

## Study of Psychodynamic Aspects in Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Descriptive Study

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### ABSTRACT:

The present research paper attempts to study Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) child's emotional experiences, his relationships and shed light on the connections between his/her inner world through an understanding of Psychodynamic approach and symptoms such as attention deficits, hyperactivity and impulsivity. This is a descriptive study with 30 diagnosed cases of ADHD from the age group 5 to 12 years, both sexes. Each case was studied in detail about the patient's childhood, upbringing, schooling, and family environment thereby exploring the various defense mechanisms through an analysis of the life space encountered by patients who are attempting to resolve the conflicts. Results suggest that mother's mental state during pregnancy, strict, dictatorial parenting, family conflicts, over pampering plays a major role in the development of behavioral disorder. It is observed that Neurotic, Immature, Mature defense mechanisms are more frequently used. Introjection, denial, and projection are defense mechanisms associated with oral-incorporative or oral-sadistic impulses, whereas reaction formations, such as shame and disgust, usually develop in relation to anal impulses and pleasures. Understanding the psychodynamic factors, the underlying conflicts, early child interactions with his environment, inter – relationships of various parts of the mind helps in the targeted management of the child with ADHD and a better outcome.

**Keywords:** *ADHD, Psychodynamic factors*

### INTRODUCTION:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is the neurodevelopmental disorder among children, adolescents and even in adults. ADHD is highly prevalent worldwide and incidence is increasing. (Faraone SV, Sergeant J, Gillberg C, Biederman J 2003). The essential features of ADHD are a persistent pattern of inattention, hyperactivity, impulsiveness and irritability. That is more frequently displayed and more severe than is typically observed in individuals at a comparable level of development. (DSM IV, 1994) To date *no* single factor has been identified as *the cause* of ADHD. ADHD is thought to be the result of complex interactions between genetic, environmental, and neurobiological factors (Biederman & Faraone, 2002). Family genetic studies, including twin, sibling, adoption, have all suggested that genetic factors play an important role in ADHD. Neurotransmitters like Dopamine, Serotonin, and Noradrenergic also play a very important role in ADHD.

Psychodynamics is a study of the manner in which the disposition interacts with the environmental forces producing cascading effects which eventually results into disease. [Carson R C, J N Butcher S Mineka (1998)]

Freud (1856-1939) developed a topographical model of the mind, whereby he described the features of the mind's structure and function. Freud used the analogy of an iceberg to describe the three levels of the mind. On the surface is consciousness, which consists of those thoughts that are the focus of our attention now, and this is seen as the tip of the iceberg. The preconscious consists of all which can be retrieved from memory. The third and most significant region is the unconscious. Here lie the processes that are the real cause of most behavior. Like an iceberg, the most important part of the mind is the part you cannot see.

Freud later developed a more structural model of the mind comprising the entities id, ego, and superego (what Freud called "the psychic apparatus"). Freud assumed the id operated at an unconscious level according to the pleasure principle (gratification from satisfying basic instincts). The ego develops from the id during infancy. The ego's goal is to satisfy the demands of the id in a safe a socially acceptable way. In contrast to the id, the ego follows the reality principle as it operates in both the conscious and unconscious mind. The superego develops during early childhood (when the child identifies with the same sex parent) and is responsible for ensuring moral standards are followed. The superego operates on the morality principle and motivates us to behave in a socially responsible and acceptable manner.

When there is a conflict between the goals of the id and superego, the ego must act as a referee and mediate this conflict. The ego can deploy various defense mechanisms to prevent it from becoming overwhelmed by anxiety. Freud developed the Stages of Psychosexual development. These are called psychosexual stages because each stage represents the fixation of libido (roughly translated as sexual drives or instincts) on a different area of the body. As a person grows physically certain areas of their body become important as sources of potential frustration (erogenous zones), pleasure or both. [Cameron N, Joseph P, (1985)]

#### **NEED OF THE STUDY:**

An understanding of psychodynamics aids the in-depth understanding and Management of the patient. It gives us an idea about the present state of the individual's phase, evolution and relationship. It gives further insight into the basic attitudes and guides us as to *how and why* the present state has developed. It can point out the possibilities and direction in which development of the personality can occur.

An in depth understanding of the inter-relationship of various parts of the mind, of psych helps us in the targeted therapy/management of the children with ADHD and a better outcome.

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

Previous attempts made to study the Psychodynamic aspects in ADHD.

**Praxis der Kinderpsychologie und Kinderpsychiatrie, (Jan 2007)** studied **Psychodynamic models about the origins, internal processing and treatment of ADHD**. At first the symptoms of ADHD can be viewed as part of the natural expressive repertory of the infant. Later they merge with pathological relationship patterns. The pathology sets in--apart from genetic vulnerability--through flawed early interactions as well as early childhood trauma. The further course of ADHD remains dependent on the course of the child's relationships and forms itself in symbiotic and narcissistic reaction patterns. By means of impulsive-aggressive outbursts and restless inattentive behaviour the child tries to attract attention and evade attention, express hurt and take revenge in the same instant. Likewise the child may ward off traumatic memories or even protect himself from a depressive breakdown.

**Streack-Fischer A, Birgit Fricke, (2007)** in his study – "**Better to be restless than locked up in a deep hole, Understanding and therapy of Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder from a psychodynamic viewpoint**", studied early mother-child interactions refer to specific psychosocial developmental conditions amongst children who develop ADHD. A psychodynamic-oriented developmental psychotherapy which centres on regulatory procedures, de-centration, mentalisation, de-somatisation and symbolisation of treated notifications is helpful, particularly amongst children with complex disorders. The underlying conflicts and dealing with them are thus elucidated in the presentation of a treatment.

#### **PROBLEM OF THE PRESENT STUDY:**

The present study is mainly aimed at understanding the various psychodynamic aspects responsible for the genesis of ADHD. Also the Authors have studied the Psychodynamic structure and evolution of ADHD.

#### **METHODS AND MATERIALS:**

The study was done by incorporating the diagnosed cases of ADHD with detailed interview of both children as well as parents, focusing upon the mother's state during pregnancy, patient's upbringing, schooling and Exploring the mental status with respect to emotions, intellect, behaviour and various defense mechanisms through an analysis of life space.

#### **Sampling:**

30 Diagnosed cases of ADHD were selected after appropriate assessment with Purposive sampling from schools, clinics, Out- Patient units of Dr. M. L. Dhawale Memorial Trust's Hospitals at Palghar, Malad and Dahisar, Maharashtra, India.

#### **Research Tools:**

**Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL):** It is a component of the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) originally developed by Thomas M. Achenbach in 1983; the test was revised in 2001. ASEBA is used to detect behavioral and emotional problems in children and adolescents.

**Reliability:** The inter-rater reliability of the CBCL10 was satisfactory ( $r=0.998$ ).

**Validity:** Test has shown high content validity.

#### **OBSERVATIONS AND RESULT:**

The Study was conducted taking into consideration 3 aspects, studying Mother's State during pregnancy, Parenting and environmental factors, various defences that emerge as a result of the ego's struggles to mediate pressures of the id and the requirements of outside reality.

#### **Table no. 1- Mother's State during Pregnancy:**

<i>TYPE</i>	<i>NO.OF CASES</i>	<i>PERCENTAGE</i>
Healthy	12	40%
Disturbed mentally	9	30%
Disturbed physically	7	23%
Rejection	5	17%

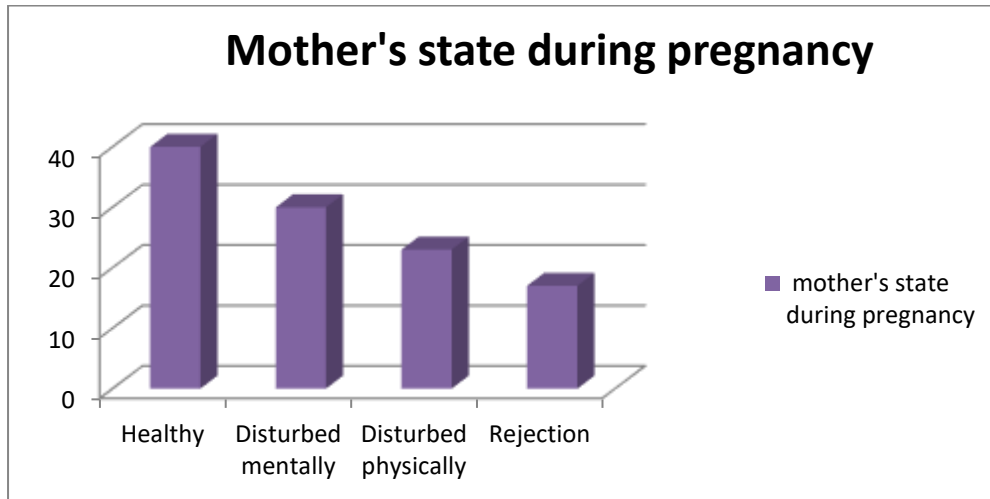
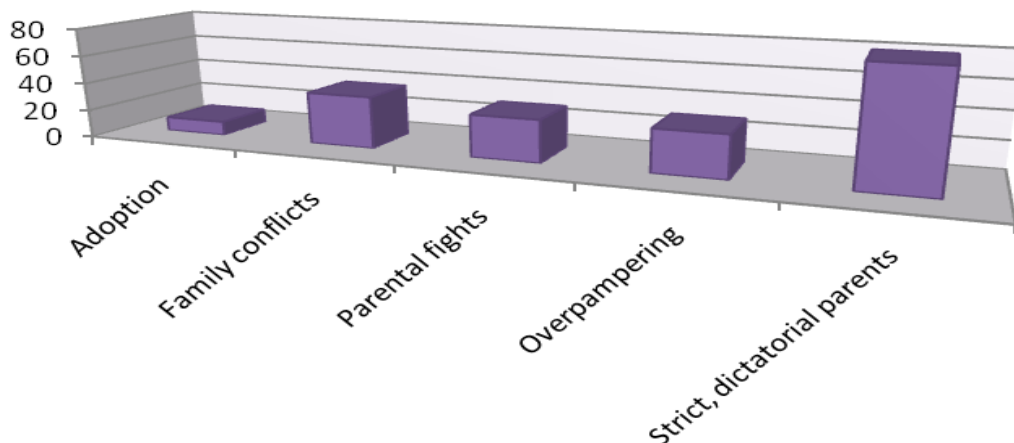


Fig No.1 – Mother's state during pregnancy in cases of ADHD

**Table no: 2 – PARENTING & ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS IN ADHD:**

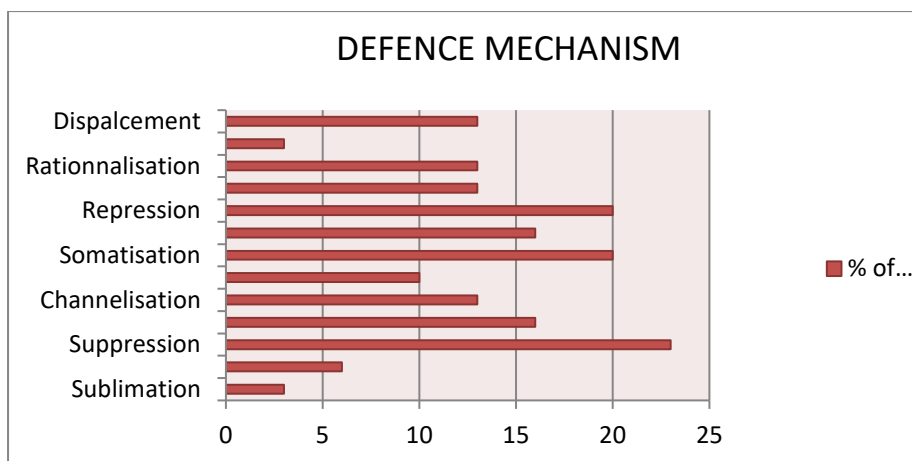
<i>Parenting &amp; Environment</i>	<i>No. of cases</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Adoption	3	10%
Family conflicts	11	37%
Parental fights	9	30%
Over pampering	9	30%
Strict, dictatorial parents	24	80%



**Fig. No. 2 Distribution of Parenting & Environment factors in ADHD**

**Table no. 3 DEFENCE MECHANISMS:**

Defences	No. Of cases	Percentage
Displacement	13	43%
Acting out	6	20%
Suppression	7	23%
Internal aggression	5	16%
Channelization	4	13%
Reaction formation	3	10%
Somatisation	6	20%
Escapism	5	16%
Repression	6	20%
Projection	4	13%
Rationalisation	4	13%
Denial	1	3%
Sublimation	1	3%



**Fig No. 3: Defence mechanism in ADHD**

**OBSERVATIONS:**

After studying 30 cases of ADHD regarding the mental state of mother during pregnancy, it was observed that in 30% cases, the mother was disturbed mentally, either due to mental stress or family conflicts. In about 23% cases, the mother was suffering from physical illness. In about 17% of cases, the pregnancy was unplanned leading to rejection of the child.

Studying the parenting and environmental factors, we can see that in 80% of cases, strict parenting has been an important factor. A family conflict was there in 37% of cases, over pampering and parental fights covering 30 % of cases.

In ADHD, from the above study, it is observed that Neurotic, Immature, Mature defense mechanisms are more frequently used. The *neurotic defence like displacement* is frequently used by the children, almost in all the cases, followed by *repression*. *Mature defences* like *suppression* is also used in most of the cases which shows the deep pain the child undergoes. *Immature defences* like *somatisation* shows the early somatic complaints of the child, along with *acting out*. Other commonly used defences are channelization with reaction formation.

**ANALYSIS:**

The present study suggests that the intra uterine and the post natal stresses play a significant role as either the precipitating or the maintaining factors. Mother’s state during pregnancy as studied in ADHD suggests that mothers with disturbed state indicates a definite co-relation of the developing fetus being affected due to disturbed mother, thus having its implications later on. Environment and parenting of a child has a strong impact on his/her overall development. It is the core process of every child upbringing with positive and negative influences. During the analysis, various stressors and the forces responsible for and maintaining the various adaptive ego functions (defenses) are derived using the principles of psychodynamics.

**CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Behavioral problems and what is normal behaviour in a child is determined by child’s age, physical development and what is socially and culturally acceptable in his/her surrounding. A child’s behaviour problem represents a conflict between his developing personality and that of his environment. In order to

understand the reasons of conflict it is important to try and understand the basis of behaviour and the innumerable interwoven factors which influence it. Development results from the dynamic interplay of Nature and Nurture.

In the beginning the qualities of child are much dispositional but when they become symptoms and distressing for the family, the parents, teachers or the primary care takers of these children, are more distressed than the child himself, because it is very difficult to manage these children. And they consciously or unconsciously start rejecting their own children which again adds or becomes a maintaining factor for the child's behaviour and there is no one to understand the depth of their suffering, at other extreme these children are prone to develop oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, antisocial personality. Generally speaking, hyperactivity decreases with age, but inattention and impulsivity may continue to be problematic and may be evident in different forms.

Understanding the genesis of these psychodynamic factors helps in the strategic management of children with ADHD.

#### **LIMITATIONS:**

The psychodynamic factors form a broader aspect, which encompasses environmental, parenting, ego defenses which are in itself broad topics to be studied. So, it is important to narrow down the topics, so that the each subtopic can be studied in detail.

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