

MENTAL ILLNESS COMORBIDITY AMONG PRIMARY LEVEL INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED CHILDREN

Dr. Mahesh Kumar Choudhary
Assistant Professor
DSMNR University, Lucknow (India)
nimhmahesh@gmail.com

Abstract

Mental disorder is characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behavior. It is associated with distress or impairment in important areas of functioning. Children with intellectual disability had significant limitation both in cognitive capacity and in adaptive that leads to various comorbid condition. An exploratory study conducted to find out and analyze the various mental illness comorbid conditions among sample. Result indicate that majority of sample exhibit one or more mental illness comorbidity. Study also indicate that none of the participant exhibit suicidal thought and involved in drugs or alcohol use. Parents, special educators, psychologist, psychiatrist and other professional need to focus in order to minimize the effect of mental illness comorbidity among the target population.

Key words: Intellectual Disability, Mental illness, Comorbidity, Primary level.

Introduction

Mental illness are collective diagnosable health conditions involved changes in thinking, emotion and behavior. Generally, it is associated with any individual in any activity such as social, functional, work and family activities. Mental illness significantly affects personal, social and community life along with thinking, emotion, communication, learning, self-esteem of the individual. The presence of one and more mental problem is termed as comorbid condition. Comorbid condition is influence and be influenced by the physical health of the individual. This shows that mental illness is a medical condition like any other diseases which can be treatable. Comorbid condition occurs in any individual regardless of their age, gender, income, social status, race, religion and any other aspect. Severity of mental illness also vary. It can vary from very mild condition to severe condition. All these condition depend on various factors.

There are various factors that lead to comorbid condition are stressful life situation, chronic medical conditions, traumatic experiences, use of alcohol, childhood history of abuse or neglect, previous mental illness and brain damage. In all these factors brain damage mostly occurred in intellectually disabled children.

As per Right of Persons with disability Act (RPWD-Act)-2016, 'Intellectual disability, a condition characterized by significant limitation both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behaviour which covers a range of every day, social and practical skills, including specific learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders.' According to American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disability (AAIDD) 2021, 'Intellectual disability is a condition characterized by significant limitation both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates during the developmental period, which is defined operationally as before the individual attains age 22.' Children with intellectual disability have very limited cognitive capacity because of which their various areas are affected that leads to various comorbid condition.

Need of the study

Comorbid condition is a condition in which individual having one or more mental health problem. Brain damage is most important factor among all the factors of mental health. Since the brain of intellectually disabled persons are damaged due to one and the other reason. Due to this they have very limited cognitive capacity and also affected by various comorbid condition. This study will help to become aware about the various comorbid condition present among participants. This study will also help to the parents, teachers and other

professional to understand the medical condition of individual. It will be helpful for them to plan and provide support appropriately under such circumstances.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the various comorbid conditions among samples.
2. To analyse the various comorbid conditions with respect to severity of disability among intellectually disabled children.

Methodology

Exploratory method was used to study the various comorbid condition among persons with intellectual disability.

Sample and sampling technique

In present study purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. Total hundred and twenty primary level children with intellectual disability selected for this study from different special school of Lucknow. In the present study out of hundred twenty sample, eighty-eight were male and thirty-two were female. The distribution of sample as per gender and severity of disability presented below in figure-1 and figure-2 respectively.

Figure-1. Gender wise Sample distribution

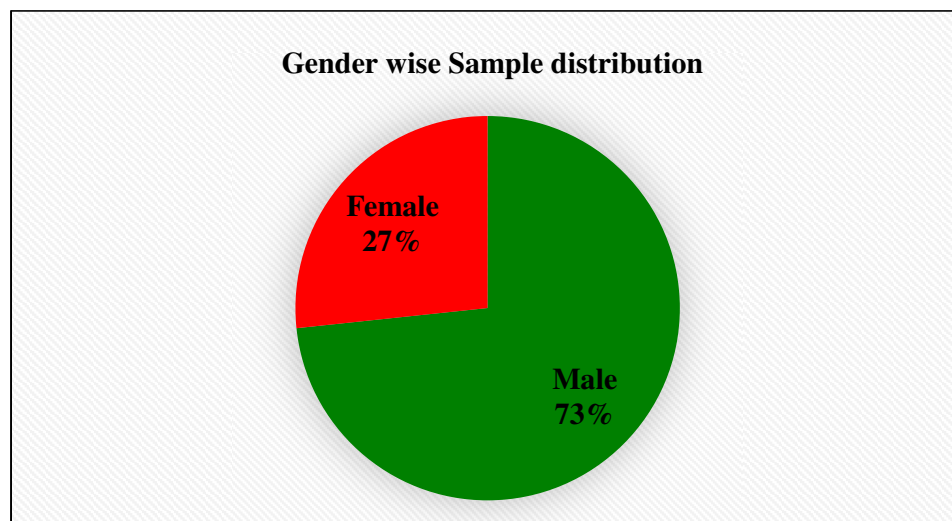
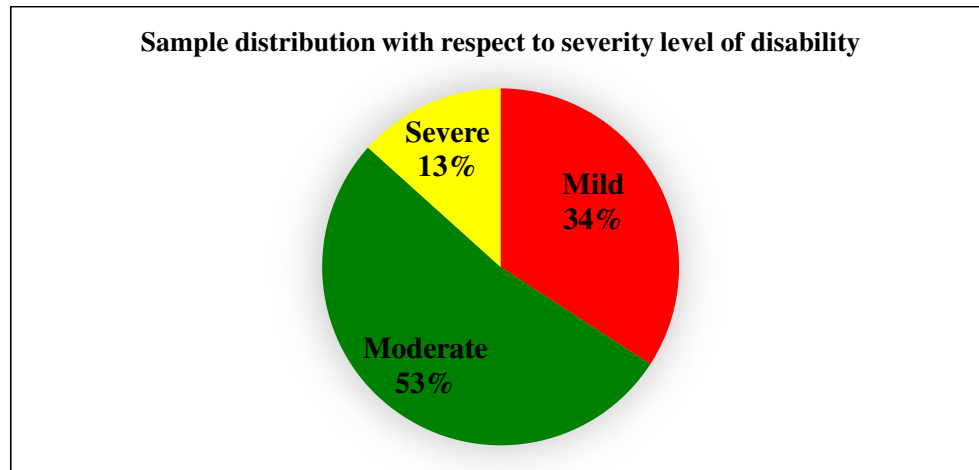


Figure-2. Sample distribution with respect to severity level of disability



Tool

Tool consist of three parts. Part-I include informant details such as name, age, gender, educational qualification and income. Part-II consist of profile of the child which include name, age, gender, severity level of disability, locality and associated condition. Part-III is specific checklist for mental illness developed by National Council of Educational Research and Training. Tool include total ten items related to mental illness behaviour. Sample were assessed on these ten behaviour only.

Data collection

Researcher took consent form concerned authority for data collection. Researcher met with individual sample and develop rapport with informant. After administering the tool data were collected. Information gathered by asking question by the researcher. The yielded response varied from person to person.

Data analysis

Verities of response were given by the participant. All the similar response of the participants was clustered together and analysis was done and presented below in table-1.

Table-1: Mental illness comorbidity as per mental illness specific checklist.
N=120

Sl. No.	Items	n	%
1.	Does this student often appear sad, or seems withdrawn, or has severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships at school?	48	40.0
2,	Does this student have trouble focusing or sitting still/staying in his/her seat?	96	80.0
3.	Does this student have an unexplained weight loss or weight gain?	23	19.2
4.	Does this student look anxious and frequently report symptoms such as headaches and stomach-aches?	15	12.5
5.*	Does this student indulge in self-harm activities such as making cut marks or burning fingers?	22	18.3
6.*	Has this student been observed to exhibit suicidal thoughts or talk about attempting suicide?	0	0
7.	Has this student been observed getting involved in drugs or alcohol use?	0	0
8.	Does this student have intense fear of something, which, in reality, has little or no actual danger?	24	20.0
9.	Has this student been observed to be detached from reality and living in an imaginative world? For example, talking to or hearing voices of imaginary friends (that is not make-believe play)?	11	9.2
10.*	Does this student have drastic changes in behaviour or personality, for example, fighting frequently, using weapons, and or expressing a desire to hurt himself/herself or others?	21	17.5

Table-1 indicates the mental illness comorbidity among sample as per specific checklist of mental illness. In this total ten comorbid conditions mentioned in this checklist. Total 40(48%) sample often appear sad, seems withdrawn and often has severe mood swing. Out of one hundred twenty

96(80%) children have trouble focusing or sitting still/staying in his/her seat. Total 23(19.2%) children show weight loss or weight gain. All together 15(12.5%) participant look anxious and frequently report symptoms such as headaches and stomach-aches. Out of hundred twenty total 22(18.3%) sample indulge in self-injurious behavior. No participant exhibit suicidal thought and involved in drugs or alcohol use. Total 24(20%) children exhibit intense fear of something, which, in reality, has no actual danger. All together 11(9.2%) children observed to be detached from reality and living in an imaginative world. Total 21(17.5%) children exhibit drastic changes in behavior. Out of hundred twenty, maximum 96(80%) participant exhibit trouble in focusing or sitting still/staying in his/her seat and none of the participant exhibit suicidal thought and involved in drugs or alcohol use.

Results

Majority (80%) of children exhibit trouble in focusing or sitting in his/her seat. Total (48%) sample often appear sad, seems withdrawn and often has severe mood swing. Some of the participant (19.2%) show weight loss or weight gain. All together (12.5%) sample look anxious and frequently report symptoms such as headaches and stomach-aches and (18.3%) students indulge in self-injurious behavior. Total (20%) children exhibit intense fear of something, which, in reality, has little or no actual danger. All together (9.2%) children observed to be detached from reality and living in an imaginative world and (17.5%) participant exhibit drastic changes in behavior. No participant exhibit suicidal thought and involved in drugs or alcohol use.

Discussion

Majority of sample exhibit one and more mental illness comorbid condition. This is supported by the similar study carried out by Hayat (2022),

‘Medical and psychiatric comorbidity in the patients with intellectual disability in a rehabilitation setting, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’ found that majority of participant had one or more comorbidity. Previous research indicates coexistence of psychiatric disorder among sample (Lakhan, 2013). Children with intellectual disability had limited cognitive capacity that affect their various dimensions. Limited cognitive capacity may be the probable reason for coexistence one or more mental illness comorbidity among intellectually disabled children.

Conclusion

The of present study helps in better understanding regarding mental illness comorbidity of intellectually disabled children. Parents, special educators, psychologist, psychiatrist and other professional need to work closely in order to minimize the effect of mental illness comorbidity among intellectually disabled children that will help in better planning and implementation and will facilitate their overall development and better rehabilitation.

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