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Dr. Anagha Mahadik

Department of Homoeopathic Philosophy, Motiwala (National) Homoeopathic Medical College, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Dr. FF Motiwala

Principle, H.O.D., Homeopathic Philosophy, Guide and Professor Motiwala (National) Homoeopathic Medical College, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Dr. Gayatri Nimbhore

Professor, Homeopathic Philosophy, Motiwala (National) Homoeopathic Medical College, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Dr. Punam Pawar

Department of Homoeopathic Philosophy, Motiwala (National) Homoeopathic Medical College, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Dr. Janga Sravani

Department of Homoeopathic Philosophy, Motiwala (National) Homoeopathic Medical College, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Anagha Mahadik

Department of Homoeopathic Philosophy, Motiwala (National) Homoeopathic Medical College, Nashik, Maharashtra, India

A prospective study to understand maternal mental health during pregnancy and its relation to neurodevelopmental disorders in children

Anagha Mahadik, FF Motiwala, Gayatri Nimbhore, Punam Pawar and Janga Sravani

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Abstract

Background: Neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Intellectual Disability (ID), and Communication Disorders (CD) significantly impair cognitive, behavioural, and adaptive functioning in children. Emerging evidence suggests that maternal mental health during pregnancy plays a critical role in fetal brain development. Emotional conflicts such as grief, suppression, domination, anxiety, or neglect may adversely influence neurodevelopmental outcomes. Homoeopathy, with its holistic emphasis on psychosomatic causation and individualization, offers a therapeutic approach addressing both maternal emotional influences and the child's constitution.

Aim: To evaluate the relationship between maternal mental conflicts during pregnancy and specific neurodevelopmental disorders in children, and to assess the effectiveness of individualized homoeopathic treatment.

Methods: A prospective observational study was conducted on 30 children aged 1-15 years diagnosed with NDDs. Detailed maternal mental history during pregnancy was recorded. Individualized homoeopathic remedies were prescribed based on totality of symptoms and repertorisation using CARA software. Clinical outcomes were assessed using the MANAS (Multidimensional Assessment of Neurodevelopment and Adaptive Skills) scale. Statistical analysis was performed using paired t-test.

Results: Maternal mental conflicts were identified in 76.6% of cases. ASD (40%) and ADHD (30%) were the most prevalent diagnoses. Specific maternal conflicts showed consistent associations with particular disorders. Mean MANAS score improved from 9.6 ± 2.91 to 32.8 ± 7.26 after treatment, with a mean gain of 23.2 points ($t=16.71$, $p<0.001$). Clinically, 80% of children showed marked improvement and 20% mild improvement, with no unimproved cases.

Conclusion: Maternal mental health during pregnancy appears to influence neurodevelopmental outcomes in children. Individualized homoeopathic treatment, when guided by maternal emotional history, demonstrated significant clinical improvement and may serve as a valuable adjunctive therapeutic approach.

Keywords: Autism, ADHD, Homoeopathy, MANAS Scale, maternal mental health, prenatal stress, neurodevelopmental disorders

Introduction

Neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) encompass a group of conditions with onset during the developmental period and are characterized by deficits in cognition, communication, behaviour, and adaptive functioning. According to DSM-5, these include Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Intellectual Disability (ID), and Communication Disorders (CD).

The prenatal period represents a critical window for brain development, during which the maternal environment exerts a profound influence on fetal neurodevelopment. Maternal stress, anxiety, grief, suppression of emotions, or exposure to domination and neglect can alter neuroendocrine pathways, placental signaling, and epigenetic regulation, thereby increasing vulnerability to neurodevelopmental disorders.

Homoeopathy recognizes the inseparable connection between mind and body and emphasizes the influence of emotional disturbances on disease expression. Maternal emotional conflicts during pregnancy are considered capable of disturbing the vital force of the unborn child, potentially manifesting later as developmental and behavioural disorders.

This study seeks to explore these associations and evaluate the role of individualized homoeopathic intervention.

Materials and Methods

- **Study Design:** Prospective observational study.
- **Study Setting:** Cases were collected from college OPDs, peripheral OPDs, homoeopathic medical camps, and private clinics.
- **Sample Size:** 30 children aged 1-15 years.

Inclusion Criteria

- Diagnosed cases of NDDs
- Presence of maternal mental history during pregnancy
- Informed consent obtained

Exclusion Criteria

- Children above 15 years
- Absence of maternal mental history
- Irregular follow-up or concurrent alternative therapies

Assessment Tool

MANAS (Multidimensional Assessment of Neurodevelopment and Adaptive Skills) scale.

Statistical Analysis

Paired t-test used to assess pre- and post-treatment MANAS scores.

Results

Gender Distribution

- **Male:** 83.3%
- **Female:** 16.7%

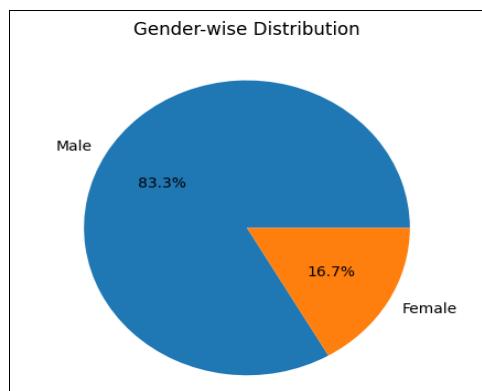


Fig 1: Gender-wise distribution

Age Distribution

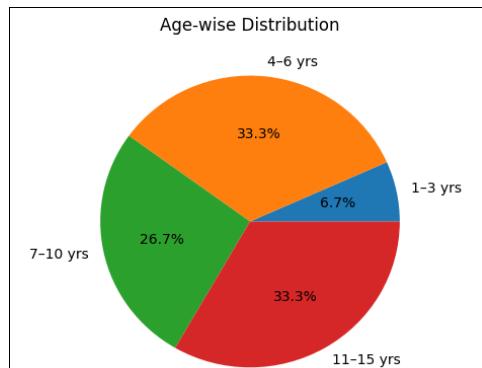


Fig 2: Age-wise distribution

Distribution of Neurodevelopmental Disorders

- **ASD:** 40%
- **ADHD:** 30%
- **ID:** 20%
- **CD:** 10%

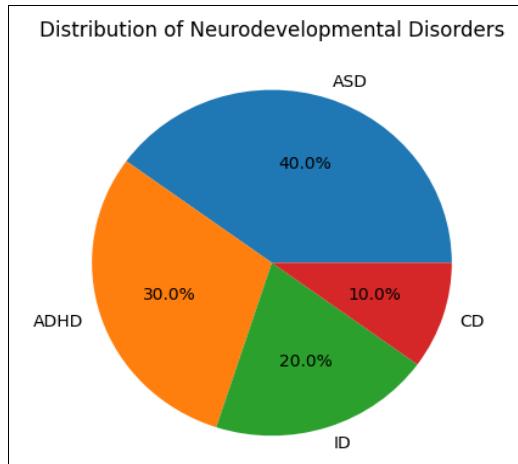


Fig 3: Distribution of neurodevelopmental disorders

Maternal Mental Conflict

Maternal mental conflict during pregnancy was identified in 76.6% of cases.

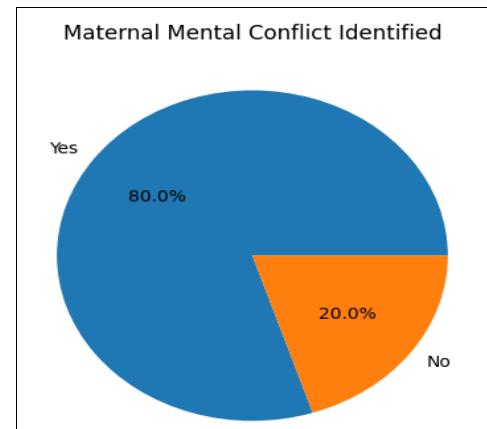


Fig 4: Maternal mental conflict identified (Yes/No)

Types of Maternal Mental Conflicts

Most common conflicts included suppressed emotions, neglect, domination, anxiety, and fear.

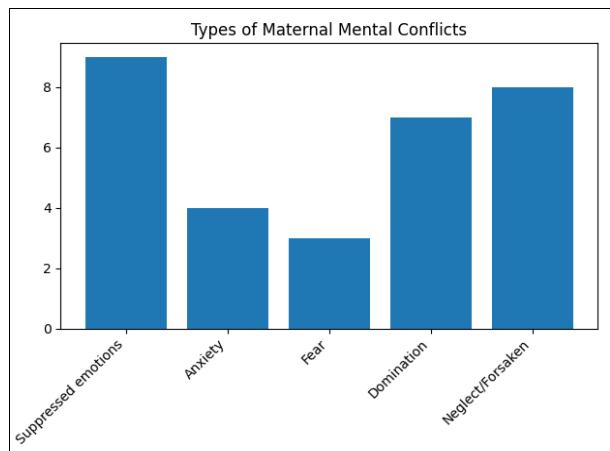


Fig 5: Types of maternal mental conflicts

Clinical Outcome (MANAS Scale)

Mean MANAS score improved significantly after treatment.

- **Before treatment:** 9.6 ± 2.91
- **After treatment:** 32.8 ± 7.26
- **Mean gain:** +23.2
- **T=16.71, p<0.001**

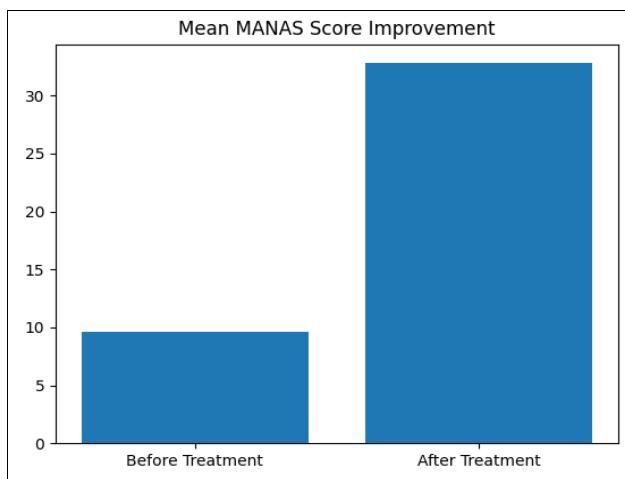


Fig 6: MANAS score improvement

Discussion

This study demonstrates a consistent association between maternal emotional conflicts during pregnancy and neurodevelopmental disorders in children. Suppressed emotions and domination were frequently linked with ASD, while neglect and forsaken feelings were more common in ADHD. These findings support the hypothesis that prenatal emotional stressors may influence neurodevelopmental trajectories.

Individualized homoeopathic treatment resulted in statistically and clinically significant improvement in all cases. Remedies such as *Natrum muriaticum*, *Carcinosin*, *Stramonium*, and *Staphysagria* were frequently indicated when maternal emotional trauma was prominent. The results emphasize the importance of incorporating maternal history into paediatric neurodevelopmental management.

Conclusion

Maternal mental health during pregnancy appears to be an important influencing factor in the development of neurodevelopmental disorders. Individualized homoeopathic treatment, when guided by maternal emotional history, demonstrated significant improvement in neurodevelopmental and adaptive functioning. These findings highlight the potential role of homoeopathy as a holistic and adjunctive therapeutic modality.

Conflict of Interest

Not available

Financial Support

Not available

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