



**Perceptions of Parents And Teachers on Students With Learning Disabilities (SLD) In  
Malaysia**

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**Abstract**

This paper reports on a survey of perception parents and teachers on student with learning disabilities (SLD) in Malaysia. The participants for this study consisted of 336 parents of SLD and 248 teachers who teach SLD in Selangor. The results showed that parents and teachers agreed that students of SLD had still low self-esteem and they did not have accurate and enough information for their educational progress. The paper concludes that further program to assist the special education program in Malaysia is required to address these shortcomings, and that, the use of ICT may be the solution for the better treatment of SLD in Malaysia. Collaboration among parents, teachers, and the government is needed to develop this program to improve special education in Malaysia.

**Keyword:** Students with Learning Disabilities (SLD),  
Parents' Perception, Teachers' Perception

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**INTRODUCTION**

Students with Learning Disabilities (SLD) is defined as a student who has been identified and confirmed by a physician as a child with a neurological problem, which is related to the way the brain receives, processes, analyzes and stores information. They also have confusion in one or more of the psychological processes involving comprehension, use of oral or written language. Special Education Division (2015) also categorizes SLD as children with Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Slow Learner, Autism, Down Syndrome and Mild Mental Retardation. Based on the above statement, it is clear that SLD has one or a variety of disabilities but can still be taught and benefit from the national education system.

In Malaysia, SLD is placed in the Integration Special Education Program or formerly known as the Merger Special Education Program. The Integrated Special Education Program (PPKI) is a special education program specifically for SLD to study in special education classes in an integrated manner in government schools or government-aided schools (Special Education Division 2015). Since the establishment of this program, the enrollment of SLD who receive education has increased year by year.

Although SLD have access to education throughout the country, the life of SLD is often talked about because they are believed to go through a life that is not in line with typical students. Such a thing can be evidenced by the results of studies conducted by Lee and Lai (2016), Lichtinger and Kaplan (2015), Mohd Hanafi, Hasnah and Rohaizat (2014). They are often associated with deficiencies in academic, social and behavioural. Furthermore, they also experience low self-concept (Pestana 2015), poverty problems (Brucker, Mitra, Chaitoo, & Mauro, 2015), discrimination problems (Hargreaves and Walker 2014) and the most critical problems making their educational and career choice decisions (Trainor, Smith, & Kim 2012; Ocsh and Roessler 2004; Rojeswki 2002).

Cheong and Sharifah (2013) began to study the best planning for SLD. The study conducted interviews with 24 individuals consisting of NGOs, SLD employees, SLD employers, SLD parents, and SLD teachers. The results of the interviews found that the Malaysian government needs to establish a career planning support system for SLD which covers aspects of Job Coach, self-advocacy skills, career guidance and career assessment, career training, career placement and sheltered workshops to SLD. Cheong and Sharifah also stressed that the government should increase the number of vocational education centres because they thought that the academic field was not relevant to the needs of SLD.

Furthermore, their findings also found that high discrimination among employers also made it difficult for teachers to find career placements for SLD. In addition, SLD also have problems adjusting to their routines and work climate. Special education teachers also suggested that this program involve collaboration between students, parents, teachers, school administrators and employers to ensure the success of the special education student transition program. In this regard, the involvement and cooperation from various parties play an important role in the education and career of SLD.

A study conducted by Zhang and Benz (2006) found that special education students` self -determination skills can be acquired through the guidance of parents and teachers. They found that parents need to allow children to make choices for their daily activities, train children to make choices according to priorities, give children opportunities to make positive and negative decisions in their lives and always respond to the impact of decisions that has been made by children. In addition, parents should also provide activities at home that help children to become leaders. It is supported by Cobb and Alwell (2009) who stated that one of the components needed by the SLD students is the involvement of teachers and parents in the education process.

Teachers also need to train students to be open in accepting decisions that are different from their wishes. Next, teachers also need to include a component of self -determination in the school curriculum to train them to be ready to face the realities of life later and even teachers need to train students to make their life plans as early as possible. The findings confirm the initial findings of Zhang, Wehmeyer, and Chen (2005) who said that parents and teachers need

to know their self-determination activities to create an atmosphere of self-determination learning among special education students.

In the classroom, teachers need to emphasize the abilities and strengths of SLD as opposed to their disabilities. Teachers also need to constantly emphasize the problem-solving process in the SLD curriculum and lastly, teachers need to build relationships with parents and the community to maintain SLD self-determination skills. Denney and Daviso also believe that if this activity is carried out against SLD then there will be more opportunities for them to succeed in the future either in education or career.

Carter, Trainor, Cakiroglu, Swedeen, & Owen (2013) conducted a study to identify the activities required for self-determination skills among SLD based on the perceptions of SLD parents. The study involved 68 parents with SLD children aged between 19 to 21 years. The findings of the study show that parents pay attention to 7 activities, namely (i) making choices; (ii) decision making; (iii) setting goals; (iv) problem solving; (v) self-advocacy; (vi) self-awareness; and (vii) self-knowledge.

The main components that lead to the improvement of the quality of SLD education were also identified through a survey of parents and teachers of SLD. This is because the study of Lim, Girl and Quah (2000) stated that the perceptual agreement between parents and teachers of SLD in designing SLD education modules is important because they are the group who have in-depth knowledge of the needs and capabilities of SLD in acquiring learning. This was also confirmed by Martin, Morehart, Lauzon, and Daviso (2013) when their study found that among the causes of failure of existing career education modules was due to lack of emphasis on the perceptions of SLD parents compared to SLD teachers. Indirectly, this study was able to fill in the gaps in previous studies.

In addition, Hairunnaja (2010) argues that the selection process becomes difficult as a result of having to face the conflict between the wishes of parents with their wishes. After that, a set of questionnaires to identify the main causes of difficulties SLD in making decisions on the choice of education field was distributed to 336 parents with children SLD and 248 teachers who teach SLD. Furthermore, the views of SLD parents and SLD teachers on the components that need to be present in improving the quality of SLD education are also taken into account in this study. Parents of SLD and teachers of SLD were involved in this study because they knew more about the needs and interests of SLD. Hanline (1993), reported that there was no evidence that special need students were not accepted by their peers as feared by parents. A positive parental attitude towards the application of special education will be a supportive thing for the optimization of children's growth and development.

Vocational education for SLD in Malaysia began with the establishment of the Basic Benevolent Society of the State in 1990. Among the aims are to improve self-reliance skills, provide equal opportunities, promote a culture of mutual assistance and create a compassionate culture in this country (Ismail 2003). Thus, a basic implementation that involves collaboration from the community, voluntary organizations, government and private sectors is highly emphasized to enable them to enjoy the welfare of life.

The government's seriousness in defending the fate of SLD was further proven when the kingdom signed the Proclamation of Full Participation and Equal Opportunities for OKU in Asia and the Pacific on 16 May 1994. This proclamation is a guarantee from the Malaysian kingdom in generalizing the rights and opportunities of SLD in society (Lau, Samsuri, & Chew

2011) instead, the National Advisory and Negotiation Council for SLD was established to frame a Plan of Action that focuses on 12 areas, namely information gathering, public awareness, legislation, ease of access and communication, education, training and work, prevention of disability recovery, facilities, voluntary organizations and overseas cooperation (Aina, 2010).

To realize this, the Department of Labor under the Ministry of Human Resources has established the Office for Promoting Payrolls for Disabled Persons in the private sector and established the OKU Code of Practice which serves as a guideline for the community in placing SLD to work in the private sector. *Pekeliling Perkhidmatan* Bill 10 of 1998 was also established to allocate at least 1% of job opportunities to this group in the public sector (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat 2010).

Furthermore, SLD's opportunity to enjoy a better life should not be contested with the establishment of the 2008 Underprivileged Persons Deed. This deed is an acknowledgement of SLD's rights in Malaysia, especially in the areas of recovery, education and training (Ariffin, 2006). Based on the deed, various services are provided by the kingdom through its agencies in increasing their economic stage in the future.

The government also started to establish a Protected Power Workshop specifically to provide jobs for SLD who did not find jobs in the open market such as sewing, public service, bakeries, nurseries, snacks, snacks and processing grilled fish sauce and chilli sauce. This workshop is provided to SLD aged between 18 to 45 years. In addition, the government also provides organizing grants and annual grants to voluntary organizations or NGO bodies to provide physical facilities, educational activities and training to this group (Quek, 2011).

The establishment of a Special Education Section under the Malaysian Ministry of Education is also one of the kingdom's initiatives in providing educational opportunities to SLD. Now, as many as 28 preschools, 28 special education schools, 5 special education secondary schools, 1390 integrated education program low schools and 734 integrated education program secondary schools are provided for vision, hearing and SLD (Section for Special Education 2015). Vocational education is an important aspect for SLD (Melati, Norfaezah and Norsafatul 2015). This interest becomes clearer, especially in the world of SLD education if the enrolment of SLD increases from year to year. SLD's vocational education program in Malaysia has been refined to provide a clear picture of the development of their education and work fields.

Therefore, in this study, the researchers aim to describe the perceptions of parents and teachers about the implementation of SLD in the Malaysian context. This study is also expected to provide information for the government to review and reconstruct the vocational education for SLD by stated in the regulations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a survey design. Survey is used to describe a social phenomenon by assessing the thoughts, opinions, and feelings of the participants. The current survey employed the questionnaire developed by Williams (2013) to describe the perceptions of parents and teachers on SDL.

The sample size formula of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used to determine the total number of SLD's parents and SLD's teachers. Out of 3218 SLD's parents and 697 SLD's

teachers in the district of Selangor, 346 SLD's parents and 248 SLD's teachers comprised the sample of the study, respectively. Stratified random sampling was conducted to determine the elements of the sample (participants). The result of the sampling is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Size of Study Participants by The District in Selangor

No.	Region	Parents	Teacher
1.	Gombak	47	31
2.	Hulu Langat	60	37
3.	Hulu Selangor	20	20
4.	Klang	46	30
5.	Kuala Langat	15	15
6.	Kuala Selangor	15	21
7.	Petaling Perdana	26	36
8.	Petaling Utama	59	19
9.	Sabak Bernam	30	22
10.	Sepang	18	17
<b>Total</b>		<b>336</b>	<b>248</b>

Furthermore, the details of the components of the questionnaire in improving the quality of SLD education based on the perceptions of parents and teachers of SLD are explained in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The Main Components of the Questionnaire

Part	Item-item	No. Item	Items
<i>Part I:</i>			
Demography of parents and teachers	Gender	1	2
	Age	2	4
	Degree of Education	3	5
	Income	4	4
	Child/Student Characteristics	5	5
	Functional Level of Child/Student	6	3
	Completed by	7	2
<i>Part II:</i>			

Career Planning	Career Expectations	1-10	10
<i>Part III:</i>			
Information Communication Technology	Learning using ICT	1-10	10
<i>Part IV:</i>			
	Autonomy	1-4	4
	Competences	5-8	4
Sincerity	Relationships	9-13	5
<b>Total</b>			<b>58</b>

Based on table 2, the demography was used to show the characteristics of the parents and the teachers. Career planning was used to know their perspective about career planning for the SLD students. Then, the information communication technology was used to measure their ability in using recent technology such as website and others. Lastly, sincerity was used to know the bond among parents and their children and the bond among teachers and their students.

Furthermore, in this case the researcher uses a closed questionnaire, which is a questionnaire whose answers have been provided so that the respondents just have to choose. The purpose of collecting data using this questionnaire is to obtain data on the interest in consuming cassava as an alternative food to replace rice. The alternative questions chosen were using a modified Likert Scale, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. The Likert scale was used to measure attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of a person or group of people about social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The answers to each instrument item using a Likert scale have a gradation from very high to very low, in the form of: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The score of each answer given by the respondent to each statement is as follows:

**Table 3.** Score for Questionnaire's Answers

Statements	Score
Very agree	5
Agree	4
Netral	3
Disagree	2
Very Disagree	1

By adding up all the answers of each respondent, then consulting with a predetermined interest interval class. Expected mean and standard deviation are used to compare with the calculated mean and calculated standard deviation to find out. Determination of interpretation results is based on the following provisions: if the mean value is <2.5, it can be said that the perception of parents and teachers is very low. If the mean value obtained is 2.5 or <3.5 then it

is interpreted as low. If the average obtained is  $>3.5$  to  $<4.5$ , it is concluded that the value is high. And if the mean value is  $> 4.5$ , then it is interpreted as very high (Riduwan, 2009).

## RESULT

### Demographics of Parents and Teachers of Students with Learning Disabilities (SLD)

This part described demographics information of parents and teachers of SLD. This part uses frequency and percentage analysis to obtain information on gender, age, approval, income, child/ student category and child/ student functional level.

**Table 4.** Demographics of Parents and Teachers of SLD

No.	Item		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender of Parents	Male	156	25.4
		Female	210	34.2
	Gender of Teachers	Male	77	12.5
		Female	171	27.8
2.	Age of Parents	21-30	57	9.28
		31-40	171	27.8
		41-50	79	12.8
		50 and above	59	9.6
	Age of Teacher	21-30	72	11.7
		31-40	98	15.9
		41-50	44	7.2
		50 and above	34	5.5
3.	Education of parents	Diploma	10	1.6
		Degree	203	33.0
		Master's	88	14.3
		Others	65	10.5
	Education of teachers	Diploma	97	15.7
		Degree	111	18.0
		Master's	8	1.3
		Others	32	5.2
4.	Income of Parents	RM 1000 and below	34	5.5
		RM 1001- RM 3000	62	10.0
		RM 3001-RM 5000	173	28.1
		RM 5001 and above	97	15.7

	Income of Teachers	RM 1001- RM 3000	70	11.4
		RM 3001-RM 5000	178	28.9
5.	Children Category	Autisme	14	2.2
		Sindrom Down	35	5.7
		ADHD	93	15.1
		Mild Mental Retardation	67	10.9
		Slow Development	157	25.5
	Students Category	Autisme	6	0.9
		Sindrom Down	13	2.1
		ADHD	56	9.1
		Mild Mental Retardation	29	4.72
		Slow Development	144	23.4

n=584

As displayed in Table 3, most of the respondents are females (381 or 62%) and 31 to 40 years old (269 or 43.7%), had a degree (314 or 51%), and have children/students who are slow learners (301 or 48.9%).

### Perceptions of Parents and Teachers on the Causes of Problems in Choosing Vocational Education for SLD

Next, a survey was conducted on 336 parents and 248 SLD teachers using Williams (2013) questionnaire. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Causes of Vocational Education Field Selection Problems for SLD

Problem	SD	Mean	Interpretation
Students are less motivated	0.73	4.00	High
Students have a hard time making decisions	0.39	4.18	High
Students have misconceptions about the field of education	1.16	3.63	High
Students have no skills in the process of choosing a field of education	0.70	4.20	High
Students have low self-esteem	0.43	4.79	Very High
Students lack information about alternative areas of education	0.51	4.68	Very High
Students do not know the source for obtaining information	0.64	4.15	High
Students do not know how to use information accurately	0.82	4.10	High
Students stereotype a field of education	0.91	4.15	High
Students are unable to use information consistently due to	0.75	4.62	Very High

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conflicting opinions of family and friends

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**Total Mean**

**0.71**

**4.25**

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n= 584

Based on Table 4, there are three problems that are at a very high level, namely SLD has low self-understanding (M = 4.79, SP = 0.43), lack of information about alternative education (M = 4.68, SP = 0.51) and unable to use information consistently due to conflicting opinions of family and friends (M = 4.62, SP = 0.75) compared to 7 other problems, i.e. no skills in the education field selection process (Mean = 4.20, SP = 0.70), difficult to decision making (Mean = 4.18, SP = 0.39), do not know the source to obtain information (Mean = 4.15, SP = 0.64), stereotypes of a field of education (Mean = 4.15, SP = 0.91), do not know how to use information accurately ( Mean = 4.10, SP = 0.82), lacked motivation (Mean = 4.00, SP = 0.73) and had misconceptions about the field of education (Mean = 3.63, SP = 1.16). Overall, the problem of choosing the field of vocational education among SLD is at a very high level (Mean = 4.25, SP = 0.71).

## DISCUSSION

The question in this study was constructed to obtain information on perceptions of parents and teachers related to SLD. The findings of the study found that there are three main causes of the problem of choosing the field of vocational education SLD, namely (1) low self-esteem; (2) lack of information on alternative areas of education; and (3) unable to use information consistently due to conflicting opinions from family and friends. Based on the results of the data analysis above, the attitudes of parents and teachers towards special education. The negative attitude of parents and teachers can be seen from the majority of high and very high subjects' answers to the questionnaire given.

Low self-esteem or inferiority or inferiority or condescension, is the feeling that someone is inferior to others in one way or another. Such feelings can arise as a result of something real or the result of his imagination. Parents and teachers view that low self-esteem is associated with children with learning disabilities due to academic challenges, being labelled as slow learners and experiencing rejection from their peers. Self-esteem can be defined as respecting one's self-worth.

The legal framework for such education varies by region and dictates any obligation to conform to mainstream standardized exams and grades. Alternative pedagogical approaches may include different structures, such as in open classrooms, different teacher-student relationships, as in Quaker and free schools, and/or different curricula and teaching methods, as in Waldorf and Montessori schools. Synonyms for "alternative" in this context include "non-traditional," "non-conventional" and "non-standard". Alternative educators use terms such as "native", "holistic" and "progressive".

Barriers experienced by SLD students in conversation with them and their family or friends are noise, distraction, lack of interest, and cultural and linguistic differences. Make sure SLD students have focus, use a common language, go to a quiet or peaceful place for better communication, and interest in conversation is there. Other points also show high yields. First, parents and teachers agree that students are less motivated in learning. Motivation is important to them. These students must be motivated so that they can be like other children and can get

along with their friends. Parents should not think their child can't, it will be an obstacle for the child's development.

Research findings find that there is a need to include components of career planning, ICT and self-determination skills in the development of special education programmes. Data in the Exploration Phase were obtained from the involvement of SLD, SLD` parents and SLD`s teachers. In addition, parents agree that SLD also have difficulty in setting goals in education. Most of them also still have the wrong perception related to educational programs. In addition, they are also faced with the inability to choose the educational program they want. This is because SLD are still not able to find information properly. And most of the information they know is still inaccurate. Therefore, parents and teachers need to pay attention to this so that SLD can get better access to education. This issue also shows that it is very important to prepare a special program to assist these SLD in developing their education.

## CONCLUSION

This study uses a questionnaire to identify the perceptions of parents and teachers of special education programs in Malaysia. The data in this study were obtained from the involvement parents and teachers of SLD. In closing participants, see special education as a challenge in the Malaysian context. According to them, the current system does not encourage better special education. Students still lack motivation in education. They also do not know enough information about educational programs in their lives. Placing SLD in the mainstream system without proper support means that special education needs to be improved. Inadequate resources, non-specialized school facilities, lack of knowledge and skills of teachers and the workload of teachers are in the spotlight. Students must be supported to succeed and reach their highest potential without limiting their abilities. Therefore, it is necessary to review the policy on special education.

Parents also showed a negative perception of the implementation of special education. This is shown through the statement that their child still has low self-esteem. Parents are still worried that there are still many shortcomings in this special education. They argue that students still need more guidance related to a better level of education them. Collaboration between parents, teachers and government is needed in providing special education services in Malaysia to realize a better form of education. This collaboration is expected to improve the quality of services and help students to be more confident and able to achieve the highest possible education. So that SLD can have a better future in Malaysia.

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