

Mental Health of Rural Children

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ABSTRACT

Mental health is among the most important public health element. The mental health is the most essential and inseparable component of health. Autism is one of the major mental health problems in rural India to observe the autistic behavior in rural children and to evaluate the effect of rural lifestyle on the mental health of these children. 30 children were randomly selected from an NGO in Haryana, between the ages of 1 to 10 years. These children were observed and marked according to the 5 point scale of ISAA (Indian Scale of Autistic Assessment). The results showed that 2 of the children selected had severe autism, 5 of them had moderate autism, and 11 of these had mild autism, whereas 12 of the 30 children were completely healthy without any autistic behavior. This study concluded that a considerable amount of children in rural areas suffer from autism. This condition can be treated using various therapies, to improve the lifestyle and confidence of children suffering from autism.

Key words: autism, mental health, ISAA, rural India.

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is among the most important public health element. The mental health is the most essential and inseparable component of health. There are a number of components and dimensions that contribute to positive health. There are other related components like spiritual, emotional, vocational, philosophical, cultural, economical, and educational, beside the physical, mental and social dimensions. Thus, the health is multidimensional. Mental health is defined as, 'a state of balance between the individual and the surrounding world, coexistence between the realities of the self and that of other people and environment'.

The individual's mental health is determined by the family and the interactions among and promotion. Thus we have healthy persons when we have healthy family. Schizophrenic with the middle socio-economic classes showed a tendency to verbalize more ,conflict, in the family as compared to those coming from low income class, who denied, hostility and 'conflicts' and over-verbalizations' of their family members. Studies based on case histories have shown that 'parental deprivation', broken home and mental illness in their childhood left adverse effects on mentally ill later in adulthood.¹

The central council of health and family welfare had recommended that mental health should be an integral part of the total health program, and should be included in all national policies and programs on health, education and social welfare. In 1995 central council of India on Health, recommended that the district mental health program to be launched in 1996-97 in four districts. Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu were granted sum of Rs. 22.5 lacs each.^{2,3}

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is the most recent nomenclature for developmental disorders characterized by persistently impaired social interaction and communication, with stereotypic behavior. These have previously been also referred to as Pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) or Autism. Western literature reports the prevalence of PDD in children as 0.67-1.2%. According to a multicentric Indian community study, it is 0.8 - 1.3% in 2- to 9-year-old children. Early identification of Autism is invaluable as timely intervention is known to improve outcomes.^{4,5,6,7}

In this study we have tried understanding the Mental and Psychological health of the children in rural area through observations of the children indulged in different activities and informal interaction with them, taking Autism as the health parameter.⁷

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

To observe the autistic behavior of children, in rural population and to evaluate the effects of rural life style on the mental health of the children. This study was to observe autistic behavior in children, the psychological aspects of rural community, and to observe the lifestyle of rural people affecting their mental behavior.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

To understand the mental and psychological health of rural children, I planned to choose children (1-10years). NGO is chosen which is already active in rural village in imparting training to young girls of rural villages such as stitching, embroidery, basic computer courses and other activities connected with their physical and psychological health.

NGO have big playground where they are engaged in various sports activities which helps them to be mentally and physically strong.

The sole objective of this NGO is to help women especially with their education which got interrupted due to various reasons and helps them to identify their hidden potentials to become independent women.

Through this NGO 30 children are planned to take part in various group and individual activities. They are observed through activities and informal interaction with them. These observations then will be evaluated on the ISAA (Indian Scale for Autistic Assessment) chart. This chart consists of 40 variables, which are scored in 5 point scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Out of the 30 children 2 were severely affected with autism, 5 children had moderate autism, 11 had mild autism whereas 12 were not at all affected (Table 2). The distribution of the severity of autism in these children is depicted in the pie chart. (Figure 1)

Table 2: Classification of autism				
Classification	No Autism >70	Mild Autism 71 to 106	Moderate Autism 107 to 153	Severe Autism >153
Total Score	12	11	5	2

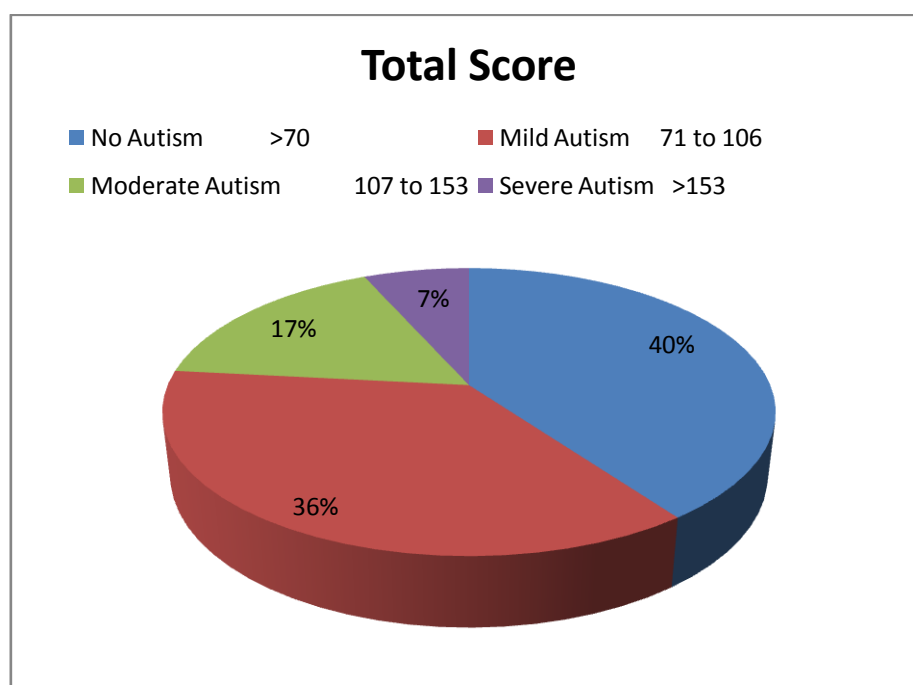


Figure 1: Distribution of autism in 30 children

CONCLUSION

In this study of mental health of children in rural area, with the help of ISAA (Indian Scale of Autism Assessment) we have concluded that:

- There is a considerable amount of autism is seen in children between the ages of 1- 10 years, as concluded with the help of ISAA.
- Out of 30 children 40 percent of the children were completely normal showing no signs of autistic behavior in them.
- Whereas 60 percent of the children were suffering from various degree of autism, namely; mild, moderate and severe.
- 6 percent of the children were suffering from severe autism. These children exhibits autistic behavior pattern almost all the time. They were completely dependent on activities of daily life on their parents.

The children suffering from autism can be treated using various therapies, like play therapy, speech therapy, etc. A number of other therapies can help people with autism improve their abilities and reduce their symptoms. Starting therapy early during preschool or before improves the chances for your child's success, but it's never too late for treatment.

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