



BEHAVIORAL & MENTAL ISSUES DURING CHILDHOOD

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ABSTRACT

Childhood is golden period of life where the child starts to in total development. There are several changes during this period so it is important to understand the behavior of a child so that the child can be handled intelligently. But if there is any fault in cognitive development in term of specific stage of development, then there may be a chance of development of mental or emotional disorders. It is rare for a child under the age of 5 to be diagnosed with a serious behavioral disorder. However, they may begin to show symptoms of a childhood illness. The common childhood disorders are oppositional defiant disorder, autism spectrum disorder, conduct disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, learning disorder, substance abuse and suicide and other emotional disorders. Positive mental health indicators among children are Curiosity (86.5%), persistence (84.7%), and self-control (79.8%) aged between 12-17 years. Childhood mental illness has dramatic consequences. Untreated mental illness in childhood often causes chronic mental illness in adults.

KEYWORDS : Children, behavioral problem during childhood, mental health, facts about children

INTRODUCTION:

Behavior is a result to external or internal stimuli, which includes visually impaired functions and processes of consciousness and man-made unconscious processes.¹ and the behavior changes over the course of life by exploring both the acquisition of basic skills and the development of more complex behaviors through mental learning.² Thus formation of behavior start by birth. Mental health in childhood contributes to the development of healthy behaviors and coping with stress. Mentally healthy children have a good quality of life and can work well at home, at school, and in their communities.³

The Most common behavioral problems during childhood:
Handling child during childhood is tricky, as you can see that your child is passing the stage, or if something is really wrong it is not always easy and requires complete attention. But raising children who are difficult can be devastating.⁴

A tantrum doesn't always mean your toddler has a problem with authority, and a kindergartner who doesn't want to sit still doesn't necessarily have an attention disorder. When it comes to understanding our children's behavior, experts say diagnoses and labels should be kept to minimum.⁵

Early Childhood Behavioral and Emotional Disorders:
It is rare for a child under the age of 5 to be diagnosed with a serious behavioral disorder. However, they may begin to show symptoms of a childhood illness. This may include:

1. oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)⁶
2. autism spectrum disorder (ASD)⁶
3. conduct disorders⁵
4. attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)⁵
5. anxiety disorder⁷
6. depression⁷
7. bipolar disorder⁷
8. learning disorders⁵
9. Substance abuse and suicide⁴



Figure No.-1 Most Common childhood behavioral and Emotional Disorders

Behavioral Problems	Description	Characteristics
Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)	Children with ODD begin to play continuously at school, at home, or with other children. Most children with ODD begin to show signs of behavioral disorder before 8 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often angry or upset • Refusal to comply with laws or requests • Frequent arguing with adults • Blaming others for your mistakes • Annoying or easily offending the actions of others
Conduct Disorder (CD)	Persistent and specific pattern of emotional behavior in which children and adolescents often have difficulty in respecting others' rights, being compassionate, and following community rules. The children may be described as delinquent or "bad."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fighting • Bullying • Stealing from others • Deliberately injuring peers • To show a few signs of remorse for their actions • Damage to property
Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	Persistent pattern of inattention/hyperactivity, leading to problems at school. Many teens with ADHD continue to show similar symptoms later in life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dreaming during the day • To show signs of forgetting or losing things many times • Frequent talking • Trouble stooping (staggering) • Taking unnecessary risks • Having difficulty resisting temptation
Anxiety	Anxious children experience chronic fear and chronic anxiety. Children try to avoid from participating in school activities or sharing with family members alike ADHD/ODD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of losing a parent • Try to avoid school because they do not want to be around people • Extreme fear of being tied to certain situations like going to the doctor • Always in mental pressure about something bad happening.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety attacks
Depression	Depression is the most common feeling among individuals. Depressed children do not resolve their feelings within a few days or even weeks. They find it difficult to enjoy the things even in their favorite activities or may feel hopeless.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insomnia. • Lethargy • Anhedonia • Poor attention • Persistent feelings of guilt or worthlessness • Self-destructive behavior
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	Children experience traumatic events are more likely to have emotional consequences like hyperarousal, re-experiencing of image of stressful and avoidance of reminders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always play event in their mind • Sleep problems and nightmares • Inability to be happy • Anger and resentment • Refusal to report incidents • Emotionally confused • Avoid people or places that might remind them of the event

Statistical facts on children's mental health and behavioral problems:

Mental health plays a significant role in overall health and individual's development. Individual have different stressor, needs and problems at different stages of life. Children are the most vulnerable group as they experience serious changes in the way that they typically learn, behave, or handle their emotions, causing distress and problems getting through the day.

There are different ways to assess mental health and mental disorders in children. According to the 'National Survey of Children's Health' a no. of statistical information was drawn regarding children's mental health by Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.⁸

Facts about mental health:

National data (US) on positive mental health indicators that describe mental, emotional, and behavioral well-being for children are limited. Based on the data we do have:

Indicators of positive mental health are present in most children.

From 2016-2019, parents reported that mostly children showed Curiosity (86.5%), persistence (84.7%), and self-control (79.8%) aged between 12-17 years.⁹

Behavior problems (ADHD, anxiety etc.) and depression are the most common mental disorders in children.

In 2016-19, it is estimated among children aged 3-17 years that:

- ADHD 9.8% (approx. 6.0 million)⁹
- Anxiety 9.4% (approx. 5.8 million)⁹
- Other behavior problems 8.9% (approx. 5.5 million)⁹
- Depression 4.4% (approx. 2.7 million)⁹

Some of these conditions often occur together.

In 2016, among children aged 3-17:

Having other mental disorders was commonly associated with depression:

About 3 out of 4 children with depression also had anxiety (73.8%) and about 1 in 2 had behavioral problems (47.2%).¹⁰

Children with anxiety:

> 1 in 3 also had behavioral problems (37.9%) and about 1 in 3

also had depression (32.3%).¹⁰

Children with behavioral problems:

> 1 in 3 also had anxiety (36.6%) and about 1 in 5 had depression (20.3%).¹⁰

Prevalence of behavioral problems varies with age

- Incidence of ADHD, anxiety, and depression increases with age.⁹
- Behavioral problems are more common between 6-11 years.⁹

Depression and anxiety have increased over time

- Among the children aged 6-17 **diagnosed with anxiety or depression** have increased from 5.4% in 2003 to 8% in 2007 to 8.4% in 2011-2012.¹⁰
- **Diagnosed with anxiety** have increased from 5.5% in 2007 to 6.4% in 2011-2012.¹⁰

Among adolescents, depression, drug use and suicide are major concerns:

In 2018-2019, it is reported that the children aged between 12-17 year:

- More than 1/3rd (36.7%) had persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness.¹⁰
- Around 19% considered serious suicide attempts.¹⁰
- While 15.7% had committed suicide, 8.9% attempted suicide.¹⁰
- Around 15% had a major depressive episode.¹⁰
- 4.1% had a substance abuse problem.¹¹

Treatment may vary for different mental disorders(2016): Among children aged 3-17:

- About 8 out of 10 children (78.1%) with depression received treatment.¹⁰
- Around 60% with anxiety received treatment.¹⁰
- More than half of the children (53.5%) with behavioral problems received treatment.⁸
- Behavioral, mental and developmental disorders begin at toddler and preschool stage (17.4%).⁸

CONCLUSION:

Childhood is not a good time for all young people. Many children experience traumatic events, abuse, dependence, fear of being loved or cared-for, and develop other illnesses, such as depression and anxiety. Childhood mental illness has dramatic consequences. Untreated mental illness in childhood often causes chronic mental illness in adults. Early diagnosis and appropriate services for children and their families can make a difference in the lives of children with mental illness. Access to service providers, including testing, referrals, and treatment, varies from place to place.

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