

# 11<sup>TH</sup> WORLD PEDIATRIC CONGRESS

AUGUST 16-17, 2018 SINGAPORE

## **Cognitive insights into ADHD: Exploring the relationship between ADHD, parent's/school's knowledge, dysfunctional expectations, beliefs and stigmatization in Pakistan**

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In Pakistan, there is an extreme dearth of awareness about the developmental needs of children, especially those suffering with ADHD is sorely lacking. A comprehensive analysis of the published empirical research literature of Pakistan demonstrates that no studies so far have been conducted on the significance of parents and teacher's knowledge of ADHD. This study is an initial step to create awareness and tolerance for all those children who are different. The primary purpose of this study is to explore the existing knowledge and understanding (if any) of parents and teachers about ADHD. Moreover, to inquire, how their cognition and belief towards mental health services for ADHD influences their decision to seek psychological assistance and medical help for their child's treatment. Purposive sampling technique was used to select primary students (6-8 years) from lower middle-class schools from three different towns of Karachi, Pakistan. Ten focus group interviews were conducted to collect data from 150 (semi-literate) parents and teachers (untrained). The findings of the study showed cognitive dysfunction of the parents due to stigmatization of learning disabilities, societal pressure and rigid thinking (tunnel vision). Mother and fathers spread stigma the most. Furthermore, 80% of the mothers in the focus group outlined/suggested lack of decision making (especially in case of children) in a male dominant society. Moreover, mothers attributed lack of guidance/professional help and inclusive schools in Pakistan as compared to the west (developed nations) where ADHD treatment is much more common, while 45% of the fathers attributed lack of finances and overload of responsibilities. This concludes that parents disregard the needs of their child over societal needs. Besides parents, 70% of the teachers complained lack of awareness and professional training regarding such disorders.

### **Biography**

Zahrah Khimani has completed her MSc in Clinical Neuropsychology from the University of Bangor, England. She is a Master Neuro Linguistic Practitioner-Licensed (USA) and Specialized in Cognitive Behavior Therapy, USA. Presently she is working as a Senior Behavior Therapist at Aga Khan University Hospital and Senior Clinical Psychologist at Karachi Vocational Training Centre. She is also working as A-Level Psychology Faculty at Falconhouse Grammar School and The Coleshill College. She is the Founder and CEO of URAAN-Paediatric Therapy Services.

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