Behavioural Problems

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Abstract

Childhood is a phase of development when children develop motor and social skills, language & behavior, learn to regulate emotions and control their behavior. Any disruption to a child's mental or emotional development might result in behavioral problems. Certain kids exhibit remarkably tough and demanding behaviors that defy expectations for their age group. Childhood mental health problems are quite prevalent. These include developmental issues anxiety, depression, ODD, CD, and emotional-obsessive-compulsive disorder.
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Introduction

The point at which two gametes that have been charged with energy come together to form a zygote is where life begins. Life has always operated under the principle of survival of the fittest; over its lengthy journey from a single-celled zygote to a multi-organ baby, life has adapted to its mother's womb. Every stage, from the initial union to the child's rearing, influences how a child develops into a typical youngster or one who exhibits certain behavioral issues.

Children are invaluable to their parents and represent the future of the nation. Childhood is a critical period during which children acquire motor and social skills, develop language and behavior, and learn to manage their emotions and actions. From the time they are in the womb, children undergo various stages of physical, mental, and social growth until they reach adulthood. Interruptions in a child's mental or emotional development can lead to behavioral issues.

It's common for young toddlers to occasionally act impulsively, defiantly, and naughtily. Nonetheless, certain kids exhibit remarkably tough and demanding behaviors that defy expectations for their age group. These days, it's typical for behavioral issues to surface currently as kids attempt to adjust to the changing environment, establish their independence, and go through different changes like starting school or meeting new friends.

Epidemiology

Children under the age of 15 make up about one-third of the global population, with an

estimated 10–15% affected by behavioral disorders. Approximately 80% of these children live in developing countries where mental health services are minimal or unavailable. Recent studies indicate that mental health issues among school-aged children range widely, from 6.33% to 43.1%. Among orphans, the prevalence of behavioral and emotional problems is even higher, varying between 18.3% and 64.53%. Overall, research shows that behavioral disorders affect 10% to 42% of children and adolescents, with a higher occurrence in males. In India, community-based studies have reported prevalence rates between 6.3% and 12.5% among children aged 0 to 16 years across different regions.

As per the Government survey > 400 Indian students lost their life in abroad due to Suicide in last 5 years. Childhood mental health problems, or MHDs, are quite prevalent. These include developmental issues (speech/language delay, intellectual impairment, autism spectrum), anxiety, depression, ODD, CD, and emotional-obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD).

Causes:

The exact causes of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Conduct Disorder (CD), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) remain unknown, but several risk factors have been identified:

- Gender: Boys are more commonly affected than girls.
- Gestation and Birth: Complications during pregnancy, premature birth, low birth weight, and isolated environments can contribute to behavioral problems later in life.
- Temperament: Children who display early signs of moodiness or aggression are at higher risk for developing behavioral disorders.
- Family Environment: Dysfunctional family settings, such as those involving domestic violence, poverty, poor parenting, or substance abuse, increase the likelihood of behavioral issues.
- Learning Difficulties: Problems with reading and writing often correlate with behavioral challenges.
- Intellectual Disabilities: Behavioral problems are twice as common in children with intellectual impairments.
- Brain Development: Research suggests that children with ADHD show reduced activity in brain regions responsible for attention control.
- Modern Technology: Increased exposure to screens like mobiles and TVs, along with reduced outdoor playtime, may hinder the development of communication skills.

Studies indicate that consumption of energy drinks may raise the risk of mental health disorders in children.

Types of Behavioral Problems

- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD): Approximately 10% of children under 12 are affected, with boys twice as likely as girls to develop the disorder.
- Conduct Disorder (CD): Children with CD often engage in delinquent behavior, reject rules, and are frequently labeled as “bad kids.” Boys are four times more likely than girls to have CD. Typical behaviors include frequent disobedience, lying, running away from home, early drug and alcohol use, aggressive tendencies (including fighting and weapon use), criminal acts (such as theft, arson, and vandalism), lack of empathy, and cruelty towards animals or others, including bullying and abuse.
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): Affecting around 2–5% of children, boys are three times more likely to have ADHD than girls. Symptoms include difficulty focusing, forgetfulness, inability to complete

tasks, impulsiveness (such as interrupting others or quick temper), hyperactivity (restlessness and constant movement), avoidance of eye contact, repetitive movements (like hand waving or spinning), and delayed milestones such as walking and talking.

- Anxiety: Children with anxiety disorders suffer from persistent fears and worries that do not subside. They may fear separation from parents, avoid social situations like school, constantly worry about disasters, and often experience panic attacks.
- Depression: Depressed children struggle to overcome feelings of sadness for extended periods. They may lose interest in activities, experience sleep disturbances (too much or too little), have low energy, become absent-minded, change eating habits, and sometimes engage in self-harm.
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Children exposed to traumatic or stressful events may develop PTSD, showing long-lasting emotional distress. Symptoms include frequent replaying of the trauma, nightmares, sleep disturbances, avoidance of reminders, emotional numbness, and heightened sensitivity to triggers.

Conclusion

Children facing behavioral challenges should be treated with kindness and understanding. It is important to identify the underlying causes of these issues and implement appropriate interventions to help the child experience a healthy and normal childhood.

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