

**The impact of a parental guidance program based on the Orton-Gillingham strategy on improving academic achievement in reading among pupils with learning difficulties; Third Year primary**  
**– Field Study-**

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**Abstract:**

The study aimed to examine the effect of a parental guidance program on academic achievement in reading among pupils with learning difficulties. A field study was conducted on a selective sample of twenty mothers of children enrolled in the third year of primary school. The study adopted a quasi-experimental approach using several tools: Michael Best Scale to identify pupils with learning difficulties, The Colored Progressive Matrices Test by John Raven (John Raven) to measure students' intelligence quotient (IQ) and a guidance program based on the Orton–Gillingham strategy designed by the researcher for mothers of pupils with reading difficulties. Statistical analysis was carried out using the t-test. The results showed no significant differences in reading academic achievement scores of the pupils before and after their mothers attended the guidance sessions. This indicates that the guidance program was not effective in improving academic achievement in reading among pupils with learning difficulties.

**Keywords:** Parental guidance - Learning difficulties - Academic achievement in reading.

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|

## **Introduction:**

Academic learning difficulties are considered to be one of the educational challenges that have become increasingly apparent within educational institutions in Algeria. This has been observed through the researcher's professional practice as a speech-language therapist at a multi-service community health clinic in Algiers. The researcher receives a large number of cases suffering from written language disorders across various age groups, with numbers rising particularly during exam periods.

This reflects the significant and growing concern of parents regarding their children's academic progress. Cases of reading difficulties are the most frequent among those we see, given that reading skill is the foundation for the rest of the school subjects and has a direct impact on pupil's academic achievement, particularly in the early years of schooling. This causes parents to feel anxious and confused, leading to negative reactions and behaviors that may further complicate the situation and result in poor treatment of their children. In such situations, parents need information to help them understand their children's problems and the nature of the learning disorder from which they suffer, as well as the underlying causes leading to poor and inconsistent academic achievement. They also need to be familiarized with the modern educational intervention methods that special education has to offer. Therefore, it is clear how important to guide parents to change their misconceptions and negative attitudes towards their children learning difficulties.

Based on this field reality, we have chosen a topic for study and research entitled: "The Impact of a Parental Guidance Program on Academic Achievement in Reading Among a Group of Pupils with Reading Difficulties Enrolled in the Third Year of Primary School in Certain Schools Affiliated with the Municipality of Mohamed Belouizdad in Algiers".

## **1. Study Problem:**

Parental guidance is a fundamental area of psychological counseling, as it aims to help parents raise their children in the right way providing them with the necessary support to confront the psychological, behavioral or academic problems that they may face. The importance of this field is also highlighted as a supporting element for the teacher and psychologist in providing an integrated educational service to the student, especially with cases of academic learning difficulties that

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|

require specialists in the field of special education because it is difficult for them to benefit from the regular programs provided to ordinary children in schools. They need an appropriate learning environment, academic support and appropriate individual care that helps them proceed with their studies according to their abilities by preparing an individual educational plan, but this is not the case for us in Algeria.

Cases of learning difficulties of various kinds are still directed to school health units or to multi-service health clinics for clinical and routine psychological care. They are also directed to associations and centers that provide school support for various stages, but to no avail because they have not benefited from the educational treatment programs designated for them. Parents are still floundering in a vicious circle to search for solutions to their children's learning problem. It is necessary to take care of parents first by providing guidance services (Botros, Hafez Botros (2007), p.121), planning a therapeutic educational guidance program (Bin Ali al-Hammadi, Hammad, (2009), p.12); That aims to raise awareness and educate and give parents with learning difficulties the opportunity to participate in educational therapeutic intervention and work according to the recommendations of studies and research in the field of special education.

We also note that there are other previous studies conducted by other researchers in the same context, by organizing counseling sessions for parents to overcome the academic problems of students with learning difficulties and reduce the negative effects of parents' attitudes.

Other studies conducted by a group of researchers, (Abramson & al (1983)), call for the necessity of involving parents in preparing academic programs for their children. The Researcher also relied in this study, within the framework of her specialization in the field of special education, on the modern scientific literature related to therapeutic intervention for learning difficulties disorder in reading (Botros, Hafez Botros (2009), p.140-141), and on the parental counseling kits to look for various methods of educational therapeutic intervention for cases who suffer from reading learning difficulties used by special education specialists working in educational associations and institutions inside and outside the country. We chose an association in Canada for people with reading learning difficulties that uses a multi-sensory method of the Orton Gillingham strategy (Abdel Salam Al-Bualiz, Muhammad).

The Kuwaiti Arab Association for Learning Difficulties in Reading adopted the same method after adapting it to the Arabic language because it is the most

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|

effective for helping and alleviating the severity of learning difficulties in reading, as confirmed by the following studies by the researcher “Oakland et al. (1998), in (Hala, Ramdan Abdel Hamid, p.24), research sample, consisting of 48 pupils with reading learning difficulties, was divided into two groups. The number of the experimental group was 22 pupils and the number of pupils in the control group was 26 students. Two years after implementing the program, pupils with reading learning difficulties showed a greater ability to recognize and understand reading compared to the control group.

The same results were obtained by researcher “Fritz” (2016) in the study he conducted on a sample of pupils with learning difficulties in reading after implementing three different treatment programs. The first program is based on the Orton Gillingham strategy, The second is based on a teaching program prepared by teachers in the classroom, and the third program is based on direct teaching. Among the Arabic studies that tested the effectiveness of programs based on the Orton- Gillingham strategy was the study of “Al-Harsh & Al-Imam” (2009) in (Hala, Ramdan Abdel Hamid, p.25),

In Jordan, the Researchers verified the effectiveness of a program developed by a learning difficulties specialist at the Orton- Gillingham Academy in Britain in 2000 to treat her son's reading learning difficulties. We also refer to the study conducted by the researcher “Abdo” (2016) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to treat reading learning difficulties for 16 primary school students.

Among the Arab studies that tested the multisensory method in reducing reading learning difficulties was “Zuhair's study” (2013) in Algeria. The Study found statistically significant differences between the pre and post-measurement of the experimental group, which indicates the effectiveness of the program based on the multisensory method in reducing reading learning difficulties among pupils in this context, we decided to try the same method in Algerian educational institutions through a parental guidance program to improve academic achievement in reading for pupils with reading learning difficulties in order to know the effect of this program in improving academic achievement in reading for third year primary school pupils with learning difficulties in reading, and from this standpoint, we posed the question the study problem as follows:

**-Are there differences on the level of academic achievement among pupils with reading difficulties before and after implementing the parental guidance program based on the Orton Gillingham strategy?**

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|

## 2. Hypothesis:

There are differences between pre and post-test scores in reading achievement among pupils with learning disabilities, attributable to the mothers' participation in counseling sessions prior to the post-test.

## 3. Objectives of the Study :

- Encouraging parental involvement in the stages of therapeutic intervention, in line with the findings of recent studies in the field of special education.

- Investigating the differences between pre and post-test academic achievement scores in reading among pupils with learning disabilities, as a result of their mothers' participation in counseling sessions.

## 4. Significance of the Study :

- The scarcity of Arabic studies examining the impact of parental guidance on children with reading difficulties.

- The urgent need for families of children with academic learning difficulties, particularly parents to attend guidance sessions to understand their children's learning challenges and support them in their academic journey.

- Highlighting modern educational intervention methods and attempting to implement them.

## 5. Study Concepts:

### ▪ First: The Procedural definition of Parental counseling Program:

It is a set of guidelines and instructions supported by activities, developed by the researcher through the organization of group counseling sessions for ten (10) mothers of children with reading difficulties who are enrolled in the third year of primary school. The program consists of no more than ten (10) sessions, with the aim of helping them support their children.

### ▪ Second: The procedural concept of learning difficulties:

To identify pupils with learning difficulties, the researcher relied on the “**Michael Best**” scale, which consists of 24 items distributed across five subtests; a total score below 1.98 indicates the presence of a learning difficulty

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|

▪ **Third: The operational definition of reading learning difficulties:**

It is a disorder that affects students' ability to acquire reading skills, a deficiency in the ability to recognize written words, and comprehension and it is present wherever alphabetic characters are found, independent of any hearing, visual, or motor impairment, intellectual disability, or emotional disorder. This is evident in the discrepancy between a child's actual age and their reading age, which has been estimated in most previous studies to be approximately two years.

▪ **Fourth: The Operational definition of academic achievement in reading:**

This refers to students' grades in reading, as recorded on their report cards, where a single grade is assigned to reflect reading proficiency as defined by the new, modern concept (decoding and comprehension).

## **7. Field Study :**

The researcher adopted a quasi-experimental approach due to its suitability for the nature of the variables under study and its ability to test the impact of the guidance program by conducting pre and post-tests of the dependent variable in order to confirm or refute the proposed hypothesis.

The study sample consisted of a selective sample of 10 mothers of third-year primary school pupils who were struggling with reading, and who were selected through a purposive sampling method.

The study tools are as follows: An information form designed by the researcher, Michael Best's Scale for Identifying pupils with Learning difficulties (Jordanian Edition), John Raven's Colored Progressive Matrices Test for measuring IQ, and a guidance program for mothers of pupils with reading difficulties, designed by the researcher.

## **8. Results and Discussion :**

Academic achievement results before and after implementing the program:

After obtaining the students' report cards, their reading scores were recorded before the implementation of the guidance program for mothers in the first and second semesters, and after the implementation of the guidance program for mothers in the third Trimester.

The following table illustrates this:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                          |                                                   |                       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|

**Table 1: Reading scores of pupils with learning difficulties before the implementation of the guidance program (first and second terms) and after the implementation of the guidance program (third term), according to their distribution in primary schools.**

| <b>Case number</b>  | <b>First-term grades</b> | <b>Second -term grades</b> | <b>Third -term grades</b> | <b>Primary school</b>      |
|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>First case</b>   | <b>5.00</b>              | <b>5.50</b>                | <b>3.50</b>               | <b>Mohammed Amash</b>      |
| <b>Second case</b>  | <b>4.65</b>              | <b>4.80</b>                | <b>5.58</b>               | <b>Mohammed Amash</b>      |
| <b>Third case</b>   | <b>6.00</b>              | <b>6.00</b>                | <b>6.50</b>               | <b>Mohammed Amash</b>      |
| <b>Fourth case</b>  | <b>3.25</b>              | <b>3.00</b>                | <b>3.50</b>               | <b>Mohammed Amash</b>      |
| <b>Fifth case</b>   | <b>5.25</b>              | <b>4.75</b>                | <b>5.75</b>               | <b>Ali Issio</b>           |
| <b>Sixth case</b>   | <b>5.00</b>              | <b>5.00</b>                | <b>5.25</b>               | <b>Ali Issio</b>           |
| <b>Seventh case</b> | <b>2.75</b>              | <b>2.25</b>                | <b>2.75</b>               | <b>Ali Issio</b>           |
| <b>Eighth case</b>  | <b>2.00</b>              | <b>2.00</b>                | <b>3.00</b>               | <b>Boudoua Al-Tahir 02</b> |
| <b>Ninth case</b>   | <b>3.50</b>              | <b>2.00</b>                | <b>3.00</b>               | <b>Al-Tahir Salem</b>      |
| <b>Tenth case</b>   | <b>4.50</b>              | <b>3.00</b>                | <b>3.50</b>               | <b>Al-Tahir Salem</b>      |

From this table, we can see that most pupils' reading skills did not improve, with the exception of four cases. In the second case, academic achievement rose from 4.65 in the first term to 4.80 in the second term and 5.58 in the third term; the fourth case, where academic achievement rose from 3.25 in the first term to 3.00 in the second term and then to 3.50 in the third term; and the sixth case, where academic achievement rose from 5.00 in the first and second terms to 5.25 in the third term. Similarly, in the eighth case, academic achievement rose from 2.00 in the first and second terms to 3.00 in the third term most pupils' reading achievement scores did not improve following the implementation of the mother-based guidance program based on the Orton- Gillingham multisensory method.

## **9. Analysis of the Hypothesis Results:**

The hypothesis states that there are differences between the pre-test and post-test results in reading achievement among pupils with reading learning difficulties, attributable to the mothers' participation in counseling sessions, with the post-test showing a more favorable outcome. In order to verify the validity of the hypothesis, a t-test was used, as shown in the following table.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                            |                                     |                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|

**Table 2: Results of the analysis of differences in performance  
for the experimental group**

|                        | Arithmetic average | Standard deviation | Standard error of the mean | 95%confidence interval |         | t     | Degree of freedom | Level of Significance |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|---------|-------|-------------------|-----------------------|
|                        |                    |                    |                            | minimum                | maximum |       |                   |                       |
| Pre-test and post-test | -,04300            | ,81455             | ,25758                     | -,62569                | ,53969  | -,167 | 9                 | ,871                  |

The table shows that the differences in the performance of pupils in the experimental group between the pre-test and post-test are not statistically significant, as the t-value was calculated as -0.167, indicating that the program implemented was not effective in raising achievement scores in reading.

### **10. Interpretation of the Results:**

In light of the findings of the present study, which failed to support the null hypothesis stating that Parental guidance program influences academic achievement in reading among third-year primary school pupils with reading difficulties, which indicates that the guidance program was unable to make a statistically significant difference in academic achievement in reading.

This could be explained by the fact that the mothers who attended the guidance sessions were unable to apply their new knowledge to practical methods that would make a difference to their children's academic performance, or that it takes longer to absorb new information and to practice applying it; Furthermore, the interval between each session was very short, as three guidance sessions were scheduled within a single week, making it difficult for the participants to fully absorb the information.

Additionally, the time span between the pre-test and post-test was very short (one month). Mothers were not given sufficient time to apply the new information or the opportunity to work with their children for a longer period. It is recommended that the time interval between the pre-test and post-test for achievement results be at least six months, which is the duration recommended by most studies.

The study findings regarding the difficulty of implementing the quasi-experimental approach can be attributed to extraneous mediating variables, the

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|

family circumstances in which the pupils live, and the school environment in which the study was conducted. The academic level of the counselees participating in the field study also influences their comprehension of the content of the educational therapeutic counseling program sessions.

## ▪ **Conclusion:**

Most scientific research and studies in the field of special education confirm the importance of guidance program for parents of children with learning difficulties in improving reading skills, particularly program based on the Orton-Gillingham multisensory approach.

However, the current study found the opposite: it did not appear that guidance sessions for mothers of pupils with reading difficulties in Year 3 of primary school had any effect on these pupils' academic achievement in reading; consequently, the study's hypothesis was not confirmed.

The researcher outlined the possible reasons why the hypothesis was not substantiated, in the hope that pupils and researchers in the field of special education would focus on these and take them into account in future studies; from this, we have drawn up a number of recommendations

## ▪ **Practical Suggestions:**

1. Conduct further follow-up field studies to confirm the impact of parental guidance on the academic achievement of pupils with learning difficulties.
2. The need for families to work together with the school to achieve educational goals, improve reading performance and reduce the severity of academic learning difficulties.
3. Raising parents' awareness of the learning difficulties pupils may face at the start of their educational journey, particularly at primary level, and equipping them with various ways to support their children through the provision of guidance services.

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|

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