

DR. SUSHMA GOPALAN

Lead Consultant - Paediatric Psychology and Child Life Services

Qualification

PhD (Psychology) | MA (Psychology) | MSc (BCGBT) | PGDMH | PGDECFE | Dip. Immunology | Dip. Genetic Engineering

Overview

Dr. Sushma Gopalan is an exceptionally accomplished Paediatric psychologist practicing in Hebbal, Bangalore. As the Lead Consultant in Paediatric Psychology and Child Life Services at Manipal Hospital Hebbal, she plays a transformative role in Paediatric healthcare by seamlessly embedding emotional, psychological, and behavioural support into routine medical care for young patients and their families. Renowned as a leading Paediatric psychologist in Hebbal, her pioneering vision for hospital-based emotional support and family care systems has set a benchmark for compassionate, holistic healing in Paediatric medicine. Dr. Gopalan’s clinical work is rooted in a remarkably rich and diverse academic background. She holds a Ph.D. in Psychology, an MA in Psychology, an MSc in Behavioural Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (BCGBT), a PGDMH, and a PGDECFE, alongside Diplomas in Immunology and Genetic Engineering. This multi-faceted knowledge base enables her to apply a unique science-backed, interdisciplinary lens to her clinical practice. Crucially, she is the driving force behind the implementation of Child Life Services across medical institutions in India, a structured, evidence-based psychosocial

framework aimed at lessening the emotional strain on children, parents, and clinical teams during diagnosis, hospitalization, and complex treatments. Guided by the philosophy that “healing is not complete until the mind and heart find peace,” Dr. Sushma has spearheaded India’s first fully integrated Paediatric psychosocial care model, earning her a reputation as one of the top Paediatric psychologists in Hebbal. Her broad clinical scope spans paediatric and adolescent psychology, where she supports young patients through anxiety, phobias, depression, treatment-related trauma, behavioural shifts, body image struggles, and overall emotional recovery. Beyond standalone therapy, Dr. Sushma collaborates directly across critical sub-specialties, including paediatric endocrinology, bone marrow transplant (BMT), immunology, pulmonology, oncology, neurology, and general paediatrics—to enhance emotional resilience and boost treatment compliance. Grounded in trauma-informed and chronic illness care, she also walks alongside families, guiding them through complex diagnoses, grief, and long-term medical journeys. As an expert in Child Life interventions, Dr. Gopalan turns intimidating clinical environments into supportive, developmentally tailored spaces. Using therapeutic storytelling, art and play therapy, procedural preparation, and parent-sibling guidance, her structured programs empower children to feel prepared and secure. This significantly reduces fear, procedural distress, and resistance to medical care. Beyond Paediatric care, Dr. Sushma Gopalan provides specialized psychological support in perinatal and maternal mental health. She works closely with women navigating IVF, fertility challenges, high-risk pregnancies, postpartum depression, and infant loss. Grounded in the belief that a parent’s emotional well-being directly impacts a child's health trajectory, her family-focused interventions are particularly vital within Paediatric intensive care units (PICU) and NICU settings. A dedicated advocate for community mental health, Dr. Gopalan has mentored over 50 school counsellors and led more than 50 workshops for children, parents, educators, medical teams, and corporate groups. She also drives

targeted mental health initiatives for defence personnel and high-risk groups, translating complex psychological concepts into practical tools for resilience, emotional regulation, and trauma recovery. Internationally recognized, she is affiliated with the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP), USA, holds memberships in key global paediatric and psychological bodies, and has published extensively on hospital psychology, caregiver support, and paediatric mental health. At Manipal Hospital Hebbal, Dr. Sushma Gopalan continues to elevate the standard of child health care through a blend of clinical mastery and genuine empathy.

Fellowship & Membership

- Member of ACLP (Association of Child Life Professionals), USA: Membership Number: 1155416
- Affiliated member of ICANCL (Indian Child Abuse, Neglect and Child Labour) CANCL/AF/2023/G-59
- Associate Member of IAP-PEM (Pediatric Emergency Medicine Chapter of Indian Academy of Pediatrics) – PEM/2024/A-100
- Member of American Psychological Association (C2405029531)
- Senior Member of Indian Counselling Association (ICA23202356)
- Lifetime Member of Counsellors Council of India (CRN146542)
- Co-Founder – Child Life Services, India

Field of Expertise

- Dr. Sushma Gopalan’s field expertise spans Pediatric and Hospital Psychology, Child Life Services, Family Counselling, Trauma Recovery, and Community Mental Health Advocacy. Her multidisciplinary experience bridges healthcare, psychology, and education — creating emotionally intelligent

systems of care for children, families, and professionals.

- Pediatric Psychological Care - Specialized in providing emotional and psychological support for children in hospital settings, Expertise across pediatric subspecialties including Oncology, Endocrinology, Immunology, Pulmonology, and Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT), Skilled in play therapy, pre-procedural preparation, and medical coping strategies for children and families, Focused on reducing fear, anxiety, and treatment distress through developmentally appropriate psychoeducation.
- Child Life Services & Psycho-Social Care - Founder of Child Life Services India, the country’s first structured hospital-based Child Life program, Integration of psycho-social support within medical care to ensure holistic healing, Expert in developing emotionally supportive hospital environments through staff training and child-centered interventions, Experience in creating protocols and guidelines for Child Life practice and hospital counselling in India.
- Maternal and Perinatal Mental Health - Psychological support for women and families during pregnancy, IVF treatments, and postpartum periods, Specialized in Postpartum Depression (PPD) screening, therapy, and family adjustment counselling, Focus on emotional well-being of mothers and caregivers during and after childbirth.
- Chronic Illness and Long-Term Pediatric Care - Emotional and behavioral support for children with chronic or life-threatening conditions, Expertise in treatment adherence, resilience-building, and sibling support, Family counselling for managing prolonged hospitalizations and caregiver fatigue.
- Psychological Assessment and Diagnostics - Skilled in conducting developmental, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral assessments, Experience in diagnosing and managing learning disabilities, ADHD, and emotional disorders,

Uses standardized, evidence-based tools to inform therapy and school support recommendations.

- Family and Parent Counselling - Comprehensive family therapy to strengthen communication, parenting, and coping, Expert in addressing behavioral concerns, adolescent issues, and parent–child relationships, Guidance for families navigating medical, emotional, or developmental challenges.
- Trauma, Grief, and Crisis Counselling - Trauma-informed therapist working with grief, loss, PTSD, and adjustment difficulties, Emotional support for families coping with terminal illness or bereavement, Focused on restoring emotional safety, resilience, and post-traumatic growth.
- Therapeutic Modalities - Proficient in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Supportive Psychotherapy, Play Therapy, Art Therapy, and Mindfulness-based interventions, Uses integrative, culturally sensitive therapeutic frameworks, Adapts interventions for both children and adults based on developmental needs.
- Community Mental Health and Advocacy - Active public speaker addressing mental health awareness for defence personnel, Trained 50+ school counsellors to strengthen student emotional support systems, Conducted 50+ workshops for children, parents, teachers, and corporate professionals on stress management, parenting, and emotional resilience, Advocate for accessible, preventive mental health education across schools and communities.
- Hospital-Based Training and Program Development - Developer of hospital counselling frameworks and multidisciplinary care models, Trainer for healthcare teams on empathetic communication and psycho-social support, Consultant for hospitals aiming to establish Child Life departments and emotional care programs.
- Research and Academic Engagement - Contributor to Child Life

and pediatric psychology research in India, Focus on developing standardized assessment tools for behavioural challenges and family coping, Dedicated to advancing academic understanding of hospital-based psycho-social interventions.

- Global Collaboration and Leadership - Collaborates with international Child Life specialists and healthcare institutions, Works on aligning Indian Child Life practices with global standards of pediatric emotional care, and advocates for policy inclusion of psycho-social services in pediatric healthcare systems.
- Organisational and Program Leadership - Proven experience in strategic planning, operational management, and program execution for healthcare initiatives. Expertise in building interdisciplinary teams and establishing sustainable hospital–community partnerships. Visionary leader committed to expanding the Child Life movement across India.
- Professional Philosophy - Believes in integrating mind and medicine to achieve holistic healing, emphasises that mental health is healthcare, not an auxiliary service, and advocates for compassionate, family-centred, and culturally grounded mental health care models.
- Pediatric Psychological Care – Disorders, Oncology, BMT & chronic illness
- Child-centred, emotionally supportive hospital systems
- Maternal & Perinatal Mental Health – IVF, Pregnancy, PPD
- Family, Parent & Adolescent Counselling, Parent Training
- Stress, Anxiety, Bullying, Peer-pressure, Body image, developmental
- Trauma, Grief & Crisis Care
- CBT | Play Therapy | Art Therapy | Mindfulness
- Community Mental Health Advocate & Trainer
- Mental Health is Healthcare – Mind + Medicine

Languages Spoken

- English
- Hindi
- Tamil
- Kannada

Awards & Achievements

- 2024 scholarship and membership winner from India for ACLP (Association of Child Life Professionals), USA
- 2024 Dr Moopen’s Service Excellence Award Winner from Aster DM Healthcare

Talks & Publications

- Knowledge, Attitude and Perceptions of Parents Regarding Risks for Unintentional Childhood Injuries (DOI: 10.32677/ijch.v11i4.4617)
- Effectiveness of CBT in Overcoming the Aggression Symptoms among school students (Mental Health and Well Being – New Paradigms; page no. 86, ISBN: 978-93-90951-75-8)
- Improving Pediatric Outcomes by Supporting Caregivers: Evidence for Child Life Services as a Dual-Benefit Intervention – Paper ID: IJNRD2412302 (IJNRD - International Journal Of Novel Research And Development)
- Mental First Aid – Role of Child Life Services in Pediatric Emergency Care – Code PEM Issue: 3/10/2024
- Child Life Services In India: A Pilot Study (DOI: 10.36948/ijfmr.2025.v07i03.45282)
- Ginigeri C., Gopalan S. Child Life Services in India: A Pilot Study.

IJFMR, 2025 May.[11]

- Ginigeri C., Gopalan S. Behavioral Transformation Through Structured Play Therapy in Hospitalized Children
- Presented in Aster CME 2023 and covered in Aster CMI's media series on pediatric emotional health.[5]
- Ginigeri C., Gopalan S. Bridging Physical and Mental Health in Pediatric Care. Aster Clinical Review Series, 2023.