

The Buddhist Counselling For Students With Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)

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Introduction

One of the natural wonders of the world is the birth of a child. This is the most significant event in human life. The parents start interacting with the child and be with the child. As the parents begin to learn about the child, the child begins to learn from parents. Here the child starts learning from the family members. When he starts schooling, he learns many subject areas from the teachers, books and through different kinds of Medias. In the present world the modern child undergoes many psychological issues due to many reasons. There are many applicable solutions in the Buddhist education system for psychological issues of the students in the classroom. Attention Difficult Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common issues among the school children and this research focuses the Buddhist remedy for overcoming ADHD.

Many of Western and Asian psychologists have discussed the child counseling techniques and produce new knowledge to the world. A few scholars have discussed the Buddhist counseling techniques. Out of them Erich Fromm, Jon Kabat-Zinn, David J Kalupahana have done a great contribution. There is no any contribution with special reference to the Buddhist counseling theories and techniques on children. “The Buddha’s techniques and practice of counseling” by Jenny Quek discusses many Buddhist counseling techniques, But it does not discuss the techniques special reference to children. “An Introduction to Buddhist psychology and counseling” by Prof. Padmasiri De Silva discusses about the Buddhist psychology but it does not discuss child’s issues and child counseling. “Buddhist Psychotherapy” by H. S. S. Nissanka discusses psychotherapy mostly in relation to the four types of mindfulness. But there is no any special therapeutic approach regarding the children. “Buddhist psychiatric” by Ven. Naw Kam La Dhammasami discusses many of Buddhist counseling techniques but not special reference to the children. In my reading, since there are many psychological issues among school children, this research investigates the Buddhist counseling theories and techniques which can be applied in helping the children to cope with ADHD.

Methodology

As a teacher, I have come across many psychological issues in children when I was working with school children and novice monks. According to my personal experiences working as a school teacher in Galle and Colombo, and as a pirivena teacher in Anuradhapura, Ratnapura and Kandy, I have found mental issues which the children live in different part of the country are vary as influence of the social, culture and socioeconomic contexts where the children live in. ADHD is a common issue what I have focused my special attention. The most of the Buddhist theories, I discuss in this research are based on my personal experiences that I personally practised. The anxious situations, my school children and my pirivena novice monks faced, driven me to find out solutions in Buddhism for their psychological problems and help them to cope with their mental illnesses. As a result of my untiring effort, I could find out that there are many Buddhist counseling theories and techniques which can be applied in doing counseling for children.

The qualitative method was used for data analysis in this research. The research is a textual study which is based on the Sutta Piṭaka of the Pali Canon. The western counseling techniques are also comparatively studied and critically analyzed in this research. The encyclopedias and dictionaries are used to find the exact definition and meaning of Pāli, Sanskrit, Sinhala and English terms. The E-libraries, the internet resources and Chaṭṭhasaṅgāyanā Tipiṭaka compact disc and Tipiṭaka desktop application are used to gather information. I interviewed some teachers and discussed about the current psychological issues of the school children they experienced and met some school children in two different cities like Anuradhapura and Galle with a prior permission given by the directors of the respective education zones requested through assistant registrar of PGIHS, University of Peradeniya.

OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to find out the counselling theories and techniques in Theravāda Sutta pitaka which can be applied for ADHD in children. The enthusiasm of developing the field of Buddhist Studies is what I was fuelled working on this research. My intention of helping the children to cope with their psychological issue ADHD by composing a Buddhist education system and counselling paper for therapists, teachers, school administrators, children and parents was kept me motivated.

The objective of this study is to develop the field of Buddhist Counselling and Buddhist education. Who will benefit this research? It is for under graduates and graduate students majoring in Buddhist Studies, counselling, psychology, education and sociology. The professionals, who work with children or who anticipate working with children and families will be benefited. Any mental

health practitioner who involves with children, parents, and families will find this research a practical and helpful resource in handling counselling concerns. This study makes the readers more aware about the mental disorders ADHD of the children and also will pay much attention on mental well-being of the children.

Discussion

Mindfulness Based Attention Adequacy Therapy (MBAAT) is newly introduced therapy in this research. The MBAAT is suitable for the Attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD). Attention deficit disorder can be seen among the young and teenage school children. This is a challenging situation for a child who cannot concentrate on the lessons in the classroom. The education of such a child might be destroyed due to this disorder. Therefore it is necessary to pay our special attention for the children who has ADD. The symptoms of attention deficit disorder are as follows. The child with ADD:

- Is easily distracted
- Does not follow directions or finish tasks
- Does not seem to be listening
- Does not pay attention and makes careless mistakes
- Forgets about daily activities
- Has problems organizing daily tasks
- Does not like to do things that require sitting still
- Often loses things
- Tends to daydream

The mindfulness is the remedy for most of the psychological issues. Many mental illnesses appear due to lack of mindfulness. It happens when the *āsavas* present and in active position in the mind. When the patient practices mindfulness, the *āsava* can be controlled. When the *āsava* is controlled, the mind is restful. Then the client would see that his mind is so calm inside and he enjoys the reliefs in his body as well. When the child client practices mindfulness for daily basis it cures his attention deficit disorder (ADD) in some acceptable level. Unless a man eradicates his defilements, the attention deficit disorder would not be fully recovered. But the attention can be increase up to some acceptable level that helps the child to do his studies well.

The therapist can practice breathing meditation (*Āṇāpāṇasati* Meditation)

with child client who has ADD. This therapy is suitable for the children in 12 – 18 of age. This therapy is based on breathing meditation. When the breath in, be mindful with the in-breath. When the breath out, be mindful with the out-breath. (So satova assasati sato passa sati). We can count the breaths 1 – 10. The therapist can practise this for 10 minutes to 30 minutes. Better to start with 10 minutes. Ask the child to practise it at home daily as homework. The therapist needs to arrange a calm and quiet place for this session. If your counseling room situated in a busy environment remember to arrange any other place for sessions. After you arrange the place you can ready for the treatments.

1. Ask the child sit comfortably
2. Ask him to take several long breaths
3. Ask him to focus attention to his body posture
4. Ask him to focus attention to his head, eyes, nose, mouth, neck, shoulders, chest, hands, fingers, stomach, legs, feet and toes. Ask him to do it reverse order starting from toes. (toes, feet, legs, stomach, fingers, hands, chest, shoulders, neck, mouth, nose, eyes, head)
5. Ask him to focus attention on the breath. (Instruct him not to breath purposely)
6. As it difficult for the child, ‘follow up’ is necessary to keep him on the track.
7. Ask him to catch the place where the wind touch. (upper lip/ nostril)
8. Practice this for 10 – 15 minutes.
9. Ask the child focus attention to his eyes.
10. Ask him to slowly open his eyes mindfully.

After he is done, talk with him about the experiences. The counselor may ask the following questions.

1. Did you enjoy this activity?
2. Were you able to catch the breath where it touched?
3. Did you feel the motion in stomach?
4. Did you feel the motion of your shoulders?
5. How do you feel now?
6. Will you practise it again?

After finished the practice, if he say 'yes' for the last question fix the next meeting. Ask him to practise it at home and ask him to keep notes what his experiences were with the date and time. The therapist can do this meditation for several sessions. Remember to avoid bored situation skillfully when you work with the children. To avoid bored situation, counselor can practice other therapeutic treatment which suitable for the client. Mixed therapeutic approaches will be more interested and it avoids the bored situation of the client.

Practising meditation on five body parts (*Taca Pañcakayaya* – head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin) is another technique which can be applied as a therapy for children with ADD. This therapy is suitable for the children in 5 – 18 of age. This therapy is called *Kāyagatāsati* meditation in Buddhism. When we practise this meditation the *Taca Pañcaka* [five body parts ends with *taca* (skin)] must be recited and imaging the particular body parts at the meantime. This must be practiced in two aspects. They are direct order and reverse order. When practicing this recitation while thinking of the body parts it boosts the attention and function the brain of the child well. Practice this for 10 – 30 minutes per counseling session. The therapist should ask the child to practise it daily basis at home. This increases the attention level of the child.

- Direct order – *kesa, loma, nakha, dantā, taco*
- Direct order – head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin
- Reverse order – *taco, dantā, nakhā, loma, kesā*
- Reverse order – skin, teeth, nails, body hair, head hair

There are other techniques here I introduced with reference to MBAAT. These counseling techniques can be practised with young and teenagers (age 5 - 18) who have ADHD.

Mindful Exercise Based Attention Adequacy Technique (MEBAAT)

Being mindful helps people do better in just about every part of life, like focusing on homework or feeling less stressed out. Practicing mindfulness a little bit every day helps children to build attention skill. These exercises help children develop mindfulness in different daily works such as walking, sitting, standing, eating, drinking, sweeping, washing, bathing, brushing teeth etc.

“gacchanto vā ‘gacchāmī’ ti pajānāti, ṭhito vā ‘ṭhitomhī’ ti pajānāti, nisinno vā ‘nisinnomhī’ ti pajānāti, sayāno vā ‘sayānomhī’ ti pajānāti. Yathā yathā vā pan-assa kāyo pañihito hoti, tathā tathā naṃ pajānāti”

"when walking, the monk discerns, 'I am walking.' When standing, he

discerns, 'I am standing.' When sitting, he discerns, 'I am sitting.' When lying down, he discerns, 'I am lying down.' Or however his body is disposed, that is how he discerns it.

This therapy can be practised with children who have attention deficit disorder.

Mindful walking (*caṃkamana*)

Select a place inside or outside of the counseling room which is suitable for mindful walking. Take several long breaths and start the first step. Raise one leg mindfully. Step forward on the ground mindfully. Raise the other leg mindfully and step forward on the ground mindfully. Start with slow phase. Walk forward 10 – 15 steps and then turn. When turning back turn mindfully. Practise this for 10 – 20 minutes. Then ask the child:

- How do you feel?
- Did you feel the touch of the ground?
- Was the touch of the ground cool or warm / soft or rough?
- Did you feel the motion of the muscle of the leg?
- Shall we practise it again?

After the counseling session, ask the child to practice it at home every day. Instruct the parents to practice mindful walking as a routine with the child selecting a suitable time. Instruct them to select the same time every day for practices. In the next session, ask about his experience. This technique is suitable for all age groups between 5 – 18 years.

Mindful eating or drinking

The eating or the drinking is a physical activity engages many body parts. The hand, fingers, the mouth, the tongue, the teeth, the esophagus and the stomach are functioning together with eating and drinking. Eating or drinking mindfully means aware about the function and feeling of these body parts. This therapy can be practised with the children age 5 – 18 years.

When the child client visits you, prepare him a cup of tea/ coffee or a cool drink as he prefers. Remember to do it mindfully as your client might imitate you. After you ready, drink with him mindfully. Follow up him asking some questions whether he feels the hot/ cool of the tea/ drink, what taste it is, whether he feels the touch of the esophagus and stomach. Ask him to enjoy the drinking taking several minutes.

After finish drinking or eating, the following questions you may ask:

- Did you enjoy the drink?
- Did you feel hot/ cool?
- What did it taste?
- Did you feel the touch of the teeth?
- Did you feel how it flows through the esophagus?
- Did you feel how it flows to the stomach?

The counselor can practise some other mindfulness exercise like walking, drawing, playing or sweeping according to the remaining time. Remember, not to exceed one hour counseling session. Ask the child to practice it at home.

Mindful sweeping

We have seen that how bhikkhus sweep the Bodhi compound (Bo-maluwa). It is swept in a particular style like a shape of a coconut leaf. If it is possible, counselor can ask the client to meet him at temple and conduct sessions at temple with a prior permission of monks. If not, counselor can arrange a suitable place for session in his place or anywhere else.

Show the child how to sweep first. Then ask him to do so. Start from a corner and ask him to sweep following a shape like a coconut leaf. After he is done one leaf, ask him to explore it whether there are any shortcomings. Then ask him to complete another one shape. Guide him to do it at a slow phase at the beginning. After he completed, ask the following questions.

- Did you enjoy sweeping?
- Did you notice how dry leaves or dirt are swept?
- Did you hear the sound and rhythm of sweeping?
- Did you feel how the broom touches the ground? Soft or hard?
- Did you notice the starting point of a sweep?
- Did you notice the end point of a sweep?
- Did you notice the alignment of sweeps?
- Do you think whether it is nice?
- Will you sweep again?

Guide the child sweep mindfully. Ask him to practise it more and more, until he ends with the best sweeping. In the next session, see his improvement. Try different styles and designs.

When the child does all these exercises, he will probably find that his mind wanders after a minute or two. It goes here and there. That is normal. Minds do that. Educate the child that it is our job to gently bring our attention back to the thing we focus on. The more he practices doing that, the better he trains his brain to pay attention. This increases the child's level of attention and he would cope with attention deficit disorder (ADD) and attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD).

Summary

The results of this research have shown Buddhist counselling in the field of Buddhist education system is more effective for children who have got ADHD. In the light of increasing evidence that promoting mental health in children and young people can have positive effects upon learning, achievement, school attendance and behaviour. The application of Buddhist counselling for children is both timely and appropriate research. The resulting research has been in high demand with practitioners, parents, teachers, service managers and local education authorities to use as a resource in supporting of child counselling provision.

Key words: Counselling, Buddhist Counselling, Children, Mental Disorders, ADHD

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