

Children in Difficult Circumstances: Behavioral Problems and Their Management

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Abstract

Circumstances play a crucial role in a child's growth and development. These circumstances are often generated in the primary environment of the child. Therefore, the environment plays a significant role in the development of a child, whether it is physical, cognitive, emotional, social, or moral. The factors that may contribute to problem behavior include working parents, teachers with incorrect concepts, societal influences, the playing area, and stereotypes, among others. While these majorly affect children directly or indirectly, positively or negatively, there are still ways to manage the negative influences that have deeply affected the healthy growth of a child. As stakeholders, we need to pay special attention when handling the emotions and behavior of the child. The management skills will be learned in this and more cases of behavior patterns that are generated by the difficult circumstances a child may be in.

Keywords: Difficult circumstances, Behavior, development, protection, problems, disorders, management.

1. Introduction

In 2011, the Census data revealed that children under 18 in India constituted 39% of the total population, which is approximately 472 million children. Therefore, our constitution ensures that "children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and moral and material abandonment".

However, not all children are fortunate enough to have an environment that is conducive to providing appropriate opportunities for healthy growth and development of the child. They may have witnessed or suffered a lot, like poverty, hunger, migration, discrimination, and being outcasts, which are too much for their age. In today's world of equality and equity, the need to protect such children is certainly greater than that of others due to specific socio-economic, political, and geographical conditions. They have higher risks of survival, holistic development, protection, and participation. Such children are at greater risk of malnutrition, more prone to disease, or getting into illegal acts. These children are Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances (CEDC)

‘Children are in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC) when their basic needs for food, shelter, education, medical care, or protection and security are not met. Such children are at great risk of suffering from malnutrition, disease and even death.’

It is a worldwide problem. They suffer from deprivation, exploitation, and neglect for no fault of their own and reasons beyond their control. CEDC are the children whose basic needs are not met. They represent a vast and diverse group. Though the circumstances can be classified based on some differences and similarities, the children in these circumstances still have some common needs that must be taken care of, in order to make them feel safe and protected and to provide them with greater opportunities and a healthy environment for their sound growth and development.

“Children in especially difficult circumstances (CIDC) are those children who are for shorter or longer periods in their lives, exposed to intense multiple risks to their physical and mental health. A common characteristic of these children is that they lack proper adult care and protection and that they lead their lives outside mainstream society”- UNESCAP (2008)

3. The Circumstances

Learning begins with classification, and to learn more about how problems in behavior arise due to different circumstances and therefore finding ways to manage those problems, we first need to classify the difficult circumstances that a child may encounter during his/her growing stage.

UNICEF in 1996 moved from the idea of 'Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances' to the idea of 'Especially Difficult Circumstances' that causes gross violations of the rights of children and the need of special protection measures. It counts the upper limit of children's age as 18 years.

Few categories of Difficult Circumstances for children can be:

1. War and other forms of organized violence
2. Childhood disabilities
3. Neglected children
4. Deficient laws and juvenile justice system
5. Sexual indulgence
6. Early work life exposure
7. Other social conditions

These categories can further be divided into specific circumstances, which can be classified as

The figure above represents various difficult circumstances for children that may affect their behavior. According to research, the environment of a child leaves a significant impact on their development. The developmental changes that a child goes through during his/her childhood are physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and moral. All these developmental stages are interconnected with each other and may be developed simultaneously in a child. Thus, we can say that the social environment of a child has an impact on their emotional development. We will especially be looking at what kind of behavioral problems can arise as a result of difficult circumstances that he/she might have experienced.

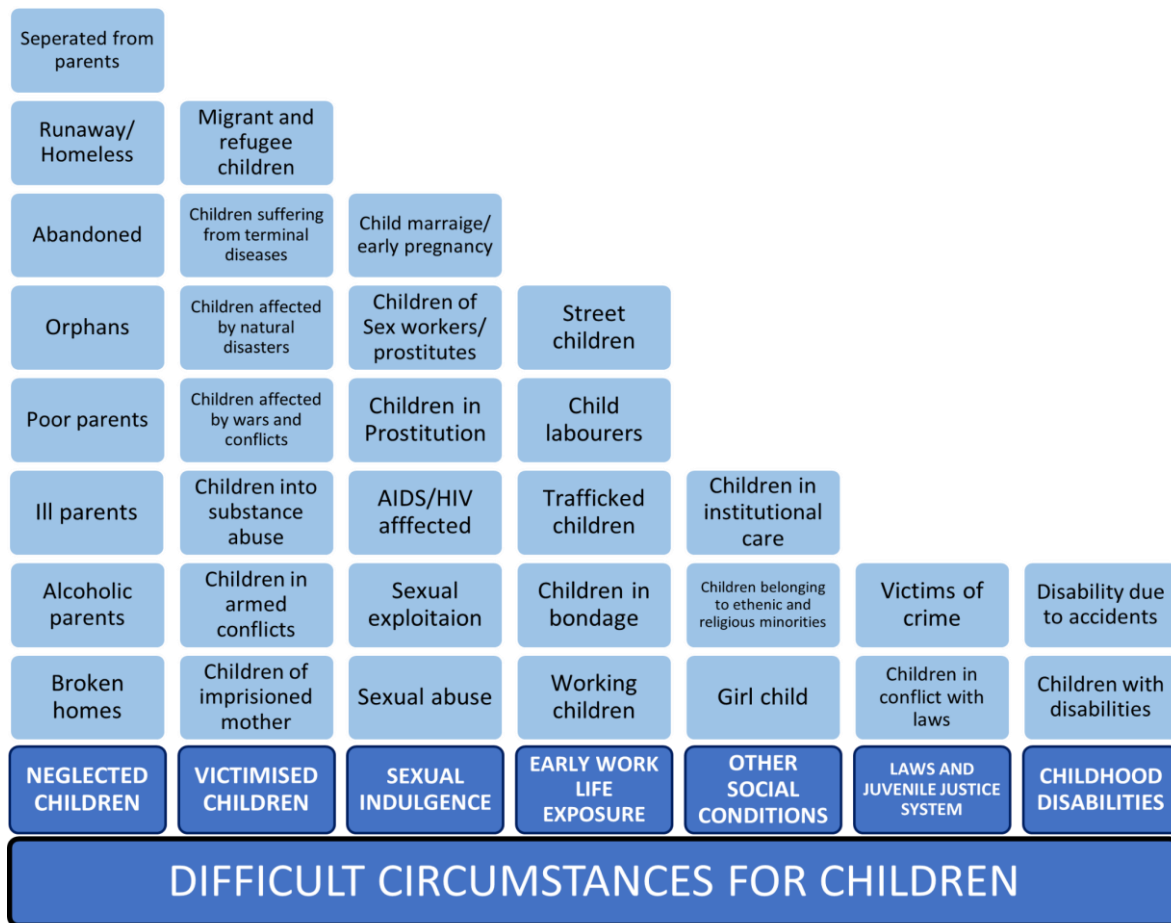


Fig. 1 Various Difficult Circumstances for Children Affecting their Behavior

4. Behavioral Problems

Children who have gone through so much in their lives often have difficulties with school, poor concentration, trust issues, fewer friends, depression, anxiety, or social withdrawal. They are in search of a safer environment, but if not provided with the right guidance, they might end up engaging in risky behavior such as smoking, drinking alcohol, early sexual activity, gang involvement, etc.

Some behavioral problems can be

- Aggressive
- Delinquent
- Passive and avoidant in their interactions
- Anxious/depressed
- Withdrawn/ depressed
- Thought problems
- Rule breaking behavior

If the impact of the circumstances is very severe, a child may develop personality disorders. Some personality disorders can be

- ❖ **Attachment disorder**- Attachment Disorders are psychiatric illnesses that can develop in young children who have problems in emotional attachments to others.
- ❖ **Conduct disorder**- Children with these problems are always judged as 'bad kids' because of their behaviors and refusal to accept the rules. These children frequently refuse to obey parents and teachers, tend to use drugs, lack empathy, are aggressive towards animals and others, normally lie, steal, and have a tendency to run away from home..
- ❖ **Problematic sexual disorder**- PSD involves inappropriate or harmful use of sexual body parts, such as the buttocks, breasts, anus, or genitals (including the penis, testicles, vulva, and vagina). The child displaying the sexual behavior, as well as any other children who might have been witnesses to it or who might have been involved, may be harmed by such behavior.
- ❖ **Develop phobias**- Children are more likely to have Philophobia, Pistanthrophobia, Claustrophobia, Nyctophobia, etc.
- ❖ **Sexual problems** - Children are more prone to develop problems in later stages of their lives.
- ❖ **Habit disorder**- Thumb sucking, nail biting, tics, stealing, telling lies, enuresis, encopresis.
- ❖ **ADHD**- Children with these problems have difficulty concentrating and moving from one task to another without completing the previous one. Constant restlessness and doing something or other tasks, and forgetting instructions given by others.
- ❖ **Oppositional Defiant Disorder**- Children with these problems easily get angered, show frequent temper tantrums, argue with parents, refuse to obey the rules, and try to blame others for their mistakes.
- ❖ **Temper Tantrum**- These are the emotional problems that occur suddenly or are sometimes severe and violent. It includes signs like screaming at the top of their lungs and crying.

5. Ways To Manage Behavioural Problems

A child is still a child, no matter what kind of difficult circumstances he or she has gone through. And thus each and every child must be provided with proper guidance, help, and support, so that we can help him/her for growth and develop. Some issues can be mild and solved quickly, but some serious problems require professional help and ongoing treatment.

The following are some effective ways to manage a child with behavioral problems.

1. Education of parents
2. Family therapy
3. Cognitive behavior therapy
4. Social training
5. Anger management
6. Counseling treatments
7. Education institutes
8. Providing protection and safety

1) **Education of Parents**- It is about educating the parents about the problems and how they should behave in front of their kids, what impact it can leave on the child, etc., and also about communication.

2) **Family Therapy**- The whole family is educated about the problems and also about communication.

3) **Cognitive Behavior Therapy**- It helps the children to control their behavior and also cope with the problems

4) Social Training- Important social skills are taught to the children, including good conversation, and how to cooperatively play with their fellow mates

5) Anger Management- Children are taught about how to recognize their signs of growing frustration. Coping skills to manage their anger and aggressive behavior.

6) Professional Help - In severe cases, we can ask for help from professionals. These professionals can be counselors, doctors, police, NGOs, UNICEF, and many more.

7) Education Institutes- The role of schools, teachers, and other educational institutes becomes very important as they are the facilitators and guides for students. They have the power to mold the students' past experiences for a better future. They must play an active part in identifying kids with behavior problems and look for chances to help a child overcome his/her behavioral problems.

6. Conclusion

The Constitution of India recognizes children as equal rights holders and grants the highest priority for their protection and well-being. Thus, there are laws for child protection and rights given to children. As adults, we must protect and help a child in need and provide them with a healthy and safe environment.

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