Original Article

Child and Behaviour: A School Based Study

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Abstract

Background: Behaviour problems in children are on the rise. Available literature speaks of variability and inadequacies of diagnostic methods, research criteria, treatment modalities and psychosocial interventions. Methods: 50 children of age 6-14 years attending government school were assessed for behaviour problems. Children were selected after appropriate randomization and subsequently assigned to Child behaviour checklist. The data thus collected was suitably interpreted using appropriate statistical tests. Results: Twenty-one (42%) children were found to be above the cut-off score. Mean CBCL score was 43.3. Most common behaviour problems in these subjects were “can not sit still, restless, hyperactive” shown by 62% of the subjects. Female children had behaviour problems like “too concerned with neatness or cleanliness”, “self conscious or easily embarrassed” and “feels she has to be perfect” where as male children had behaviour problems like “does not feel guilty after misbehaving”, can not concentrate” and “restless”. Conclusion: The analysis of pattern of distribution of behaviour problems in the subjects revealed them to be more of externalizing ones. Female children had more of internalizing behaviour problems.

Key words- school children, behaviour problems, Child behaviour checklist

Introduction

In the present era where everyday we are stepping ahead to technological advancement, with the increasing pressure in children to achieve, breaking up of the families and rapidly changing sociocultural paradigm, rise in the behaviour problems in children are also similarly steep and disrupting. Reviews of the study done in this field reveal that the prevalence of behaviour problems in children is alarmingly high. Diverse method of data collection and equally diverse method of diagnosis generated these rates. School being an important catchment area for pediatric population; these data are also similarly worthwhile looking into. Review of recent studies concentrating on mental health problems amongst school going children showed the prevalence figures varying from 6.33% to 43.1% in Indian context (1-6). International context showed similar variability. (7-10) The available literature also speaks of variability and inadequacies of diagnostic methods, research criteria, treatment modalities and psychosocial interventions.

India, a developing country has large population, of whom significant proportions are children attending school. Behavioural problems and psychiatric syndromes in the children are a matter of concern as the consequences can seriously impair their ability to become useful & productive citizens of tomorrow. The vulnerability of the child tends to increase when effective parenting is not available.

This study was planned with the aim to assess the prevalence of behavioural problems among school going children. The research findings will help in determining the prevalence, associated factors and predictors that are useful in early diagnosis and management.

Material and method

50 students of age 6-14 years from a government school were selected after appropriate randomization after due consent. The subjects were then assigned to Child behaviour checklist (CBCL)
which was filled appropriately by the parents’ (11). This checklist (CBCL) developed by Achenbach is a family of self rated instruments that surveys a broad range of difficulties encountered in children from preschool age through adolescence. It is a multiaxial scale normed by age and gender. Various versions of CBCL were designed to obtain similar types of data in a similar format from parents, teachers and youth. Parent’s version of CBCL was used in this study. The cut off scores as given by Achenbach was used in this study. (Table 1) The resultant data was statistically analyzed using appropriate test.

Results

Twenty-one (42%) children were found to be above the cut-off score. (Table-2). Mean CBCL score was 43.3 (SD± 27.17). (Table-3). Of the fifty children studied thirty-six children (72%) were from the Armed forces background. Four (8%) out of the total 50 children were officer’s children. Mean age of the study population was 9.9 years (SD± 2.69 years). Male to female ratio was 1:1. Mean income of the parents was Rs 6130 (SD± Rs 3627.85).

There was no significant difference in the prevalence of behaviour problems between age group 6-11 years and 12-14 years,(Table-4) Sex-wise distribution showed no significant difference in prevalence of behaviour problems.(Table-5) Behaviour problems also did not differ significantly on income wise distribution of the parents.(Table-6)

Most common behaviour problems in these subjects were “can not sit still, restless, hyperactive” shown by 62% of the subjects. (Table-7) Other common problems were “too concerned with neatness or cleanliness”(60%) and “demands lot of attention”(56%). Female children had behaviour problems like “too concerned with neatness or cleanliness”, “self conscious or easily embarrassed” and “feels she has to be perfect” where as male children had behaviour problems like. “does not feel guilty after misbehaving”, can not concentrate” and “restless”. (Table-8)

Discussion

Twenty-one (42%) children were found to be above cut-off score. This was higher than many other studies however similar to study by Vardhini (6) . There was no statistically significant difference in the behaviour problems between age group 6-11 years and 12-14 years, which did not corroborate with the research findings of Liu. (10) Sex-wise distribution showed no significant difference in behaviour, which was not in consonance to findings by few researchers (4). Mean CBCL score of 43.3 was similar to findings by Jyoti et al (12). Income-wise profile also did not bring out any specific trend.

The analysis of pattern of distribution of behaviour problems in the subjects revealed them to be more of externalizing ones. This goes along with findings by Shenoy et al (4) as well as Molin and his colleagues (9). Female children had more of internalizing behaviour problems where as male

Table 1: Cut off Score of Child Behaviour Check list by Achenbach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-5 years</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11 years</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-16 years</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Prevalence rate of behaviour problem of the subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Above cut-off score</th>
<th>Below cut-off score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pediatric OPD N - 50</td>
<td>21 (42%)</td>
<td>29 (58%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Mean CBCL scores of the subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Mean CBCL score</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School subjects</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>27.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Relation of CBCL scores to age of the subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Above cut off score</th>
<th>Below cut off score</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-11 years</td>
<td>17(50%)</td>
<td>17(50%)</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-14 years</td>
<td>4(25%)</td>
<td>12(75%)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yates Continuity Correction = 1.912  
DF = 1  P= 0.167 (NS)
patients had more of externalizing problems. This again is in keeping with findings by other researchers. (4, 9) Behaviour problems profile in male population was similar to findings by Shenoy et al (4).

Limitation of this study

Lower sample size would have affected the conclusion in some manner or the other. Study needs to be further validated with more researches at a larger magnitude on a longitudinal perspective. We authors are already working on it.

References

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