



Voices from the Field: Psychologists' and Teachers' Views on Peer Tutoring for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Special Education

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive study explored the perceptions of psychologists and special education teachers regarding the use of peer tutoring interventions to support students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in special education schools across Punjab, Pakistan. The study aimed to identify effective peer tutoring strategies and examine whether opinions varied by demographic characteristics such as gender, qualification, experience, and work area. Using a self-developed and validated questionnaire (Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$), data were collected from 136 respondents selected through random sampling. Descriptive and inferential statistics (t-tests and ANOVA) were employed for analysis using SPSS 27. Results indicated strong agreement among respondents that peer tutoring can effectively enhance learning, motivation, and emotional resilience in students with SLD. Teachers endorsed strategies such as play-based learning, storytelling, co-curricular activities, and self-reflection opportunities as key components of peer tutoring. No significant differences were found by gender, experience or designation. The study highlights peer tutoring as a promising, low-cost, and inclusive strategy to strengthen academic and social development among students with SLD. Recommendations include professional training for teachers in peer-assisted learning methods and policy-level integration of peer tutoring within special education curricula.



Introduction

Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) experience persistent challenges in reading, writing, and mathematics despite having average intelligence and adequate educational opportunities (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). These difficulties often hinder their academic achievement, reduce motivation, and negatively affect self-esteem and overall

educational success. Early identification and effective instructional interventions are therefore essential to improve learning outcomes and retention among learners with SLD.

Among various instructional strategies, peer tutoring has emerged as a promising and cost-effective approach, particularly in educational settings with limited special education resources (Guo & Keles, 2024). Peer tutoring involves structured interactions in which students support their peers in mastering academic content, either through reciprocal or fixed tutor–tutee roles. Research indicates that peer tutoring can enhance academic outcomes when instruction is individualized, scaffolded, and includes repeated practice opportunities (Spencer et al., 2022). Peer tutoring significantly improved students’ academic performance and self-efficacy in secondary-level biology compared with experiential instructional strategies (Kareem et al., 2025).

Peer tutoring has also shown benefits for students with additional learning or behavioral challenges. For instance, systematic reviews have demonstrated that peer tutoring interventions are effective in improving both academic and behavioral outcomes among students with or at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders (Spencer et al., 2022).

Reading fluency and accuracy are among the domains most impaired in students with SLD, particularly those with dyslexia. Recent experimental studies using dyadic or triadic peer reading formats have reported significant gains in reading fluency and accuracy among early-grade students, especially those with lower baseline reading skills (Zhang et al., 2022). Peer tutoring can lead to substantial mathematics improvements (Batool et al., 2021). Previous studies have consistently highlighted the positive impact of peer tutoring on students’ academic achievement, particularly in mathematics. Schloss et al. (2007) described peer tutoring as an effective instructional strategy in which students take on the role of teaching agents for their peers, thereby reinforcing their own understanding. Fuchs et al. (2001) found that peer tutoring significantly accelerates students’ mathematical achievement, while Roscoe and Chi (2007) demonstrated that tutors enhance their own learning by integrating new knowledge with prior understanding.

For younger learners, peer tutoring has proven especially beneficial in urban and low socioeconomic contexts, improving both academic and social outcomes (Rohrbeck et al., 2003; Topping, 2008). Empirical studies further confirm its effectiveness across subjects. Nawaz and Rehman (2017) found that secondary school students exposed to peer tutoring outperformed those taught through traditional methods, with female students showing greater improvement. Students in peer tutoring groups achieved higher test scores than those receiving conventional instruction, independent of gender differences (Raheem et al., 2017).

Oloo (2016) revealed that peer tutoring significantly improved students’ mathematical abilities and motivation, while Costantini (2015) emphasized its role in strengthening both academic and behavioral outcomes. Bowman-Perrott et al. (2013) and Topping et al. (2011) concluded that peer tutoring is particularly advantageous for students with lower socioeconomic status and for slow learners, with girls often benefiting more than boys. Peer tutoring not only improved academic performance but also enhanced social intelligence and confidence (Farooq et al., 2022).

However, there remains a lack of research examining peer tutoring interventions specifically for students with SLD in special education settings. Few studies have evaluated the effects of peer tutoring on retention or explored gender-based differences in learning outcomes. Addressing these gaps is crucial for informing inclusive education practices and improving academic success among students with SLD in Pakistan. Several studies have examined the role of peer tutoring within general education contexts. Despite these findings, research addressing the use of peer tutoring

among students with SLD in Pakistan remains scarce. This gap highlights the need for studies that both validate culturally relevant screening tools for SLD and assess the potential of peer tutoring as an instructional intervention in special education settings. This study explored the perceptions of psychologists and special education teachers regarding the use of peer tutoring interventions to support students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in special education schools across Punjab, Pakistan.

Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical background of peer tutoring draw primarily from Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory, which emphasizes learning through social interaction within the zone of proximal development, and Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, which highlights observational learning and modeling. Cognitive load theory (Sweller, 2011) also supports peer tutoring by suggesting that collaborative scaffolding can reduce the cognitive demands faced by learners with SLD. For students with SLD, peer tutoring provides structured, repetitive practice, immediate feedback, and a supportive learning environment — elements aligned with evidence-based practices in special education (Cook et al., 2015).

Method

Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative research. The study was primarily descriptive. Design of research was survey design. The goal of descriptive research is to describe the characteristics of the population or subject being studied.

Sample

All teachers (teaching students with SLD) and psychologists employed in Govt. special education centers and schools of Punjab were the population of study. The researcher found that there are 174 institutes, and 209 teachers in these institutes were teaching the student with SLD. Sample of study was selected using simple random sampling. Sample of the present study features 136 special education teachers and psychologists who are teaching children with SLD in special education schools.

Instrument

The researcher developed a questionnaire containing 20 items. The questionnaire has two parts; one regarding the demographics of respondents and the second part consists of four sections with five-point Likert rating scale which are described as; peer tutoring interventions to support students with specific learning disabilities in schools. The questionnaire was examined by the expert. The expert provided valuable recommendations. The suggestions were implemented. Validation of the instruments constructed and content validity by an expert. After tool validation, data were obtained using the tool. Prior to the completion of the bigger study, pilot studies are undertaken as smaller versions of the larger research. A pilot study was conducted to assess the reliability and clarity of the survey instrument. The pilot testing involved 50 respondents and consisted of 20 items designed to measure perceptions related to supporting students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) through peer tutoring. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .88, indicating a high level of internal consistency and suggesting that the instrument was reliable for use in the main study. During instrument validation, the durability of the instrument was validated. SPSS 27

was utilized to determine Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficients for the questionnaire designed to screen out reliability of questions was ($N=136$, $N(Items)=20$, $\alpha=.866$). The instrument used a 2 point-Likert scale (1= no & 2= yes) and 5 point-Likert scale that ranges from 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= undecided, 4= agree, 5=strongly agree.

Procedure

The researcher tried to gather data using a quantitative (questionnaire) survey. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to respondents in groups and individually. The data was collected physically and where accessibility was not possible, Google form was used to collect data. With authorization from the school officials, the online questionnaire of the survey questionnaire was produced, and the link was distributed to the participants. The responses were recorded accordingly.

Data Analysis

Using SPSS, the collected data were tabulated and assessed. The outcomes were obtained using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies and percentages were computed to demonstrate the demographic items and questions, and the independent sample t-test and one-way analysis of variance were applied in order to highlight the differences in instructors' opinions based on the demographic data.

Results

Table 1: Demographic Variables of Participants

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	53	39
	Female	83	61
Age of Respondents	21-30 Y	61	44.9
	31-40 Y	46	33.8
	41-50 Y	27	19.9
	51-60 Y	2	1.5
Designation	Psychologist	72	52.9
	Special Education Teachers	64	47.1
Profession Qualification	Bachelors	22	16.2
	Master	57	41.9
	M.Phil.	52	38.2
	PHD	5	3.7
Area of Posting	Rural	49	36
	Urban	87	64
Division of School	Lahore	16	11.8
	Multan	15	11
	Rawalpindi	4	2.9
	Sargodha	8	5.9
	Bahawalpur	12	8.8
	DG Khan	57	41.9
	Faisalabad	8	5.9
	Gujranwala	5	3.7
	Sahiwal	11	8.1
		332	

Experience	1-5 Y	53	39
	6-10 Y	53	39
	11-15 Y	13	9.6
	>15 Y	17	12.5
		136	100

Table 2: Frequency distribution for peer tutoring interventions to support students with Specific Learning Disabilities

Sr#	Items	SA f(%)	A f(%)	UD f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	M	SD
1	Increasing awareness helps the cause.	72(52.90)	52(38.20)	10(7.40)	2(1.50)	0(0)	4.43	.70
2	Play and learn is a good method to make learn more.	45(33.10)	74(54.40)	13(9.60)	3(2.20)	1(.70)	4.17	.75
3	Peer Tutoring can be used to teach students with SLD.	66(48.50)	51(37.50)	18(13.20)	0(0)	1(.70)	4.33	.76
4	Extra-curricular activities should be included in their school timings.	54(39.70)	72(52.90)	8(5.90)	1(.70)	1(.70)	4.30	.68
5	AV aids should be a part of their classrooms.	79(58.10)	46(33.80)	10(7.40)	1(.70)	0(0)	4.50	.67
6	Co-curricular activities promote peer tutoring	57(41.90)	70(51.50)	9(6.60)	0(0)	0(0)	4.35	.60
7	Students with SLD must have opportunities to express themselves through peer tutoring	69(50.70)	55(40.40)	9(6.60)	3(2.20)	0(0)	4.40	.71
8	Parent Teacher meeting helps a lot.	52(38.20)	68(50)	15(11)	1(.70)	0(0)	4.26	.68
9	Encouraging self-reflection gives good academic results.	68(50)	55(40.40)	8(5.90)	0(0)	5(3.70)	4.33	.89
10	Peer Tutoring helps students in schools.	60(44.10)	62(45.60)	11(8.10)	2(1.50)	1(.70)	4.31	.75
11	Students with SLD learn quickly in discussion style.	68(50)	52(38.20)	14(10.30)	0(0)	2(1.50)	4.35	.78
12	Activity method has been fruitful in educating students	58(42.60)	67(49.30)	10(7.40)	1(.70)	0(0)	4.34	.65
13	Socialization Activities via Peer Tutoring help do good in their studies.	69(50.70)	49(36)	11(8.10)	6(4.40)	1(.70)	4.32	.86
14	Setting realistic goals is necessary.	59(43.40)	66(48.50)	11(8.10)	0(0)	0(0)	4.35	.63
15	Relating bookish knowledge with daily life	72(52.90)	48(35.30)	16(11.80)	0(0)	0(0)	4.41	.69

16	Story telling helps students remember their lessons.	58(42.60)	65(47.80)	12(8.80)	1(.70)	0(0)	4.32	.67
17	Make student face educational problem and respond.	73(53.70)	46(33.80)	15(11)	2(1.50)	0(0)	4.40	.74
18	Make students emotionally strong through peer tutoring to learn better.	61(44.90)	59(43.40)	12(8.80)	3(2.20)	1(.70)	4.29	.78
19	Social Support through peer tutoring helps students do well in their studies.	76(55.90)	49(36)	9(6.60)	2(1.50)	0(0)	4.46	.69
20	Secure and healthy environment is mandatory.	65(47.80)	46(33.80)	25(18.40)	0(0)	0(.70)	4.29	.76

Table 2 elaborated the Peer Tutoring Interventions to Help Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in Schools) of the questionnaire. Majority of the respondents (91%) opined that Increasing awareness helps the cause with M (4.43) &SD (.70) and that Play and learn is a good method to make students with SLD learn more(88%) having M (4.17) &SD (.75). This table also elaborates that Drill method can be used to teach students with SLD as respondents (86%) suggested the same, with M (4.33) & SD (.76). According to 93% respondents Extra-curricular activities should be included in their school timings having M (4.30) &SD (.68). Respondents (92%) agreed that AV aids should be a part of their classroomwith M (4.50) &SD (.67). They (93%) were of the opinion that Co-curricular activities should be mandatory having M (4.35) &SD (.60). 91% of them agreed that students with SLD must have opportunities to express themselves with M (4.40) &SD (.71). Most of the respondents (88%) suggested that Parent Teacher meeting helps a lothaving M (4.26) &SD (.68). They (90%) agreed that Encouraging self-reflection of students with SLD gives good academic results with M (4.33) &SD (.89). Respondents (90%) concluded that Peer Tutoring helps students with SLD in schools having M (4.31) &SD (.75). Most of them (88%) agreed that students with SLD learn quickly in discussion style with M (4.35) &SD (.78). They (92%) believed that Activity method has been fruitful in educating students with SLD having M (4.34) &SD (.65).As per 87% respondents, Socialization Activities help students with SLD do well in their studies having M (4.32) &SD (.86). Respondents (92%) agreed that setting realistic goals is necessary with M (4.35) &SD (.63). They (88%) were of the opinion that relating bookish knowledge with daily life can do wonders having M (4.41) &SD (.69). Majority of the respondents (90%) opined that Story telling helps students remember their lessons with M (4.32) &SD (.67) and that Make student face educational problem and respond (88%) having M (4.40) &SD (.74). This table also elaborates that Make students emotionally strong to learn better (88%) suggested the same, with M (4.29) & SD (.78). According to 92% respondents Social Support helps students do well in their studies having M (4.46) &SD (.69). Respondents (82%) agreed that Secure and healthy environment is mandatory with M (4.29) &SD (.76). They (85%) were of the opinion that Religious coping helps students academically having M (4.29) &SD (.82).

Table 3: Independent Sample t-test results for gender differences

Gender	N	M	SD	Df	T	Sig.
Male	53	92.02	6.17	134	.894	.373

Female 83 90.69 9.65

**P > .05 Level of Significance*

Table 3 indicated that the empirical information for male ($N=53$, $M=92.02$, $SD=6.17$) and for female ($N=83$, $M=90.69$, $SD=9.65$) with t-statistics ($t(134) = .894$, $P > .05$) which leads to the decision that there is no significant difference in the opinion of males and females regarding peer tutoring interventions to support students with specific learning disabilities in special education schools.

Table 4: Independent Sample t-test for comparison of perception across designation

Designation	N	M	SD	Df	T	Sig.
Psychologists	72	91.18	9.77	134	.037	.971
Teachers teachers	64	91.23	6.78			

**P > .05 Level of Significance*

Table 4 indicated that the empirical information for psychologists ($N=72$, $M=91.18$, $SD=9.77$) and for special education teachers ($N=64$, $M=91.23$, $SD=6.78$) with t-statistics ($t(134) = .037$, $P > .05$) which shows that there is no significant difference in the opinions of psychologists and special education teachers respondents about peer tutoring interventions to help students with specific learning disabilities in special education schools.

Table 5: Independent Sample t-test for comparison of area wise perceptions

Area of Posting	N	M	SD	Df	T	Sig.
Rural	49	88.71	9.44	134	-2.632	.009
Urban	87	92.61	7.56			

**P < .05 Level of Significance*

Table 5 indicated that the empirical information for rural ($N=49$, $M=88.71$, $SD=9.44$) and for urban ($N=87$, $M=92.61$, $SD=7.56$) with t-statistics ($t(134) = -2.632$, $P < .05$) which leads to the decision that there is a significant difference in the opinion of teachers from rural areas and teachers from urban areas regarding peer tutoring interventions to help students with specific learning disabilities in special education schools.

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA for comparison of perception of across professional experience

Experience	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	124.87	3	41.62	1.14	.335
Within Groups	4819.02	132	36.51		
Total	4943.88	135			

**P > .05 Level of Significance*

Table 6 indicated that the empirical information with one way ANOVA ($F(135) = 1.140$, $P > .05$) which leads to the decision that there is no significant difference in the opinions of teachers from Between Groups and Within Groups regarding peer tutoring interventions to help students with specific learning disabilities in schools.

Table 7: One-Way ANOVA for comparison of perception of across different division

Division	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
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Between Groups	425.15	8	53.14	1.494	.166
Within Groups	4518.73	127	35.58		
Total	4943.88	135			

**P > .05 Level of Significance*

Table 7 indicated that with one way ANOVA ($F(135) = 1.494, P > .05$) which leads to the decision that there is no significant difference in the opinions of teachers from Between Groups and Within Groups regarding peer tutoring interventions to help students with specific learning disabilities in special education schools.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrated that psychologists and special education teachers hold overwhelmingly positive perceptions of peer tutoring as an effective strategy for supporting students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). Respondents agreed that peer tutoring enhances students' engagement, self-confidence, and learning outcomes. These findings are consistent with prior research that highlights the academic and psychosocial benefits of peer-assisted learning approaches (Farooq et al., 2022; Guo & Keles, 2024; Heliyon, 2019; Kareem et al., 2025). Peer tutoring allows students with SLD to learn in a less formal, collaborative environment that encourages repetition, feedback, and social interaction—all elements supported by Vygotsky's social constructivist theory.

The absence of significant gender-based differences suggests that both male and female teachers perceive peer tutoring as equally valuable, aligning with prior studies emphasizing its universal applicability across classroom contexts (Javed et al., 2024). Similarly, the lack of significant difference between psychologists and special education teachers indicates shared recognition of peer tutoring's potential in addressing the cognitive and emotional needs of students with SLD. However, differences across qualifications and areas of posting (rural vs. urban) suggest that contextual and resource-related factors may influence implementation. Urban teachers may have greater access to training, materials, and exposure to innovative pedagogical practices that promote effective peer tutoring (Khan et al., 2024).

These findings reaffirm international evidence that peer tutoring strengthens not only academic competencies but also social skills and emotional regulation among learners with diverse needs. As noted by Guo and Keles (2024), structured peer interaction enhances engagement and builds a supportive classroom community, which is particularly beneficial for students with learning difficulties. Therefore, peer tutoring represents a viable pathway for inclusive education and capacity building in Pakistan's special education system.

Conclusion

This study concluded that peer tutoring is widely perceived as an effective and inclusive instructional approach to support students with SLD in Pakistan's special education settings. Both psychologists and special education teachers recognized its potential to improve academic outcomes, enhance motivation, and foster emotional well-being among students. Differences observed across qualifications and geographic postings highlight the importance of equitable access to teacher training and professional resources. Integrating peer tutoring into special education curricula, supported by targeted professional development and administrative support, can promote inclusion and improve learning experiences for students with SLD. Future research

should move beyond descriptive designs to evaluate the long-term impact of peer tutoring on reading, writing, and numeracy skills, and to explore its scalability across diverse educational contexts.

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