

## Need of CBT & Mindfulness in Schools for Resolving Behavioural Problems in Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a period of life with specific health and development. It is a critical link between childhood and adulthood- mentally, emotionally, physically and socially. It is a time to develop skills and knowledge which are used to acquire attributes and abilities to manage emotions and relationships. School can play an important role in adolescents' overall development. It is here that they can get support and guidance to meet their goals by resolving their common problems in day-to-day life. Behaviour problems in children in adolescents affect their personal, emotional & social life and have been a major concern of parents, teachers and social reformers. Many children and adolescents often find it difficult to focus on their studies or important tasks given to them. Mindfulness is one way to help them train their minds to focus on the tasks at hand. CBT focuses on the present and future. It helps adolescents that they can control their behaviours.

**Keywords:** *Adolescence, Behaviour Problems, School, CBT, Mindfulness*

In India, while the term 'adolescence' is comparatively new, the term 'youth' is better known and has been used, especially at the national level and in policy making (Singh, 1997). Indian population, which is 17.5% of the world's population, has 116 million males and 103 million females who make up an 18.2% of its population in the age group of 15-24 years (The Central Intelligence Agency, 2013). In India, youth are looked upon as a resource with various talents and the contributors to the development of the country. By empowering today's adolescents, India can build its bright future.

WHO defines adolescence as the phase of life between childhood and adulthood in the 10-19 years age group. Adolescence may be further divided up into sub-groups of early adolescence (10-13years), middle adolescence (14-16 years), and late adolescence (17-19 years). WHO clearly recognizes that "adolescence" is a unique stage of human development in an individual's life. It is a phase of development on many fronts: from the appearance of secondary sex characteristics (puberty) to sexual and reproductive maturity; the development of mental processes and adult identity; and the transition from total socio-economic and emotional dependence to relative independence (UNICEF, 2021).

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Adolescence is usually associated with the teenage years and termed as a period of “stress and strain” and “storm and strife”. Adolescents are particularly prone to behavioural problems because of stress, peer pressure, sense of insecurity and misperception. The common mental ailments are mood disorders like anxiety, depression, suicide, conduct disorder like violent and aggressive behaviours, these need timely identification and intervention (Parthasarathy, 2006).

Adolescent years are now recognized as a period of great importance in the development of civilised men. Increases in juvenile delinquency in schools and home problems of adolescents, all over the world have spurred educationists to overcome some of the difficulties formerly encountered, thus adolescent behaviour problem is a global phenomenon.

### ***Behaviour Problems in Adolescents***

According to Kapp (2003), the unacceptable behaviour must have manifested for a longer duration than normally expected in order to be referred to as a problem. The behavioural problems may manifest as delinquency, aggressiveness, rebelliousness and violence (Finkenauer, Engels & Baumeister, 2005).

Many behaviour problems are observed from time to time in most children and are interpreted as culturally and socially unacceptable, however we expect different levels of self-control. When misbehaviour of adolescent persists, causes distress and interferes with daily functioning at home, with peers, and in school, then intervention is needed. Because behavioural problems impact other people in a child's life (e.g., parents, peers, and in schools), they account for most referrals to mental health professionals (Carr, 2000).

"Behaviour problems of childhood and adolescence" are actions that are considered unacceptable according to social and cultural expectations and are more stable, internalized and resistant to treatment. The manifestation of behaviour problems includes symptoms such as over-activity, inattentiveness, shyness, feeling of reflection, over-aggressiveness, timidity and delinquency (Rutter & Taylor, 2002).

It may be thought by teachers and lecturers that behaviour problems interfere or disturb class room routines, as there are several forms of behaviour problems- in the broadest sense it could be said that, any kind of behaviour that creates difficulties or reveals the presence of difficulties are behaviour problems. Misbehaviour of adolescents in school, especially in classrooms has been a major concern of teachers. Studies of the nature, extent and influences of pupil misbehaviour and possible teachers' reaction to pupil misbehaviour have become important areas of applied educational research and writing.

### ***How Can We Resolve These Behavioural Problems?***

Behavioural problems are manifested by adolescents as disruptive behaviour, aggressive and antisocial behaviour and are a major concern in many secondary schools in India. Behaviour problems may interrupt adolescents' efficiency in academic achievement and also interrupt in enjoying their normal activities within the same age group and family members. Adolescents' behavioural problems remains a major concern for many parents, teachers, social reformers and all others who are concerned with the academic achievement of students.

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The teachers can use their ability to distinguish the behavioural problems of adolescent. They can use their ability for coping with behaviour problems among adolescence. “It is the personality of the teachers and their attitude towards students more than teaching that constitutes the crux of mental health in school” (Papalia et al., 2008).

Many psychosocial interventions in schools may be useful to find any kind of behavioural problems in adolescents and target them to resolve early. Some efficient teachers can get some training in such programmes to identify the behaviour problems of adolescents. With the help of these programmes, they will become potentially well qualified in identification of behavioural problems among adolescents. The mental health programmes help to improve the coping skills, decrease the stress and increase the psychosocial well-being of the adolescence (Hill, 2002).

Schools are the major source of formal learning and excellence. Schools provide the best possible curriculum and maximize the learning opportunities for all students and provide extracurricular activities like arts and crafts and sports as well. Schools should provide guidance to students to cope with life stress and to develop social skills to allow them to integrate fully within their own society and become good citizens. Good teachers have always been interested in helping students to overcome behaviour problems and provide guidance so as to ensure optimum achievement and profitable placement. Schools are expected to play a major role in assisting adolescents to develop good relationships with others, emotional intelligence and resilience.

### **Role of CBT**

Cognitive behavioural therapy has been developed by Aaron T. Beck in 1960s and initially started out as an attempt to validate certain psychoanalytic concepts of depression. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a combination of the two psychological approaches of behaviourism and cognitive psychology and aims to change our thought patterns, our beliefs, our attitudes, and, ultimately, our behaviour, to help us face difficulties and achieve our goals (Kendall and MacDonald, 1993). CBT is a hands-on approach that requires both the therapist and the client to be engaged in the activity and willing to actively participate in the process. The therapist and client work together as a team to identify the problems the client is facing, come up with strategies for addressing them, and creating positive solutions (Willson & Branch, 2010).

CBT emphasizes the effects of maladaptive beliefs and attitudes on current behaviour. The assumption is made that a person's reaction to an event is influenced by the meanings he or she has attached to the event. Accordingly, the treatment goal is for children to develop a new cognitive structure or a modified existing structure through which he or she can function adaptively in the world (Kendall, 2000).

Cognitive behavioural therapies have been increasingly applied to remediate self-control and behaviour problems in children. CBT can be broadly defined as a combination of cognitive and behavioural therapeutic approaches used to modify maladaptive thoughts and behaviours (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979).

Cognitive behavioural therapy in schools will ensure that adolescents will have the ability to cope up their aggressive behaviour. This would mean that the risk of aggression and anxiety may decrease and they will be able deal with them (Mennuti, Freeman & Christner, 2006). Aim of using CBT with adolescents is to help them aware of distortive and automatic

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thoughts. The relevance of the automatic thought to the current situation can then be checked out and alternatives offered (Saltzman & Goldin, 2008).

### ***Role of Mindfulness***

Mindfulness is based on to become aware of the mind. Mindfulness aware of one to inner consciousness and simultaneously mental habits of reactions of sensation received by an external or internal environment that creates a chain of aversion or craving are called root cause of sorrow. So, concentration in mindfulness or meditation technique is different in quality from worldly concentration. Concentration in the perspective of mindfulness means non-involved attention and where no involvedness occurs there is no possibility to induce a particular thinking process (Beauchemin et al., 2008).

Mindfulness has positive impact on emotional and social qualities in adolescents such as the ability to feel calm and in control of one's emotions and to be resilient, compassionate and empathic. Adolescents who are mindful, either through temperament or training, tend to experience greater well-being; and mindfulness correlates positively with positive emotion, popularity and friendship-extensiveness, and negatively with negative emotion and anxiety (Sibinga et al., 2011).

Mindfulness is a basic human capacity occurring at different levels and an ability that can be trained. It is a mean which cultivates the awareness of the ongoing experience, helps to accept the world as it is and cultivates non-judgmental perspective of oneself and others (Shapiro & Carlson, 2009).

Mindfulness is a present centred attention which focuses on the “now and here” of the experience happening and helps to view clearly what is going in lives when perception is preoccupied by wishes, desires and needs. It is an antidote for mindlessness, the consciousness state that is governed by rule and routine. It makes one to focus on what is happening “right now”, focusing on “right now” means living in the present moment with regard for the future (Brown et al., 2007).

Recent research with younger populations has shown that teaching mindfulness to children and adolescents who engage in aggressive and problem behaviour is associated with a reduction in these behaviour patterns (e.g., Singh et al, 2007). For example, Singh et al (2007) taught a mindfulness practice to three teenagers who engaged in disruptive behaviour in the classroom (e.g., bullying, aggression, and non-compliance).

Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, adapted for use with children, revealed improvements in attention, reduced behavioral problems and managed anxiety and found significant improvements in selective attention, social skills and decreased test anxiety (Burke, 2010).

It is also found that children who have participated in a mindfulness-based stress reduction intervention showed improvements in attention, self-regulation (Mendelson et al., 2010).

### ***Combined Role of CBT & Mindfulness***

Cognitive behavioural interventions and mindfulness can play a major role to overcome adolescent behavioural difficulties. Specifically, cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) has been applied to a number of common clinical problems in youth, including anxiety,

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attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorder, depression, eating disorders, and oppositional defiant disorder, to name a few (Mendelson et al., 2010)..

Given the critical role schools and school staffs have in the cognitive, behavioural, emotional, social, and interpersonal development of children and adolescents, it is only fitting that school-based clinicians and school systems begin considering the implementation of CBT intervention and mindfulness services to help children and adolescents in need (Burke, 2010). With the growing evidence-base supporting the use of cognitive-behavioural interventions with young subjects, CBT or cognitive-behavioural interventions are promising for use within school settings (Mennuti, Freeman & Christner, 2006).

The need for school-based CBT and Mindfulness is greater than ever, as an adolescent's behavioural well-being. Adolescents with identified behavioural problems in schools often have less academic achievement as well as higher frequencies of truancy, suspensions, tardiness, expulsions, attention-seeking behaviours, and poor peer relationships. If these issues are left untreated or treated ineffectively in youth, they can progress to debilitating mental illness that impacts an individual's functioning as an adult (Mennuti, Freeman & Christner, 2006).

### **CONCLUSION**

CBT and Mindfulness treatments are recognized as research-based approach and have received major support for efficient treatment of a variety of clinical and nonclinical problems, including stress, depression, anxiety disorders, anger management difficulties etc. They are used in individual therapy as well as group settings, and the techniques are also commonly adapted for self-help applications and they are appropriate for use in school settings.

CBT and Mindfulness programmes for specific disorders have been developed and evaluated for efficacy and effectiveness; as a result, CBT and Mindfulness tend to give better results more consistently than any other forms of Psychotherapy. Due to better results in clinical settings, CBT interventions and Mindfulness have gained favour in school settings.

Because CBT and Mindfulness do seem to have a relevant and potentially important role in education. They are student operated as opposed to other traditional teacher operated interventions. They are based on student's self-control rather than rewards and punishment. CBT and Mindfulness instructions probably should be incorporated into curriculum at all levels of education to help students to resolve their behavioural problems and become more successful.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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