

**COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY FOR BEHAVIOURAL DISORDERS IN CHILDREN: A
HOLISTIC APPROACH****Dr. Annu Verma***

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ABSTRACT

Counselling stands as a pivotal intervention in addressing psychological behavioural disorders, offering tailored and empathetic pathways to healing. This abstract sheds light on the critical role of counselling in managing disorders prevalent in children. **Aims and Objectives:** Study aims the significance of counselling in managing psychological behavioural disorders in children. It focuses on tailored interventions and collaborative efforts, with the objective of emphasizing the benefits of early engagement in counselling for improved long-term outcomes. **Scope:** This abstract encompasses various psychological behavioural disorders prevalent in children, including ADHD, ODD, and ASD. It explores diverse counselling modalities such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Play Therapy, and Family Therapy. **Major Issues:** It highlights the criticality of early intervention, the diversity of counselling techniques, and the necessity for collaborative care to enhance the well-being of affected individuals. **Conclusion:** Counselling, with its personalized and empathetic approach is a transformative pathway significantly contributes to enhancing the well-being and potential of individuals affected by these disorders, ensuring a more balanced and fulfilling life.

KEYWORDS: Counselling, children, Psychological Behavioural Disorders, Behavioural Therapy, Early Engagement.

INTRODUCTION

Childhood mental health disorders, or MHDs, are very common problem. A variety of emotional and behavioural disorders, such as disruptive, depressive, anxious, and pervasive developmental (autism) disorders, which can be either internalizing or externalizing in nature, are examples of mental health issues that affect children and adolescents. The most prevalent types of behavioural issues in pre school and school-age children are disruptive ones, which include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorders, oppositional, defiant, and temper tantrums.

Teachers and parents are much concerned about behavioural issues in school-age children. They are known to have detrimental effects that are both short-term and long-term. Studies on psychiatric morbidity among schoolchildren are anxious in our nation, despite the high frequency.

In the modern era, as technology advances daily, children are under more and more pressure to succeed, and as families disintegrate and societal norms change quickly, the growth in behavioural issues in children is likewise dramatic and upsetting.^[1]

The main and adverse effect of child abuse is observed as a drastic change in the behavior pattern of the children i.e. Child Behavioural Psychology. In some cases that change in behavior is carried from the childhood to the adolescence. There are many types of disorders like oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), conduct disorder (CD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Child behavioural psychology is a very delicate issue to study.^[2]

While occasional low-intensity misbehavior, defiance, and impulsive behavior, from time to time losing one's temper, damaging property, and dishonesty/stealing in preschoolers are considered normal, extremely difficult and challenging behaviors outside the norm for the age and level of development, such as prolonged, unpredictable, and/or destructive tantrums and severe outbursts of losing one's temper, are recognized as behavior disorders. According to community surveys, over 80% of preschoolers occasionally have mild tantrums sometimes, although a lesser percentage—less than 10%—will have tantrums on a daily basis. At this age, tantrums are considered normal misbehaviour.^[3]

A holistic approach to managing behavioural disorders in children involves understanding that these challenges are

not isolated incidents but are influenced by multiple factors. This comprehensive perspective recognizes the interplay of biological, psychological, social, and environmental elements in shaping a child's behavior. Here are key components of a holistic approach.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Significance of counselling in managing psychological behavioural disorders in children.

Common Behavioural disorders and their Clinical Presentation

Behavioural disorders encompass a diverse array of conditions, each presenting a unique clinical picture.

Clinical presentations of behavioural disorders, shedding light on the nuanced signs and symptoms that clinicians navigate in their diagnostic journey.

Recognizing the Spectrum

Behavioural disorders are not a one-size-fits-all category; they exist along a spectrum, ranging from attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to conduct disorders and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). Each disorder manifests uniquely, requiring clinicians to discern specific patterns and variations in behaviour.

ADHD: The Unsettled Mind

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is characterized by persistent patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Clinically, this may translate into difficulties in sustaining attention, impulsive decision-making, and challenges with organization and time management.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD): The Defiance Dilemma

ODD presents with a pattern of hostile and defiant behaviour, often directed towards authority figures. Clinical signs may include frequent temper tantrums, arguing with adults, and deliberately annoying others. Understanding the underlying frustration and emotional dysregulation is key to effective intervention.

Conduct Disorder: Navigating Troubled Waters

Conduct disorder involves severe behavioural problems, including aggression, cruelty to animals, and violation of societal norms. Clinically, clinicians may observe a disregard for rules, persistent lying, and a lack of empathy. Early identification and intervention are crucial in mitigating potential long-term consequences.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Deciphering Social Challenges

Autism Spectrum Disorder presents with a range of challenges in social interaction, communication, and repetitive behaviours. Clinically, individuals with ASD may exhibit difficulties in understanding nonverbal cues, maintaining eye contact, and engaging in repetitive movements or routines.

Anxiety-Related Disorders: The Internal Struggle

Behavioural disorders also encompass conditions rooted in anxiety, such as generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and social anxiety disorder. Clinically, manifestations may include excessive worry, avoidance of social situations, physical symptoms like restlessness, and difficulty concentrating.

Eating Disorders: Beyond Appearance

Behavioural disorders extend to conditions like anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa. Clinically, signs may involve distorted body image, obsessive thoughts about food and weight, and unhealthy eating patterns. Recognizing the interplay of psychological and physical aspects is vital for comprehensive treatment.

The Role of Clinicians

Navigating the clinical presentation of behavioural disorders requires astute observation, thorough assessments, and a collaborative approach. Clinicians play a pivotal role in unraveling the complexities, working closely with individuals, families, and multidisciplinary teams to tailor interventions that address specific needs.

Management of Behavioural Disorders

A variety of interventions, such as family- and child-focused psychological techniques like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), behavioural modification and social communication enhancement techniques, parenting skills training, and psychopharmacology, will be incorporated into holistic management strategies. When it comes to treating kids who have a variety of emotional, behavioural, and social communication disorders, these techniques can be quite helpful. Adolescents and school-age children also require the implementation of effective alternative educational procedures.

Determining the best course of action requires a thorough evaluation of the symptoms that are currently present, the influences of the family and caregivers, the larger socioeconomic context, the child's developmental stage, and their physical health. It necessitates multidisciplinary and multilevel approaches involving experts from a variety of fields, including psychiatry, psychology, behavioural analysis, nursing, social work, education, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, pediatrics, and pharmacy. Pharmacotherapy is typically only taken into consideration in conjunction with environmental and psychological interventions.^[4]

Similar parenting techniques have been found to be effective in the early years of childhood in managing a number of seemingly unrelated EBPs (e.g., infant feeding or sleeping problems, preschool tantrums, disruptive and various emotional problems). This may imply the existence of a shared maintaining mechanism, most likely associated with a lack of ability to control impulses and emotional expressions.^[5]

Therapy and Counselling: Behavioural therapy, cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), and family therapy can be effective in addressing the underlying issues contributing to behavioural disorders.

Medication: Depending on the specific disorder and its severity, medication may be prescribed to regulate neurotransmitter imbalances and manage symptoms. E.g. Haloperidol, Chlorpromazine, Thiotixene, Perphenazine, Trifluoperazine these are Traditional antipsychotics.

Educational Interventions: Children with behavioural disorders may benefit from specialized educational programs that address their unique learning needs.

Parental Training: Parents can play a crucial role in managing behavioural disorders by learning effective parenting strategies, communication skills, and coping mechanisms.

Supportive Interventions: Creating a supportive and structured environment can help individuals with behavioural disorders manage their symptoms and improve their overall well-being.

Child-focused psychological interventions

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is one of the most widely used non-pharmacologic treatments for individuals with emotional disorders, especially depression, and with individuals with behavioural problems including ASD.^[6] CBT integrates a combination of both cognitive and behavioural learning principles to encourage desirable behaviour patterns. Research evidence from several trials^[7] provide strong support for the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioural interventions among CYP with Anxiety and Depression.

Behavioural modification and social communication enhancement strategies

Behavioural interventions and techniques are designed to reduce problem behaviours and teach functional alternative strategies using the basic principles of behaviour change. Most interventions are based on the principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) which is grounded on behavioural learning theory.^[8]

❖ Behavioural disorders can significantly impact an individual's daily life, affecting their relationships, academic or professional performance, and overall well-being. Fortunately, counselling and therapy serve as invaluable tools in understanding, managing, and mitigating the challenges associated with behavioural disorders.

I. The Multifaceted Nature of Behavioural Disorders

Behavioural disorders encompass a wide range of conditions, each with its unique manifestations. Conditions such as Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

necessitate individualized approaches that recognize the complexity of each person's experience.

II. The Therapeutic Relationship

Central to counselling and therapy for behavioural disorders is the establishment of a strong and trusting therapeutic relationship. This alliance forms the foundation for effective communication, understanding, and collaboration between the individual and the mental health professional.

III. Behavioural Therapy Approaches

1. **Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT):** CBT is a widely recognized therapeutic approach that focuses on identifying and altering negative thought patterns and behaviors. For behavioural disorders, CBT helps individuals recognize and change problematic behaviors, fostering healthier coping mechanisms.
2. **Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA):** ABA is particularly effective for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. It involves breaking down behaviors into manageable components, utilizing positive reinforcement to encourage desired behaviors while discouraging problematic ones.
3. **Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT):** DBT combines cognitive-behavioural techniques with mindfulness strategies, aiding individuals in managing intense emotions, impulsive behaviors, and challenges in interpersonal relationships.

IV. Counselling Strategies

1. **Individual Counselling:** Tailored one-on-one sessions allow individuals to explore their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in a confidential and supportive environment. Therapists collaboratively work with clients to set goals and develop personalized coping strategies.
2. **Family Therapy:** Recognizing the impact of behavioural disorders on family dynamics, family therapy addresses communication breakdowns and enhances understanding. This approach promotes a collective effort in supporting the individual's journey toward recovery.
3. **Group Therapy:** Group settings provide a platform for individuals to connect with peers facing similar challenges. Group therapy fosters a sense of community, empathy, and shared learning experiences, reducing the isolation often associated with behavioural disorders.

V. Practical Interventions

1. **Behavioural Interventions:** Therapists collaborate with individuals to identify and modify specific behaviors contributing to the disorder. This may involve implementing behavior modification plans, creating behavior charts, and setting achievable goals.
2. **Social Skills Training:** For those struggling with social interactions, therapists employ role-playing

and other techniques to enhance communication skills, empathy, and relationship-building.

VI. The Holistic Approach

Effective counselling and therapy for behavioural disorders consider the individual in their entirety, addressing emotional, social, and environmental factors. Holistic approaches integrate various therapeutic modalities, ensuring a comprehensive strategy that accounts for the complexity of behavioural disorders.

CONCLUSION

Counselling psychology for behavioural disorders in children is a complex and dynamic field that aims to understand, assess, and intervene in the psychological well-being of children facing behavioural challenges. The following are key points that can be considered in concluding the significance and implications of counselling psychology for behavioural disorders in children:

- 1. Early Intervention is Crucial:** Counselling psychology emphasizes the importance of early intervention for behavioural disorders in children. Identifying and addressing behavioural issues during childhood can prevent the development of more serious psychological problems later in life.
- 2. Holistic Approach:** Effective counselling for behavioural disorders in children involves a holistic approach that considers various factors, including family dynamics, school environment, and individual characteristics. A comprehensive assessment helps tailor interventions to the specific needs of the child.
- 3. Family Involvement is Key:** The involvement of families in the counselling process is crucial. Counselling psychologists work with parents and caregivers to understand the family dynamics and provide support and strategies to create a positive and nurturing environment for the child.
- 4. Customized Interventions:** Counselling psychology recognizes the uniqueness of each child and tailors interventions to address their specific needs. This individualized approach is essential for the success of therapeutic interventions.
- 5. Skill-building and Coping Strategies:** Counselling psychology focuses on equipping children with the necessary skills and coping strategies to manage their emotions and behaviors. This not only addresses current issues but also prepares them for future challenges.
- 6. Collaboration with Other Professionals:** Effective counselling for behavioural disorders often involves collaboration with other professionals, such as teachers, school counselors, and healthcare providers. This interdisciplinary approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the child's needs and a coordinated effort to support their well-being.
- 7. Promotion of Positive Mental Health:** Counselling psychology is not only about addressing problems but also promoting positive mental health. By

fostering resilience, self-esteem, and positive coping mechanisms, counselling contributes to the overall well-being of children.

- 8. Long-Term Impact:** Successful counselling interventions during childhood can have a lasting positive impact on an individual's life. They can contribute to improved academic performance, social relationships, and overall life satisfaction.

In conclusion, counselling psychology plays a vital role in addressing behavioural disorders in children by employing a holistic, individualized, and collaborative approach. By focusing on early intervention, involving families, and promoting positive mental health, counselling contributes to the well-being and development of children, setting the foundation for a healthier and more fulfilling future.

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