

DR. SUSHMA GOPALAN

Lead Consultant - Child Life Services (Psychology)

Qualification

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

Overview

Dr. Sushma Gopalan is a highly skilled paediatric psychologist on Old Airport Road. She is currently practising as the Lead Consultant - Child Life Services (Psychology) at Manipal Hospital Old Airport Road, Bangalore, bringing a transformative approach to paediatric care by integrating emotional, behavioural, and psychological support into medical treatment for children and their families. With her pioneering vision and extensive expertise in paediatric psychology, hospital-based emotional care, and family support systems, she is widely recognised as one of the best paediatric psychologists in Yelahanka, known for her ability to humanise hospital environments and redefine holistic paediatric healing. With a multifaceted academic background including a Ph.D. in Psychology, MA in Psychology, MSc in Behavioural Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (BCGBT), PGDMH, PGDECFE, Diploma in Immunology, and Diploma in Genetic Engineering, Dr. Sushma brings a deeply interdisciplinary approach to clinical practice. She is the key force behind introducing Child Life Services in India, a structured hospital-based psychosocial program designed to support children, parents, and healthcare providers emotionally during illness, diagnosis,

hospital stays, and long-term treatment. Her vision, driven by the belief that “healing is not complete until the mind and heart find peace,” has shaped India's first integrated psychosocial care framework in paediatrics, making her one of the best paediatric psychologists in Yelahanka for children needing emotional support alongside medical care. Dr. Sushma’s expertise spans paediatric psychological care, family counselling, trauma-informed therapy, maternal mental health, chronic illness support, paediatric oncology, behavioural assessments, grief counselling, and hospital-based psycho-social care. She specialises in helping children cope with anxiety, fear, depression, hospitalisation stress, treatment trauma, behavioural changes, body image concerns, and emotional recovery. She plays a pivotal role in multiple paediatric departments, including paediatric endocrinology, bone marrow transplant (BMT), immune disorders, pulmonology, oncology, neurology, and general paediatrics, contributing to both emotional well-being and treatment adherence. As an expert in Child Life Services, she designs emotionally supportive hospital environments through age-appropriate medical education, play therapy, art therapy, procedural preparation, parent guidance, sibling support, and therapeutic storytelling. Through her programs, children feel more informed, prepared, and emotionally secure during treatment, significantly reducing fear, treatment resistance, and procedural distress. She is highly revered for her ability to transform medical procedures into emotionally supportive, developmentally appropriate experiences for children. Her work also extends deeply into maternal and perinatal mental health, supporting women undergoing fertility treatments, IVF cycles, complicated pregnancies, postpartum depression, infant loss, and adjustment challenges. She firmly believes that parental emotional stability directly influences child health outcomes, making her family-centric counselling approach highly impactful in NICU and paediatric critical care settings. Dr. Sushma is also a visionary leader in community mental health and psychological education. She has trained over 50 school counsellors, conducted 50+

workshops for children, parents, healthcare providers, teachers, and corporate professionals, and actively advocates mental health awareness among defence personnel and emotionally high-risk groups. She is known for turning complex psychological concepts into practical tools for resilience, emotional regulation, communication, parenting, and trauma recovery. Her international affiliations with the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP), USA, along with her role as a member of Indian and global psychological, counselling, paediatric emergency medicine, and emotional healthcare associations, underline her global impact. Her research contributions include multiple publications on hospital psychology, behavioural transformation, trauma recovery, pediatric mental health, and caregiver support models. With her rare ability to blend clinical precision with empathy, Dr. Sushma continues to redefine holistic paediatric healing at Manipal Hospital Yelahanka. Her vision to establish Child Life Departments in every Indian hospital, train emotionally aware healthcare professionals, and integrate mental health as an essential part of paediatric medicine embodies her leadership and dedication. Today, she stands as a pioneer transforming paediatric emotional care in India, one child, one family, and one hospital at a time, making her undoubtedly one of the best paediatric psychologists in Old Airport Road.

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.