

SPRC & Telecom Foundation Joint Webinar on Autism, ADHD & SLD Awareness



Social Protection Resource Centre (SPRC), a think tank dedicated to promoting universalization of social protection in Pakistan, in this regard joined hands with Telecom Foundation (TF) to mutually collaborate in arranging a Webinar on Autism and to create awareness among school teachers and parents. The focus of the discussion was school-going children having developmental disorders or falling in any category of autism. This is to mention that SPRC signed a memorandum of understanding in Dec 2020 to work towards capacity building of teachers of TF welfare schools.

Dr. Razia Safdar (Executive Director SPRC)

The executive director of SPRC Dr. Razia Safdar moderated the session and highlighted the global and national magnitude of any form of disability and intellectual disability. In her remarks, she stressed upon the counting of children with intellectual disabilities like autism spectrum to do the needful interventions, she also appreciated the joint and timely webinar on Autism awareness. This timely awareness regarding autism-related issues is key to making these children useful members of society as future adults and she is hopeful to draw some productive results from this collaboration of SPRC and Telecom Foundation (TF). Along with awareness and timely interventions inclusive schools are one of the entry points to address this challenging condition



<https://indianexpress.com/article/parenting/family/how-can-parents-of-special-kids-secure-their-childrens-future-6147063/>

Mr. Zomma Mohiuddin (President Telecom Foundation) (Chief Guest)

President Telecom Foundation appreciated the efforts of SPRC and other participants in collaborating and organization of this webinar which will surely become a milestone in achieving the concept of inclusive schooling. He shared the progress of the Telecom Foundation and stated that TF was established in 1991 as a charitable trust to undertake welfare activities for the benefits of the retired as well as serving employees of PTCL, PTA, NTC, FAB. Since then, Telecom Foundation has made money by providing high-quality telecom and other engineering services that are provided entirely by Telecom Foundation. Foundation School System was formed in 1995 as part of its assigned welfare to provide quality education to the underprivileged and low-income households within its mandated sector. However, the operation of affordable subsidized Telecom Foundation Schools in 12

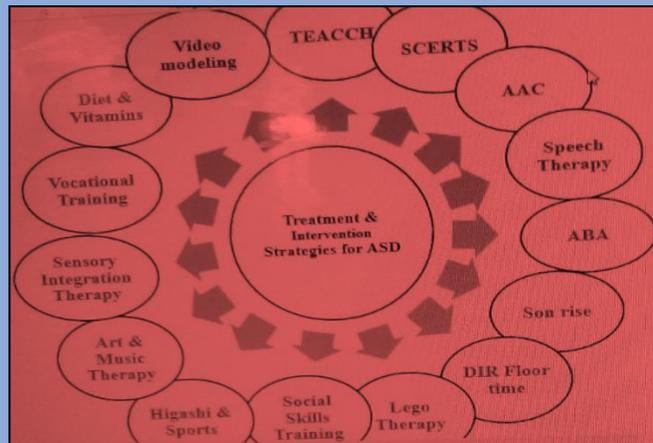
cities around the country, serving over 3000 children, benefits both the children of mandated subjects and the broader public. **Mr. Zomma further committed to opening more schools based on inclusive education in which all the required facilities will be provided regarding special education till June 2022.** Moreover, he also showed great interest in collaborating with SPRC for this cause in the domain of research, survey, and identification of relevant stakeholders to better cater to children with disabilities. He emphasizes arranging one more similar kind of webinar within this calendar year and extends the hope that with constant effort and mutual collaboration of the stakeholders, we will be able to create such an environment in which every child will receive an equally inclusive and learning environment.



https://www.telecomfoundation.com.pk/index_2.php

Dr. Rukhsana Shah (Executive Director ASDWT) gave a detailed overview of autism spectrum disorder. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that has mild to severe functioning problems, language, socialization, and cognitive problems. These kinds of disorders often went unnoticed as only those teachers would be able to

diagnose those who have a history of interaction with such students. It can also be diagnosed through neurological symptoms and speech and language evaluation and multiple other ways. These children have repetitive behavioral patterns and they have either hypersensitive or either hypo-sensitive and it can also be diagnosed through DSM-V Assessment. Autism symptoms may be observed in the early developmental period and these



symptoms include, poor eye contact from birth, not reacting to name and no social smile by age of 12 months, resistance to change and insistence on routine, relate to machines and objects, like few toys, sleep disorder, picky eaters and have chemical imbalances. In addition, Differential diagnosis is also very important as Autism can occur with different co-morbidities. The general interventions that can be adopted include, the structural environment like classes should be properly structured, conduct group activities, independent living skills, reduce the inappropriate behavior using different techniques, and sports and physical exercise and also social stories (pictorial) to develop the theory of mind so that their potential to learn increases. Treatment and interventions for Autism like TEACCH, SCERTS, ABA, AAC, Speech therapy, are also discussed. Moreover, for teachers, the most important tool is to individualize the education plan.

Ms. Farah Amanat, Senior Clinical Psychologist ASDWT

Ms. Farah Amanat discusses the concept of Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication- Handicapped Children (TEACCH). The physical organization is the first step in TEACCH, which focuses on the visual to direct the students to an activity and to make the environment organized and predictable. The second step in the TEACCH is a daily schedule that includes the schedules made up of pictures and words to organize routine. The third step is a working system that includes person-centered learning techniques. The next step in TEACCH is Task organization to reduce the need for verbal instruction and to increase independence. She also discussed ADHD, a neuro-developmental disorder related to attention deficit and hyperactive behavior. The main symptoms of this disorder are Inattention, for example, careless mistakes and trouble holding attention, etc., Hyperactivity, for example, constant moving, and Impulsivity like speaking or acting without thinking and displaying emotions without control. She also gives some recommendations like conducting physical activities and sports and avoiding the usage of sugar and fizzy drinks.



Ms. Ayesha Tariq Child Psychologist

She discussed Healthy Childhood Development. This term focused on the optimal performance in four domains i.e., behavior, Cognitive, Social and Emotional Domains. There are primarily three people that can help a child who is suffering from Autism. These are Psychiatrist, Parents, and Teachers. She also discusses the inclusive schooling concepts and seven principles related to it. These seven principles include teaching all students, exploring multiple identities, Preventing Prejudice, Promoting Social Justice, Choosing Appropriate Materials, Teaching and Learning about cultures and religions, Adapting and Integrating Lessons Appropriately.



Executive Director Dr. Razia Safdar concluded the session and thanked all the speakers for talking on the most ignored spectrum. Moreover, she congratulates TF to highlight this issue. Further, she said that it will be beneficial for all the schools and it is a great help from TF towards the families of those children who are facing this problem and who are struggling for learning. Lastly, she showed her consent to cooperate and support TF in this regard.



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