio-cultural dimension, the pattern shifts slightly. Teachers rate the severe level highest (mean = 4.10, SD = 0.65, Rank 1), followed by moderate (mean = 3.90, SD = 0.75, Rank 2), and then mild (mean = 3.60, SD = 0.80, Rank 3). Conversely, school principals assign the highest rank to the moderate level (mean = 4.20, SD = 0.55, Rank 1), with the severe level next (mean = 4.15, SD = 0.50, Rank 2), and the mild level last (mean = 4.00, SD = 0.60, Rank 3). The overall socio-cultural averages indicate that principals (mean = 4.12, SD = 0.55) perceive a slightly stronger socio-cultural significance of the classification system than teachers do (mean = 3.87, SD = 0.73).

Finally, when considering the overall average perception across all levels and dimensions, school principals report a marginally higher overall mean (4.14, SD = 0.56) compared to teachers (4.02, SD = 0.66). This suggests that while both groups recognize the value of implementing a classification system for LD, school principals tend to have a slightly more favorable overall perception of its importance. The detailed descriptive statistics in this table thus provide valuable insights into how

both educators and administrators prioritize different aspects of the classification system, reflecting their distinct professional perspectives and experiences.

To address the second research question, "What are the perceptions of parents regarding the implementation of a system that categorizes students with LD into levels (mild, moderate, and severe) based on their condition?" The interview responses were collected, categorized, and analyzed to address the five sub-questions posed in the interview. The sample for the personal interview was purposefully selected from parents who voluntarily expressed their willingness and consent to participate in the interview. Twenty-five parents were interviewed until the researchers became convinced that the responses had become repetitive and uninformative. At this point, the researchers discontinued further parental interviews. The responses were organized according to the following five sub-questions:

Sub-question 1:

Do you agree with the school classifying your son/daughter as a student with LD? What are the main reasons?

The responses varied between supporters and opponents. Fourteen individuals (56% of the sample) agreed with the classification. The primary reasons for agreement included recognizing objective realities, parental acceptance of individual differences among children, and the facilitation of teachers' efforts. One participant said, "classifying students based on the severity of their LD provides parents with an early indicator for planning their children's futures". Another respondent indicated that "classification helps reduce student bullying", while yet another emphasized that "categorization guides parents in appropriately addressing their children's needs according to their abilities". Conversely, one respondent cautioned that "although classification is important, it might lead to lowered educational ambitions among students".

Sub-question 2:

Do you consider categorizing students with LD into levels (mild, moderate, severe) to be beneficial at the educational, familial, and social levels?

The responses were varied (48% agreement & 52% disagreement), as 13 individuals did not agree on categorizing students with LD into levels in classrooms. At the educational level, proponents argued that classification aids in tailoring educational programs to suit the abilities of students with LD and in providing appropriate remedial plans. One participant mentioned that "classification helps set realistic expectations for parents, preventing them from expecting their children to perform beyond their real abilities". One participant said that "classification reduces bullying among students", while another mentioned that "it significantly enhances teachers' classroom performance and reinforces the role of school counselors". At the familial level, a participant noted that "it assists in early planning for a child's future in accordance with their capacities and facilitates the search for alternative vocational programs." Another respondent indicated that "it helps interpret and understand behaviors in children that may be inconsistent with their age". On the social level, one participant highlighted "the importance of guiding children to enhance their communication and social relationships, thereby leveraging their personal skills for community benefit". In contrast, the main reasons for disagreement included concerns that classification might lead to the isolation of students with LD in special classes, which could hinder their social and communicative skills and evoke feelings of isolation. "One participant warned that such isolation might increase school dropout rates and, consequently, raise illiteracy levels and reduce professional competencies among these students in the workforce". On the familial front, some respondents expressed that the idea of students' classification could foster domestic conflict and other family issues, one parent noting that "it might result in decreased parental investment in the education of their children with LD". Socially, one

participant indicated that "classification could contribute to the stigmatization of these students and even prompt their association with delinquent peers" This aligns with the finding of Al-Zayat (2006), who suggested that LD might result from negative attitudes toward school and teachers, diminished student aspirations, lower parental expectations, and a lack of motivational and supportive factors.

Sub-question 3:

Do you believe that categorizing students with LD into levels (mild, moderate, severe) contributes to addressing your child's educational, behavioral, and social issues at school?

The responses again varied (40% agreement, 60% disagreement), while 15 parents did not agree. Proponents argued that classification helps teachers understand each student's capabilities, identify appropriate strategies for engagement, assign tasks that align with their abilities, and delegate educational responsibilities that cater to their needs. It was noted that such categorization contributes to the gradual improvement of academic performance, the customization of educational programs, the modification of inappropriate behaviors, the reduction of violent behavior, and the promotion of social adaptation and integration, thereby enhancing community cohesion. Conversely, some participants expressed concerns, he said "classification might exacerbate student rebellion against teachers and peers", while the other said "it is lead to student rejection of education and the school environment, causing tardiness", and one of the participants said that "results in the isolation of students with LD from their mainstream peers". Another participant remarked that "such classification could foster feelings of inadequacy and inferiority among the students.

Sub-question 4:

From your perspective, what benefits can be achieved by categorizing students with LD into levels (mild, moderate, severe)?

The responses regarding the benefits of classification were diverse and can be categorized into three subdomains:

- **Educational Benefits:** participants' suggestions were designing curricula to match the abilities of students with LD, providing supplementary extracurricular activities aligned with the academic program, designing appropriate assessment tools, and offering suitable remedial programs with ongoing monitoring of progress, increasing the cooperation between school and families.
- **Behavioral Benefits:** These encompass the use of effective motivational strategies, improved collaboration between home and school to monitor student progress, reduction of frustration and failure sentiments, and enhancement of self-confidence through diversified behavior modification programs tailored to students' levels.
- **Social Benefits:** These involve guiding families in selecting appropriate academic specializations for their children, advising on vocational programs that match the students' capabilities, assisting in the selection of compatible peers, enhancing interpersonal communication, and increasing societal acceptance of students with LD.

Sub-question 5:

From your perspective, what are the most significant drawbacks of implementing a system that categorizes students with LD into levels (mild, moderate, severe)?

Responses were also grouped into three subdomains:

- **Educational Drawbacks:** These include depriving students of opportunities for academic advancement and improvement and failing to meet their educational aspirations. One participant mentioned that "classifying students into levels does not ensure equitable access to education".

- **Behavioral Drawbacks:** Some participants indicated that classification might diminish a student's self-confidence, engender feelings of inferiority and isolation due to negative perceptions from peers, and adversely affect the psychological well-being of both students and their families by increasing psychological and emotional stress.

- **Social Drawbacks:** Classification students with LD "may lead to the segregation them into separate classes away from their mainstream peers, thus reducing their opportunities for and integration, adaptation and social communications" as reported by one parent. Additionally, some respondents warned that "such segregation could encourage associations with delinquent peers, potentially increasing the risk of substance abuse and contributing to higher crime rates within the community".

This comprehensive analysis of the interview responses with parents provides a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted perceptions surrounding the classification of students with LD into levels.

To answer the third question, *"What specific challenges do teachers and school principals face in addressing the needs of students with LD?"*

The process of classifying students with LD into levels (mild, moderate, severe) introduces several challenges for educators and school administrators. Teachers often struggle to design curricula tailored to students' abilities, as creating differentiated lesson plans that address the wide spectrum of LD severity demands significant time, expertise, and resources. Compounding this issue is the lack of specialized training programs to equip teachers with strategies for addressing LD-specific needs, particularly for moderate cases that may fall into a pedagogical "gray area." Classroom dynamics further complicate these efforts, as educators face difficulties in selecting activities that engage students with LD while ensuring alignment with broader learning objectives. Even when effective methods are identified, rigid teaching practices and time constraints often hinder the adaptation of strategies to suit individual student levels, risking the marginalization of students with severe LD who require intensive support. School principals, meanwhile, grapple with systemic challenges such as resource allocation and integrating LD students into regular classes, which are hampered by overcrowded classrooms and insufficient co-teaching support. Parental involvement remains inconsistent, with communication gaps and cultural barriers limiting collaboration between schools and families. Additionally, the role of an assistant student is often underutilized due to inadequate training, leaving teachers overburdened in managing the diverse needs of their classrooms.

Beyond educational barriers, the sociocultural implications of students with LD classification present distinct challenges for families and communities. A persistent issue is the stigma associated with labeling, which can lead to family denial or shame, particularly in cases of severe LD, while students may exhibit unhandy behavior. Some parents resist formal diagnoses due to fear of social judgment, delaying critical interventions and perpetuating cycles of family frustration or abuse. Efforts to foster communication between families of LD students are often undermined by societal misconceptions, leaving caregivers isolated and unsupported. Schools also face difficulties in reducing bullying of LD students, as peers' lack of awareness about learning differences fosters exclusionary behaviors. Sociocultural biases further complicate efforts to promote social integration, with communities often unprepared to accept LD-related behaviors, such as impulsivity or slower cognitive processing. Behavioral challenges linked to LD, such as frustration or low self-esteem, are frequently misunderstood, leading to punitive responses rather than supportive interventions. Parents of children with severe LD report feeling overwhelmed when navigating specialized programs, citing a lack of guidance and systemic support. Meanwhile, initiatives to enhance self-concept among LD students are hindered by negative labeling and repeated academic setbacks, which reinforce feelings of inadequacy. Culturally ingrained biases in LD identification and

intervention further exacerbate disparities, particularly in diverse communities where perceptions of disability vary widely.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study revealed nuanced differences in how teachers and school principals perceive the implementation of a tiered classification system for students with LD, particularly across educational and socio-cultural dimensions. These differences likely reflect the distinct professional roles and contextual priorities of each stakeholder group, as well as broader systemic challenges in addressing LD.

Both teachers and principals prioritize the severe classification level as most impactful on educational outcomes, aligning with existing literature that underscores the urgency of addressing pronounced learning challenges to mitigate academic disparities (Weiss et al., 2018). This consensus likely stems from the visibility of severe LD in classroom settings, where such students require intensive, tailored interventions to meet learning objectives. However, discrepancies emerge in perceptions of moderate and mild classifications. Teachers assign the lowest priority to moderate LD, potentially reflecting practical challenges in identifying and addressing these cases within heterogeneous classrooms. Moderate LD often exists in a pedagogical "gray area," where students may not qualify for specialized resources yet still struggle to meet academic benchmarks—a phenomenon documented in studies highlighting resource allocation gaps (Fletcher et al., 2018; Alfonso & Flanagan, 2018). In contrast, principals rank mild LD lower, possibly due to their institutional focus on optimizing resource distribution across severity levels. This divergence mirrors findings by Farris et al. (2020), who noted that administrators prioritize systemic efficiency, whereas teachers emphasize classroom-level feasibility.

Teachers consistently emphasize the socio-cultural implications of severe LD, likely driven by concerns about stigma, social exclusion, and the need for advocacy to protect vulnerable students. This aligns with research demonstrating that educators play a frontline role in mitigating marginalization (Dell'Anna et al., 2022). Principals, however, assign the highest socio-cultural significance to moderate LD, a finding that may reflect their broader responsibility to balance equity with community expectations. Moderate LD classifications often involve students who are perceived as capable of integration but face subtle barriers to social participation, necessitating nuanced policy adjustments—a challenge highlighted in studies of inclusive education frameworks (Krämer et al., 2021). Principals' slightly stronger overall endorsement of the socio-cultural dimension may also stem from their role as mediators between school practices and societal norms, where classification systems serve as tools for fostering community engagement and reducing stigma at an institutional level.

The marginally higher overall endorsement of the classification system by principals compared to teachers underscores a tension between systemic and classroom-level priorities. While both groups recognize the utility of tiered classifications, principals' favorable perception may reflect their strategic orientation toward long-term institutional goals, such as data-driven decision-making and compliance with equity policies (Al-Ghamdi, 2020). Conversely, teachers' slightly lower overall agreement could signal pragmatic reservations about the implementation burdens of such systems, including added administrative tasks or the risk of oversimplifying student needs—a concern echoed in critiques of standardized categorization (Harris, 2020).

These findings resonate with, yet subtly diverge from, prior research. For instance, while Smith et al. (2018) found unanimous stakeholder emphasis on severe LD, their study did not explore socio-cultural dimensions in depth, leaving a gap this study addresses. Similarly, Perez (2022) and Alsarayreh et al. (2024) focus on resource allocation that aligns with principals' systemic priorities but overlooks teachers' socio-cultural advocacy roles. The current results thus extend the literature by

illustrating how professional roles shape perceptions of LD classification across multiple domains. However, discrepancies with studies like Taylor et al. (2017), which reported stronger teacher support for moderate LD in inclusive settings, suggest contextual factors—such as variations in training, resource availability, or cultural attitudes toward disability—may mediate these perceptions.

The discussion of these results reveals a complex landscape of perspectives regarding the challenges faced by teachers and school principals in addressing the needs of students with LD through a classification system. The interview responses underscore a duality in opinions that reflects both the potential benefits and drawbacks of categorizing students into mild, moderate, and severe levels.

On one hand, according to the parents' interviews, their perceptions and views differed regarding the classification of students with LD in schools between those who supported and those who opposed the idea. Some respondents highlighted the advantages of classification by emphasizing its role in recognizing objective realities and accommodating individual differences. Supporters argued that a well-defined classification system serves as an early indicator for parents to plan their children's educational futures, facilitates tailored instructional strategies, and helps reduce negative behaviors such as bullying. This view is consistent with previous studies that suggest early identification and tailored interventions can lead to improved academic and behavioral outcomes by enabling educators to allocate resources more effectively and design appropriate remedial programs.

Conversely, other participants expressed significant concerns about the implications of such classification. Critics cautioned that labeling students might inadvertently lower their educational ambitions, foster feelings of inadequacy, and potentially isolate them from their mainstream peers. These concerns align with existing literature that warns of the risk of stigmatization and reduced expectations, which may, in turn, impede social integration and overall academic progress. The potential for classification to reinforce negative self-perceptions and create barriers to equal educational opportunities has been noted in earlier research, suggesting that the process must be approached with careful consideration of its long-term impact.

Furthermore, the mixed responses regarding the benefits of classification across educational, familial, and social domains indicate that the issue is far from straightforward. While some educators and administrators view classification as a means to create more realistic expectations and establish targeted support systems, others worry that it may exacerbate existing challenges, such as increased isolation and diminished self-esteem among students. This divergence in viewpoints reflects broader debates in the field, where the balance between the benefits of individualized instruction and the risk of social segregation remains a contentious issue.

Overall, these findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on the implementation of classification systems for students with LD by highlighting that both the perceived advantages and potential drawbacks must be carefully weighed. The insights from this study suggest that while a structured classification system has the potential to enhance educational planning and targeted interventions, it also necessitates the development of complementary strategies to mitigate adverse social and behavioral consequences. Future research should further explore these dynamics, aiming to identify the best practices that support not only the academic advancement of students with LD but also their holistic socio-emotional development.

6. Conclusion

The study highlights the dual-edged effects of LD classification systems, which provide structured support but also risk perpetuating stigma and inequity. By aligning stakeholder roles with context-sensitive policies, schools can harness the educational benefits of classification while fostering

inclusive environments that prioritize both academic and socio-emotional growth. Future research must bridge gaps between systemic efficiency, classroom realities, and cultural dynamics to advance equitable practices for students with LD.

7. Suggestion

Professional Development:

To enhance support for students with moderate LD, targeted teacher training should be implemented, addressing challenges often overlooked due to resource constraints or diagnostic uncertainty. Additionally, school principals should be equipped with strategies to balance systemic efficiency, such as data-driven resource allocation, with socio-cultural equity, including reducing stigma associated with LD classifications. Providing specialized training courses for parents on identifying their children's LD.

Parent-School Collaboration:

Strengthening communication between parents and educators is essential for aligning perceptions of the benefits of classification, such as early intervention, with potential risks, including social isolation. Additionally, parent workshops should be established to clarify the purpose of classification systems and address concerns regarding possible lowered expectations for students.

Resource Allocation:

Adequate resources must be allocated to support students with moderate LD who often fall into pedagogical "gray areas," ensuring they receive appropriate interventions without requiring severe classifications. Investments in co-teaching models and specialized staff can also alleviate the burden on teachers managing classrooms with diverse LD levels.

Holistic Support Systems:

Classification systems should be complemented with socio-emotional programs designed to enhance students' self-esteem and foster peer integration. Furthermore, continuous monitoring of the long-term outcomes of students classified as such is necessary to assess the impact of these classifications on academic performance and social well-being.

Future Directions

Investigate how cultural attitudes, school size, or regional policies shape stakeholder perceptions of LD classification. For example, how do collectivist vs. individualist cultural norms influence parental acceptance of labeling?. Track the academic and social trajectories of students classified into mild, moderate, and severe tiers to evaluate the efficacy and equity of such systems. Explore hybrid models that combine tiered classification with universal learning design (UDL) to reduce reliance on labels while maintaining personalized support. Develop decision-making frameworks that incorporate input from teachers, principals, and parents to design classification systems that balance classroom pragmatism, institutional goals, and familial concerns. Compare LD classification practices and outcomes across educational systems (e.g., inclusive vs. segregated settings) to identify best practices for mitigating stigma and optimizing resource use. Assess the role of AI-driven diagnostic tools in reducing subjectivity in LD classification and improving early intervention accuracy.

Implications

The divergence between teachers, principals, and parents underscores the need for collaborative frameworks that integrate classroom realities with systemic goals. For instance, professional development programs could bridge gaps by training teachers to address moderate LD effectively while empowering principals to advocate for socio-cultural integration policies. Future research should investigate how contextual variables, such as school size or community

demographics, further impact these perceptions, ensuring that classification systems remain adaptable and equitable. Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of multi-stakeholder dialogue in developing LD interventions that are both pedagogically robust and socially responsive.

Declarations

Author Contributions. M.A.: Literature review and supervising the group. A.B.: conceptualization, methodology, and writing manuscript preparation. R.A.: data analysis, references writing, and review writing. M.H.: Discussion, suggestions, and final revision. All authors have read and approved the final version of the article.

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