



PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

PROMOTING POSITIVE PARENTING

DATE:

14 November 2023

LOCATION:

Rawalpindi Medical College



Pafec.org



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Acronyms

PAFEC	Pakistan Alliance for Early Childhood
PAHCHAAN	Protection and Help of Children Against Abuse and Neglect
NGO	Non-Government Organization
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
VAC	Violence against Children
DEAR	Drop Everything and Read
NCRC	National Commission for Rights of the Child

Introduction

Pakistan Alliance for Early Childhood (PAFEC) initiated a series of pre-conference symposiums on Positive Parenting in collaboration with the Pakistan Pediatric Association (PPA), UNICEF, SUN Secretariat, Nutrition Section, Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives (MoPD&SIs), WHO, and Protection & Help of Children Against Abuse and Neglect (PAHCHAAN).

The 4th symposium of this series was held on 14th November 2023 at the Rawalpindi Medical University, Rawalpindi.

The symposium was attended by over 300 participants including doctors, nurses, ECD practitioners, PAFEC institutional and individual members, and many more. Renowned experts in the fields of child development, protection, health, nutrition, and parenting delivered keynote speeches. The event provided an opportunity for the participants to gain research-based knowledge about these areas which are critical for early childhood development. The different presentations generated interest among the

participants, hence they asked questions from the experts for more clarity about the concepts and ways for promoting Positive Parenting to address adversities in the lives of children. The symposium aimed at providing a platform for key partners to deliberate upon the issues related to the adverse experiences of children which hamper their development and limit their opportunities to survive and thrive. Specific objectives of the symposium included the following:

Objectives of the Symposium:

1. Foster discussion among stakeholders about positive parenting and child development
2. Explore the significance of positive parenting practices versus Adverse Childhood Experiences in child protection
3. Understand the key components of the Nurturing Care Framework and its importance for Early Childhood Development
4. Understand Key Family Care Practices (KFCEPs) and identify avenues to integrate the key messages of KFCEPs within governmental and non-governmental sectors.

Symposium Proceedings

The pre-conference symposium began with the recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by an opening address by Prof. Rai M Asghar, Dean Pediatrics, and Controller Examinations, Rawalpindi Medical University. He welcomed the participants and introduced the crucial role of



parenting in early childhood development. He emphasized the importance of a focused approach to early childhood development and child protection. He acknowledged the invaluable contributions made by Dr. Naeem Zafar and Dr. Tufail Muhammad for child rights, safety, and protection. Their efforts included the establishment of the First Child Protection Unit at Benazir Bhutto Hospital, which now collaborates with 50 hospitals across the city, he said. He also mentioned a network of focal persons throughout the country who are working actively to report acts of child abuse and violations of child rights.

Dr. Asghar mentioned the integration of a Child Rights Curriculum and regular assessments into the Diploma in Child Health Programme. He

emphasized the significance of this approach to equip future healthcare professionals with the knowledge needed to identify and address child rights issues effectively.

He also mentioned that the University has initiated a Child Rights Journal that provides a platform for sharing insights and advancing the understanding of the challenges and opportunities in this domain. Dr. Asghar passionately articulated how the well-being of children plays a pivotal role in shaping a child's thoughts, brain growth, personality, and physical development. Neglecting critical aspects of a child's well-being could leave an indelible scar of trauma on the child's life.

Referring to positive parenting, he said that creating awareness about this key approach to child development is essential. He underscored the interconnected framework of health, happiness, and positive thinking, illustrating how these elements collectively contribute to the holistic development of a child.

Dr Asghar concluded his address by expressing optimism that future generations will be equipped with the necessary awareness to raise productive and well-rounded individuals. The call to action was clear to collectively prioritize the health, nutrition, happiness, and rights of every child, ensuring a brighter and more compassionate future for all.

Ms. Khadija Khan started her presentation by highlighting the collaborative efforts of PAFEC with Pakistan Pediatric Association, PEHCHAAN, and UNICEF for promoting holistic ECD through positive parenting and reinforcing the importance of nurturing care. She then shared the symposium's



background which revolved around the following four key pillars:

- Sharing knowledge and experiences with key partners about positive parenting through this symposium and other platforms
- Engaging key partners/stakeholders by providing them with scientific knowledge on the impact of positive parenting on child upbringing & development and advocating for finding ways to promote positive parenting across the board.
- Providing opportunities for the participants to build their capacity around positive parenting so that they can effectively play their role in society.
- Finding ways and means to institutionalize positive parenting through creating public-private partnerships and developing ECD workforce in Pakistan

Moving on, Ms. Khadija Khan shared the below objectives of the symposium, outlining a comprehensive roadmap for the event:

- Raise awareness among key partners about the pivotal role parents play in child development

- Help parents understand their role in their children's development, emphasizing responsiveness and positivity from the conception stage.
- Promote positive social norms to protect children from harm.
- Share research-based solutions for the holistic development of children.
- Foster discussions among key partners regarding positive parenting and nurturing care for child development.
- Explore the significance of positive parenting practices versus Adverse Childhood Experiences for child development.
- Understand Key Family Care Practices and identify avenues to integrate these messages within governmental and non-governmental sectors.
- Make policy recommendations for designing parenting programmes, aiming to build capacity in promoting positive parenting across different cultural contexts and socioeconomic groups in Pakistan.

Ms. Khadija Khan's insightful presentation laid the foundation for a day of enriching discussions and collaborations. The symposium successfully achieved its goals of knowledge sharing, stakeholder engagement, and policy advocacy, contributing to the ongoing efforts to promote positive parenting and nurturing care for the holistic development of children in Pakistan. The recommendations and insights generated during the event hold the promise of influencing positive change at both individual and societal levels.

Prof. Muhammad Umer, Vice Chancellor of Rawalpindi Medical University, also graced the occasion, and highlighted the critical importance of positive parenting and the



university's commitment to fostering an environment that promotes these values.

He thanked the symposium organizers for selecting his university for this event. His address added a significant dimension to the symposium, bringing the perspective of a prominent academic leader to the discourse on positive parenting. His commitment to integrating these principles within the university's fabric is a commendable step towards creating a generation of professionals who understand and champion the importance of positive parenting for the holistic development of children.

Ms. Mehak Naeem began her address by highlighting the significance of parenting programmes tailored for both current parents and those preparing for parenthood. She stressed the importance of accessible and comprehensive programmes that equip individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective parenting.

Central to Ms. Mehak's message was the need to foster strong support systems for parents. She discussed the importance of creating networks that provide emotional,



informational, and practical support. These support systems, she emphasized, play a crucial role in alleviating the challenges of parenthood and promoting a positive environment for children.

Ms. Mehak articulated the importance of instilling a sense of parental responsibility. She urged parents to actively engage in their children's lives, emphasizing the profound impact of positive parental involvement on child development. Through her address, she advocated for a collective understanding of the shared responsibility parents bear in shaping the future generation.

Addressing the concept of accountability, she emphasized the need for parents to be accountable for their actions and decisions in the realm of parenting. She discussed how fostering a culture of accountability contributes to a more conducive and nurturing environment for children to thrive.

Dr. Muhammad Zeeshan's presentation on "Modern Parenting" provided a wealth of insights into the nuances of raising children in today's world. His extensive background in psychiatry and child & adolescent psychology, bolstered by his



affiliations with prestigious institutions, lent significant credibility to his observations and advice.

Introduction and Parental Goals: Dr. Zeeshan opened his presentation by highlighting the common aspirations parents hold for their children: happiness, success, empathy, and confidence. He noted how parents tirelessly work to provide the best educational and extracurricular opportunities, hoping to set their children on a path to a prosperous future.

Understanding the Child's Perspective: The discussion then shifted to the challenges faced by children and teenagers, such as feeling misunderstood by their parents, leading to a generational gap. Dr. Zeeshan delved into serious issues plaguing young minds, including depression, anxiety, stress, and various forms of addiction. He emphasized the critical need to bridge this gap for effective parenting.

Parenting Approaches and Neuroscience: A core part of the presentation was the comparison between traditional and modern parenting methods. Dr. Zeeshan introduced the neuroscience behind emotional responses like anger and irritability, referencing works like "Ghosts in the Nursery" and "Angels in the Nursery," which explore the influence of a parent's past experiences on their current parenting style.

Behavioral Understanding and Screen Time: He then discussed the interpretation of children's behavior, particularly when it is challenging or disruptive. He introduced concepts like "Dandelion Kids" and "Orchid Kids" to underscore the diversity in children's resilience and adaptability. Additionally, he addressed the impact of excessive screen time, advocating for a balanced approach that includes ample family and social interaction.

Five Steps to Positive Parenting: A key highlight of Dr. Zeeshan's presentation was his introduction of five steps to raise happy and well-adjusted children. These steps include:

1. **Stay Calm:** Emphasizing the importance of maintaining composure, He advised parents to adopt the motto, "The more I stay calm, the better I can help."
2. **Validate Their Feelings:** Acknowledging and respecting the child's emotions is crucial for building trust and understanding.
3. **Collaboratively Explore Solutions:** Engaging with the child to find solutions together fosters a sense of partnership and respect.
4. **10 Minute Role-Take Pause Curiosity:** Taking a brief pause to engage in role-taking and curiosity about the child's perspective.
5. **Reflect:** Encouraging parents to reflect on the interaction and its outcomes.

Connection Before Correction: He stressed the importance of establishing a connection with the child before attempting to correct his/her behavior. This approach, he argued, is essential for building a strong, trust-based relationship where the child feels valued and understood.

Conclusion: In conclusion, Dr. Zeeshan's emphasis on understanding, communication, and emotional intelligence provided a valuable framework for parents navigating the complexities of raising children in today's fast-paced and often challenging environment.

Ms. Khadija Khan started her presentation by explaining holistic ECD, which refers to children's physical, cognitive, social, emotional and language development. She then explained the following



three distinct phases of ECD; conception – birth, birth –3years(1000days+), 3-8years (pre-school, pre-primary years). A child develops optimally during these phases, especially when the speed of brain development is at its peak, she said. However, she said that children need to be nurtured with responsive care, nourishing nutrition, good health, quality early learning opportunities, and safety & protection. These are

all dimensions that scientific research has found to be crucial for laying sound foundations for future adult health and productivity.

Ms. Khan further shed light on how the brain forms connections at an astonishing rate—more than a million per second! The first 1000 days, she emphasized, are crucial for laying the foundation for a child's entire life. She explained the concept of 'sensitive periods' of brain development. These are specific times when critical functions of a child develop at a speed that never repeats at any stage of that child's later life. For this to happen the child needs a stimulating and nurturing environment. The early years, she stressed, set the stage for a child's lifelong health and happiness. To keep things straightforward, Ms. Khan highlighted three key things that make a big difference in a child's life: good experiences, supportive families, and quality learning. These, she said, are like the key ingredients for a strong foundation.

Concluding her presentation Ms. Khan touched upon the different challenges faced by children in Pakistan including their safety and protection, poor health facilities, inadequate nutrition, limited or no early learning opportunities, and lack of awareness about responsive caregiving.

Since ECD requires inputs from different sectors, she urged everyone to join hands and collaborate to support children in an integrated way.

Dr. Uzma Qudsia (WHO) commenced her presentation by highlighting pivotal years, such as 2005, 2008, 2015, and 2020, which marked significant moments in global understanding and commitment to ECD. The WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health in 2008 and the global strategy for women's, children's, and adolescents' health 2016 - 2030 were underscored as instrumental in creating political momentum for ECD.



Three Key Areas of Focus of the Framework: Systems, Workforce, Three-Level Support:

Dr. Qudisia provided insights into the three key areas to focus on: strengthening systems, empowering the workforce, and providing three-level support based on children's and families' needs. The importance of policies, training, and coordination, as well as motivating working conditions for frontline workers, was emphasized.

The speaker delved into suggested actions and strategies to overcome barriers, focusing on the importance of incorporating counseling on nurturing care into routine services, integrating developmental monitoring, and ensuring a continuum of care that covers different disciplines and offers universal, targeted, and indicated services.

Dr. Uzma Qudisia concluded by highlighting signs of progress, emphasizing the inclusion of counseling on nurturing care in routine family contacts, the integration of developmental monitoring, and the availability of services for vulnerable groups. She stressed the importance of updated training curricula, policies supporting the workforce, and data-driven resource allocation.

Dr. Uzma Qudisia's presentation illuminated the conference with a profound exploration of the convergence of evidence and political momentum for Early Childhood Development. Her insights provided a roadmap for effective interventions, highlighting the need for collaborative efforts, policy changes, and a sustained commitment to nurturing care. As participants left the conference, they carried with them a deeper understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of ECD and the critical role it plays in shaping the future of our global community. Dr. Qudisia's presentation contributed significantly to the ongoing dialogue and collective efforts to ensure a holistic and nurturing

Drawing attention to key Lancet series in 2007, 2011, and 2016, Dr. Qudisia outlined how these series have served as beacons of evidence, shaping policies and programmes globally. The Lancet series encapsulated the importance of the first 1000 days, the significance of nurturing care, and the lifelong and intergenerational benefits of early investments in child development.

Dr. Uzma Qudisia highlighted the launch of the Nurturing Care Framework (NCF) at the 71st World Health Assembly in 2018. This framework serves as a roadmap, outlining the importance of commencing efforts in the earliest years, protecting children from adversity through nurturing care, and addressing the needs of caregivers to provide such care effectively, she said.

She detailed key areas of effective interventions across the life course, including health and nutrition, security and safety, responsive caregiving and early learning. The emphasis was on comprehensive strategies that encompass multiple dimensions, from maternal health to birth registration and prevention of violence.

environment for the well-being of children worldwide.

Ms. Arooj Malik, a dynamic speaker at the symposium, delivered an engaging presentation that



centered around the profound impact of playful parenting and play-based learning on the psychological and emotional development of children. Her presentation, rooted in the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, brought to light the vital role that play holds in the holistic development of children.

Ms. Malik commenced her presentation by drawing attention to Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, emphasizing the inherent right of children to engage in play and recreational activities. She highlighted the significance of play in fostering a well-rounded and fulfilling childhood.

Ms. Arooj Malik elucidated the stages of play development, ranging from unoccupied play in the early months to cooperative play as children grow. The progression from solitary play to cooperative play was explored, providing the audience with insights into the evolving nature of children's play and social interactions.

Diving deeper, Ms. Malik discussed various types of play, including sensory play, constructive play, memory play, role play, dramatic/fantasy play, and nature play. Each type was linked to the development of critical skills such as imagination, creativity, self-expression, and the nurturing of a child's emotional well-being.

The speaker underscored the importance of play in the parental relationship, emphasizing how shared play experiences strengthen the bond between parents and children. Play, according to Ms. Malik, serves as a powerful tool for communication and connection within families.

Ms. Arooj Malik meticulously explored the multifaceted developmental impacts of play. From physical and intellectual development to social, language, and emotional development, she highlighted how play contributes to a child's overall well-being and readiness for various life stages.

Ms. Malik connected play to leadership development, emphasizing that the skills honed through play lay the foundation for future leadership roles. She also emphasized the crucial role of caregivers, urging them not to overlook the importance of actively engaging in play with their children.

During her presentation, Ms. Arooj Malik organized interactive activities to illustrate the importance of play. Attendees actively participated, gaining firsthand experience of the transformative power of play-based learning.

Ms. Arooj Malik's address resonated deeply with the audience, shedding light on the transformative role of play in a child's life. The symposium benefited greatly from her insights, which not only elucidated the psychological and emotional impacts of play but also provided tangible activities for attendees to experience its benefits firsthand. As participants left the symposium, they carried with them a renewed understanding of the pivotal role playful parenting and play-based learning play in shaping the trajectory of a child's development. Ms. Malik's dynamic and interactive presentation added a vibrant dimension to the symposium, contributing significantly to the

ongoing discourse on positive parenting and nurturing care for child development.

Dr. Naeem Zafar, delivered his talk on the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on the



mental and physical well-being of children and adults. He provided a detailed overview of the long-term consequences of childhood trauma by giving a powerful example of a story, Fareeda, a 20-year-old nursing student, whose life was devastated by the negative effects of ACEs.

ACEs, according to Dr. Zafar, are childhood trauma episodes that have been connected to long-term health problems, mental diseases, drug abuse, and poor outcomes for adult prospects in terms of schooling and employment. Crucially, he highlighted that ACEs could be avoided and promoted taking preventative action.

His presentation began with a poignant story that encapsulated the real-world impact of ACEs, setting the stage for a comprehensive exploration of this critical issue. The story of Fareeda, a 20-year-old nursing student grappling with the enduring effects of a tumultuous childhood marked by violence, neglect, and emotional distress. Fareeda's struggles served as a poignant illustration of the real and tangible consequences of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Dr. Zafar provided a concise definition of ACEs, characterizing them as potentially traumatic events occurring during childhood, linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, substance use issues, and adverse impacts on education and earning potential in adulthood. However, he stressed that ACEs are preventable.

The speaker delved into the concept of toxic stress response, elucidating that it occurs when a child faces strong, frequent, and prolonged adversity. The failure of the body to fully recover from this stress response, Dr. Zafar explained, can disrupt the development of the brain and other organ systems, increasing the risk for stress-related diseases and cognitive impairment well into adulthood.

Dr. Naeem Zafar provided insights into how ACEs can change a child's brain and behavior. Chronic activation of stress hormones, he explained, bypasses the thinking part of the brain, strengthening the survival part (fight, flight, or freeze). This, in turn, interrupts normal development, impairs complex thought and learning, and manifests in behavioral changes such as aggression, difficulty communicating needs, and problems with focus.

The speaker highlighted the long-term problems associated with ACEs, spanning chronic absenteeism, attention issues, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and involvement in the criminal justice system. Additionally, ACEs contribute to mental and physical health issues like anxiety, depression, cardiovascular disease, and autoimmune diseases.

Dr. Naeem Zafar emphasized the commonality of ACEs, dispelling any notion that they are rare occurrences. The prevalence of ACEs underscores the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to prevent and address their impact.

The economic burden resulting from ACEs is staggering, as Dr. Zafar explained, citing estimates from the CDC. The total lifetime economic burden in the United States was approximately \$124 billion in 2008, with potential sensitivity analysis estimating a burden as large as \$585 billion.

Dr. Zafar introduced the PAHCHAAN Parenting Program, highlighting its role in addressing ACEs through partnerships with organizations such as PPA, ISPCAN, UNICEF, PAFEC, and Child and Family Training UK. The program conducts conferences, symposia, webinars, and provides in-person and online parenting training. Research papers on parenting have been published, and a resource center on parenting is in development.

Dr. Naeem Zafar's address shed light on the often overlooked but pervasive issue of Adverse Childhood Experiences. Through Fareeda's story and comprehensive insights into the definition, impact, and prevention of ACEs, the symposium participants gained a profound understanding of the urgency to address this critical issue. Dr. Zafar's presentation serves as a call to action, emphasizing the need for collective efforts, prevention strategies, and support systems to break the cycle of ACEs and ensure a healthier future for children and adults alike.

Event Reflections: Questions and Answers Session

Notably, a significant portion of the questions focused on practical approaches to implementing positive parenting techniques and how individuals could integrate them into their daily lives.

One prominent theme that emerged during the session was the participants' keen interest in understanding the principles of positive parenting and seeking guidance on its practical application. Questions centred around creating a nurturing environment for children, fostering healthy communication, and instilling values that contribute to overall well-being.

Participants and Panelists

Participants

- Healthcare Workers
- Key Decision Makers (legislators, bureaucrats, etc.)
- NGOs (including UN agencies)
- Educationists
- Social Scientists
- Youth Representatives
- Parents' Representative
- PAFEC Institutional & Individual Members

This symposium aims to lay down the groundwork for a more compassionate and responsive approach to pediatric care, child protection, and positive parenting within Pakistan by bringing together a wide spectrum of experts and stakeholders. Moreover, the symposium will provide an opportunity for key partners to learn about the Nurturing Care Framework and Key Family Care Practices. The initiatives and insights gained from these events will undoubtedly resonate both nationally and internationally, setting new standards and goals in child welfare.

Panelists

Pre-Conference Symposium- Promoting Positive Parenting – Introduction to Nurturing Care Framework

Venue: Rawalpindi Medical University, Rawalpindi
2023

Date 14 November

08:30am-09:00am	Registration of participants and to be seated
09:00am-09:05am	Recitation and Translation from the Holy Quran
09:05am-09:15am	Welcome Remarks Prof. Rai M Asghar Dean Pediatrics, and Controller Examinations, Rawalpindi Medical University
09:15am-09:25am	Remarks by Dr. Tufail Muhammad , Chairman Child Rights Group Pakistan Pediatric Association (CRG-PPA)
09:25am-09:35am	Objectives & Background of the Symposium by Ms. Khadija Khan, CEO

	Pakistan Alliance for Early Childhood (PAFEC)
09:35am-09:45am	Address by Prof. Muhammad Umer , Vice Chancellor Rawalpindi Medical University (TBC)
09:45am-10:00am	Address by Ms. Mehak Naeem , National Commission on the Rights of the Child (TBC)
10:15 am-10:30 am	Tea Break
Keynote Talks	
Moderator: Ms. Khadija Khan, CEO Pakistan Alliance for Early Childhood	
10:30 am - 11:00 am	Presenter 1: Dr. Muhammad Zeshan , Assistant Professor Psychiatry, Rutgers University - Newark, USA Topic: Role of Positive & Responsive Parenting in Holistic Development of Children
11:00 am - 11:15 am	Presenter 2: Ms. Khadija Khan , CEO, Pakistan Alliance for Early Childhood Topic: Understanding of Key Family Care Practices – Parental Package & Nurturing Care Framework
11:15am – 11: 30am	Presenter 3: Dr Uzma Qudsia , Technical Officer RMNCAH, WHO Pakistan Topic: Role of Health Sector in Promoting Early Childhood Development
11:30 am - 12:15 pm	Open Discussion
12:15 pm - 12:30 pm	Presenter 5. Ms. Arooj Malik , Parental Educator and ECE Expert Topic: Playful Parenting & Play-based Learning - Impact on Psychosocial & Emotional Development of Children
12:30 pm - 12:45 pm	Presenter 6: Dr. Naeem Zafar , President PAHCHAAN, President PPA Punjab Topic: Long-Term Effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences on psychological, social and physical wellbeing.
12:45 pm - 1:15 pm	Open Discussion
01:15 am - 1:30pm	Conclusion, Way Forward & Vote of Thanks by Mr. Muhammad Rafique Tahir
1:30 – 1:45 pm	Certificate & Souvenir Distribution by Guest of Honor Group Photo

Pictures



Annexure



Pre-Conference Workshop
 "Positive Parenting – Introduction to Nurturing Care Framework"
 Thursday, November 14, 2023 – 08:30 am to 02:00 pm
 at Rawalpindi Medical University, Rawalpindi

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