

ABSTRACT BOOK

5th International Conference on Early
Childhood Development, 2026

Message from Mr. Ahsan Iqbal

Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives

Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan



It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 5th International Conference on Early Childhood Development (ECD). The theme, ‘Investing in Early Years’, speaks directly to our government's core belief that a nation's future is built by nurturing its people from the very start. Under our national development framework, ‘*Uraan Pakistan*’, we are making a historic political commitment to invest in our human capital.

We understand that to prepare youth for the challenges of the future, we must build their foundation today. Our government is committed to providing young Pakistanis with advanced education, digital training, and equal opportunities so they can drive our economy forward. We are equipping them with knowledge, creativity, and technological capacity to become leaders in the modern age.

This conference directly supports that vision by focusing on what happens in the earliest years. From health and nutrition to early learning and caregiver support, these are the building blocks of a capable and competitive generation. Our goal is to see Pakistan among the world's top ten economies by our centenary in 2047, and we know this journey begins with a healthy, well-nurtured child. I commend the organizers for bringing together and by sharing knowledge on innovative financing, nurturing care, and strengthening our workforce, we can create systems that ensure no child is left behind.

The government stands firm in its resolve to transform these discussions into action. By investing in our youngest citizens today, we are fulfilling our promise to build a prosperous, stable, and developed Pakistan for tomorrow.

Ahsan Iqbal

Message from Mr. Nadeem Mahbub
Secretary, Ministry of Federal Education and
Professional Training
Government of Pakistan



It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 5th International Conference on Early Childhood Development, themed 'Investing in Early Years'. This gathering comes at a critical moment when Pakistan has declared an education emergency and is translating policy into action.

At the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, our focus is on systemic reforms that deliver results on the ground. Following the Prime Minister's declaration, we have prioritized foundational learning through evidence-based interventions. The expansion of the National Achievement Test to include private sector schools and the launch of Pakistan's first-ever National Foundational Learning Assessment will give us credible data to measure where we stand and where we must improve.

We are also strengthening non-formal education pathways for children who cannot access mainstream schools. Through initiatives like the Non-Formal Education Support Packages and the 'Each One Teach One' campaign, we are creating flexible, inclusive models that reach the most marginalized. Digitization of our examination systems and alignment with provincial boards are further steps toward a unified, technology-driven education strategy. I am hopeful that the discussions here will yield practical insights to strengthen our collective efforts.

Let us work together to ensure every child in Pakistan receives the quality early education they deserve.

Nadeem Mahbub

Message from Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood

Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad



In the journey of human life, the early years are not merely a beginning; they are the very soil in which the roots of identity, curiosity, and humanity are planted. It is with this profound conviction that I welcome you to the 5th International Conference on Early Childhood Development, themed ‘Investing in Early Years’.

When we speak of investment, we must look beyond finances and infrastructure. The true investment is in presence, in attention, and in love. A child does not learn first from books, but from the eyes that look upon them with kindness, the voice that sings to them without judgment, and the hands that hold them with security. This is the unseen curriculum of early childhood - one that shapes the human being long before they enter a classroom.

At Allama Iqbal Open University, we often reflect on the philosophy of our great poet, Allama Iqbal, who spoke of the ‘*Khudi*’ - the inner self. This self begins its formation in the earliest years. Before we can build nations, we must nurture souls. Before we can teach skills, we must awaken wonder. Every child is born with infinite potential, a universe waiting to unfold. Our role as parents, educators, and policymakers is simply to remove the barriers that block their light.

This conference brings together seven vital themes, but at their heart lies a single question: Are we truly seeing our children? Are we listening to their silent questions, their unspoken fears, their boundless dreams? Let us not reduce early childhood to milestones and checklists. Let us instead approach it with humility, knowing that in every child lies the possibility of a world more compassionate, more creative, and more just than our own.

May these discussions deepen our understanding and awaken our collective conscience. For in investing wisely in the early years, we are not just building a future; we are honoring the sacred trust that life has placed in our hands.

Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood

Message from Pernille Ironside

Country Representative UNICEF Pakistan

Every child’s early years hold the power to shape not only their own future, but the future of their nation. When we invest in Early Childhood Development, we invest in hope, in human potential, and in the promise of a more equitable and prosperous society—one where a single dollar can return thirteenfold in healthier, happier, and more capable generations. Yet too many young children in Pakistan still start life at a disadvantage, with limited access to nurturing care, stimulation, and essential services.

UNICEF stands with Pakistan to change this story by strengthening national policies, building the skills of parents and caregivers, expanding digital access to life-changing knowledge, and creating safe, stimulating spaces where children can learn, grow, and play. Through integrated village-level services, universal parenting support, and strong alliances across government and civil society, we are working together to ensure every child is cherished, protected, and allowed to flourish. When we nurture our youngest children, we nurture the nation itself and build a brighter, more compassionate future for all.



Pernille Ironside

Message from Dr. Naeem Zafar

Chairman, Pakistan Alliance for Early Childhood

On behalf of the Pakistan Alliance for Early Childhood (PAFEC), it is my privilege to welcome distinguished guests, policymakers, leading ECD experts, researchers, practitioners, and partners from Pakistan and around the globe, to the **5th International Conference on Early Childhood Development**.



This year's theme, “**Investing in Early Childhood Development – Building Human Capital**,” reflects a growing global and national realization that the early years are not merely a social concern but a strategic investment in the future of nations. As Pakistan and the wider Asian region navigate demographic shifts, climate pressures, economic transitions, and artificial intelligence, this conference provides a timely platform to align science, technology, policy, and financing toward a unified vision of human capital development.

Building on the momentum of previous conferences, this conference aims to move beyond dialogue toward actionable commitments, mobilizing innovative financing, strengthening integrated service delivery systems, and advancing a future-ready ECD workforce. The emphasis on nurturing care, caregiver well-being, early learning, and the responsible use of technology, including AI-enabled solutions, signals an important shift toward more responsive, scalable, and evidence-driven systems. By bringing together global knowledge, regional experiences, and local innovations, the conference seeks to catalyze partnerships that can translate ideas into measurable outcomes for children and families.

As we engage over the next two days, our shared responsibility is clear: to transform ECD from a fragmented set of interventions into a coherent, well-financed, and accountable system at the heart of Pakistan's development agenda. This requires collective leadership across government, academia, civil society, and the private sector, as well as a renewed commitment to equity, inclusion, and sustainability. By investing early and investing wisely, we can ensure that every child not only survives but thrives, laying the foundation for a more resilient, productive, and prosperous future for Pakistan and the region.

The evidence is clear, the urgency is undeniable, and the opportunity is before us. What remains is our collective resolve to act with clarity, with courage, and with collaboration. The

true measure of our success will not be the quality of our discussions, but the impact of the actions we take when we leave this room.

Thank you for your presence, your insights, and your dedication. Let us move forward together to ensure that every child has the opportunity to survive, thrive, and reach their full potential.

Dr. Naeem Zafar

PAPER PRESENTERS

DAY-2: WEDNESDAY - APRIL 8, 2026

Session I: Economics and Sustainable Mechanisms- Innovative Approaches to ECD Finances

Venue: Room 107, Academic Complex, AIOU

Time:2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Session Chair: Dr. Muhammad Ayub Buzdar

Moderator: Dr. Azhar Majeed Qureshi

Rapporteur: Ms. Jamila Javed

Opening of Session by Moderator

Paper Title and Authors

Transforming Maternal and Child Health through Nutrition: Pakistan's Experience with the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement

Presenter(s): Hira Iftikhar (University of Agriculture Faisalabad)

Role of Government of Balochistan in meeting educational needs of children with disabilities in Baluchistan

Presenter(s): Salma Durrani (Social Welfare and Special Education Department, Baluchistan)

From Training to Transformation: A Hybrid ECCE Model for Sustainable Teacher Development in Pakistan

Presenter(s): Sadaf Rabbani (Cantab Publisher)

Managing Early Childhood Education Programs in Islamabad: Challenges Faced by School Leaders in 100 Public Schools

Presenter(s): Sumaira BiBi (Islamabad Model College for Girls. Islamabad)

DAY-2: WEDNESDAY - APRIL 8, 2026

Session II: Nurturing Care Across Cultures: Innovations and Inclusive Approaches to ECD

Venue: Room 108 Academic Complex, AIOU

Time:2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Session Chair: Prof. Dr. Abdul Hameed

Moderator: Dr. Hina Noor

Rapporteur: Ms. Sana Qaiser

Opening of Session by Moderator

Paper Title and Authors

Building Resilient Early Childhood Education Systems: Community-Based Insights on Climate Change and Learning in Pakistan

Presenter(s): Zahid Majeed (Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad)

Identify and remove barriers—such as cultural, social, and personal—that limit fathers' involvement in raising their children

Presenter(s): Ms. Musarrat Rani (Irshad Amtul Reproductive Health and Midwifery Services)

Strengthening Inclusive Early Childhood Education through Regional Knowledge Exchange, Capacity Building, and Teacher Preparedness

Presenter(s): Syeda Fatima Kazmi (The Millennium University College Pakistan (in affiliation with University of Hertfordshire, UK)); Salma Nazar Khan (The Millennium University College Pakistan (in affiliation with University of Hertfordshire, UK))

AN ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM IN MALAYSIA

Presenter(s): Shamaila Haleem (IMCG (PG), F-7/2, Islamabad)

DAY-2: WEDNESDAY - APRIL 8, 2026

Session IV: Strengthening the ECD Workforce & Regional Cooperation

Venue: Room 209 Academic Complex, AIOU

Time: 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Session Chair: Dr. Naveed Sultana

Moderator: Dr. Muhammad Tanveer Afzal

Rapporteur: Dr. Muhammad Arshad Qamar

Opening of Session by Moderator

Paper Title and Authors

Early Childhood Development in Pakistan: A human centered design approach to empower positive parenting

Presenter(s): Seema Lasi (Aga Khan University); Taiba Yar Baig (Aga Khan University); Yasmeen Mehboob (Aga Khan University)

Study on exploring the caregiver-preschoolers interface: a review of factors influencing healthy eating habits

Presenter(s): Hadiqa Qaisar (HBS Medical College, Islamabad)

Central Asia Stunting Initiative (CASI) Program overview and Achievements

Presenter(s): Sanobar Nadeem (Aga Khan Health Service)

Cognitive Growth or Cognitive Overload? Exploring Digital Learning and Parental Mediation in Early Childhood Education

Presenter(s): Benish Saif (The Millennium Universal College); Salma Nazar Khan (The Millennium Universal College (University of Hertfordshire UK))

Future-Ready Beginnings: Reimagining Early Childhood Education in a Rapidly Evolving World— Evidence from Urban Karachi
 Presenter(s): Dr. Nuzhat Naz (College of Education, Ziauddin University, Karachi); Muhammad Nizam Uddin (M.S. Scholar, Sindh Madrasatul Islam University, Karachi)

Reimagining Teacher Preparation for STEAM Integration in Early Childhood Education
 Presenter(s): Zehra Khushal (AIOU); Dr Rukhsana Durrani (AIOU)

DAY-2: WEDNESDAY - APRIL 8, 2026

Session V: Early Learning Opportunities

Venue: Room 205 Academic Complex, AIOU

Time: 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Session Chair: Dr. Muhammad Athar Hussain

Moderator: Dr. Batool Atta

Rapporteur: Hamid Ali Nadeem

Opening of Session by Moderator

Paper Title and Authors

The Role of Early Learning Opportunities on Holistic Development in Preschool Children” (Everyday Learning in a Nurturing Environment)
 Presenter(s): Pari Bano (Rupani foundation)

Influence of Reinforcement on Performance of Primary Level Students in Subject of Science
 Presenter(s): Saira Khanm (University of Agriculture, IAEERD)

Fostering Fine Motor Skills of Children with Cerebral Palsy: Exercises & Therapies
 Presenter(s): Dr. Abdul Basit Rana (Department of Special Education)

Effect of Play Based Activities on development of Social Skills among Early Graders
 Presenter(s): Muhammad Mumtaz Khan (GCET (male) Bagh AJK); Dr. Rahmat Ullah Bhatti (AIOU); Zeeshan Mumtaz (COMSATS Islamabad)

Scaffolding Higher Order Thinking Skills Through Visuals at ECE Level
 Presenter(s): Amir Hussain (School Education Department, Khushab, Punjab); Dr. Syed Nasir Hussain (AIOU Islamabad)

Exploring the Efficacy of Digital Storytelling in Enhancing Language Acquisition in Early Childhood Education
 Presenter(s): Dr. Nuzhat Saadia Qureshi (AIOU); Hammad Ahmad (AIOU)

Beyond the Classroom: The Impact of Outdoor Activities and Storytelling on Early Childhood Development
 Presenter(s): Samina Islam (Dy. DEO EE-W, Tehsil Gujar Khan Rawalpindi; Dr. Rao Nadeem Alam, former Assistant Professor, QAU Islamabad)

DAY-2: WEDNESDAY - APRIL 8, 2026
Session VI: Research, Measurement & Accountability Systems
Venue: Room 206 Academic Complex, AIOU
Time:2:00 pm - 3:30 pm
Session Chair: Dr. Muhammad Shahid Saroya
Moderator: Dr. Tooba Saleem
Rapporteur: Dr. Irsa Zahoor
Opening of Session by Moderator
Paper Title and Authors
Analysis of psychological well-being of children in Turbat Balochistan Presenter(s): Shereen Manzoor (Allama Iqbal open University, Islamabad)
Exploring the Assessment Techniques Applied at Pre-primary Level Presenter(s): Saira Khanm (University of Agriculture, IAEERD)
Exploring the Role of Positive Education in Early Childhood Education: A Pathway to Socio-Emotional Well-Being Presenter(s): Riffat Bano (Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad)
A Study on the Significance of Equality and Inclusion In Early Childhood Development At The Primary Level In District Lakki Marwat Presenter(s): Dr. Irfan Khan (University of Lakki Marwat)

DAY-2: WEDNESDAY - APRIL 8, 2026
Session VII: Caregivers' Mental Health & MH&PSS Integration
Venue: Room 207 Academic Complex, AIOU
Time:2:00 pm - 3:30 pm
Session Chair: Prof. Dr. Aneela Maqsood
Moderator: Dr. Jahan Ara Shamas
Rapporteur: Dr. Aneela Alam
Opening of Session by Moderator
Paper Title and Authors
Study on Systemic Review of maternal dietary patterns from pregnancy to postpartum Presenter(s): Laiba Akram (HBS Medical and Dental College, Islamabad)
Faith-Based Parenting: Managing Stress to Enhance ECD Presenter(s): SAEED ANWAR (Riphah Internation University, Islamabad, Pakistan)
Unlocking Play -based Teaching: Analysing the Attitude and Practices of Teachers at Early Childhood Education Level Presenter(s): Robina Altaf (AIOU); Mubeshera Tufail (Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad)
Mental Health and Nursing Care: Interventions to Support Caregivers and Children Presenter(s): Ms. Musarrat Rani (Irshad Amtul Reproductive Health and Midwifery Services)

DAY - 2: WEDNESDAY - APRIL 8, 2026

Poster Presentation

Venue: Academic Complex, 1st Floor Lobby

Development and Piloting of a Qualitative Measure of a Home Observation Tool on Caregiver-Child Interaction and Engagement in the Context of Pakistan

Presenter(s): Taiba Baig (Agha Khan University Human Development Programme); Dr. Seema Lasi (Agha Khan University Human Development Programme); Yasmeen Mehboob (Agha Khan University Human Development Programme)

STEAM Integration and safe use of technology to enhance the learning & teaching in ECE

Presenter(s): Khet Kumar (Red Pi)

Involvement of Fathers in social development of children at Early Childhood Education in Pakistan: A phenomenological Study

Presenter(s): Uzma Mazhar (NUML, Islamabad); Qurat Ul Ain Hina (NUML, Islamabad)

To Observe and Compare the Classroom Quality Indicators of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Public and Private Schools in Gilgit Baltistan

Presenter(s): Meher Kamil (AKU)

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Presenter(s): Jawad Zareen Shah (Arid Agriculture University); Imran Yousuf (PMAS-Arid Agriculture University)

STRATEGIES FOR NATURE-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Presenter(s): Shamaila Haleem (IMCG (PG), F-7/2, Islamabad)

Analysis of Psychological Well-being of Children in Turbat, Balochistan

Shereen Manzoor (AIOU Islamabad)

This study aims to analyze the psychological well-being of children in Turbat district Kech Balochistan. The purpose of this study was to investigate regarding the psychological well-being of early grade children belong to far flung area so as to analyze the levels of measurement of psychological well-being in Turbat. For this purpose, Ryff model of psychological well-being instrument was applied to gather information from the children particularly in grade one, grade two and grade three in public schools of Turbat. 26 schools were randomly selected from the 256 schools. Cross sectional survey design was applied to gather information regarding the Ryff model of psychological well-being scale from the children. The results were derived in three levels that is low level, average level and higher level of psychological well-being. Findings derived from the results suggested that from the 2299 children there were 1592 children with the percentage of 69.24% at lower level, at average level there were 696 children 30.27% and at higher level there were 13 children 0.56%. In this regard, it is concluded that the percentage of children in lower level is very high and the percentage of psychological well-being of children at higher level was very low. It was recommended that the psychological well-being of children need great concerns from the society. Since, the low level of psychological well-being might disturb the child psychologically, physically and emotionally.

Keywords: Psychological well-being, early grade children, levels of psychological well-being

Early Childhood Development in Pakistan: A Human-centered Design Approach to Empower Positive Parenting

Seema Lasi, Taiba Yar Baig & Yasmeen Mehboob (Aga Khan University, Karachi)

The early childhood development (ECD) provides a pivotal window of opportunity to lay the groundwork for a child's future. This study delved into the practices of caregivers with children aged 0-3 years, examining their engagement, challenges, and the consequential impact on childcare. Employing a human-centered design (HCD) approach, the research embraced understand, empathize, synthesize, prototype, and testing phases. A mixed-methods strategy, including surveys, home observations, key informant interviews (KII), and focus group discussions (FGD), captured the knowledge, attitude practices (KAP), and perceptions of caregivers. Findings revealed entrenched gender inequalities in rural families, influencing caregiving practices where fathers predominantly fulfilled financial obligations. Less than 40% of parents engaged in activities like storytelling, demonstrating sensitivity to their child's needs, or actively playing and protecting them. The study adapted, contextualized, and tested parenting material, presenting it in diverse formats such as Vroom messages-based booklets, illustrations, animations, and video clips. Caregivers rated these materials highly, indicating their usefulness for child development and bonding. The project aimed to enhance our understanding of caregiving practices in remote Pakistani contexts, contributing valuable insights to parenting practices, service delivery, and caregiving structures. With implications for policy and practice, caregivers in targeted areas were empowered to foster positive relationships and supportive environments for young children. The study's recommendations, emphasizing contextually and culturally relevant, science-based learning resources, had the potential to scale up parenting programs and influence ECD outcomes and policies throughout Pakistan.

Study on Systemic Review of Maternal Dietary Patterns from Pregnancy to Postpartum

Laiba Akram (HBS Medical and Dental College, Islamabad)

Pregnancy and the postpartum period are critical for maternal and child health, with significant short- and long-term benefits linked to maintaining a healthy diet and lifestyle. Nutritional needs increase during pregnancy to support maternal and fetal development, and an energy-balanced diet is essential for appropriate gestational weight gain. Inadequate weight gain raises the risk of low birth weight, while excessive weight gain increases the likelihood of complications such as cesarean delivery, gestational diabetes, and childhood obesity. This systematic review examines how women's diets evolve from pregnancy to postpartum and identifies factors associated with these changes. A Systematic search of four databases was conducted, covering studies published up to November 2024. Seventeen studies met the inclusion criteria. The included studies assessed various dietary components, focusing on changes in energy intake, micronutrient intake, dietary patterns, and food group consumption. The findings on energy and micronutrient intake changes were mixed. However, most studies reported a significant decline in fruit and vegetable consumption, overall diet quality, and adherence to healthier dietary patterns postpartum. Additionally, an increase in discretionary food and fat intake was observed. Women with lower education levels, lower income, and those working full-time were more likely to exhibit poorer dietary behaviors after pregnancy. The transition from pregnancy to postpartum is often associated with a decline in diet quality. Women from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds are at higher risk of adopting poorer dietary habits. Future research should standardize dietary assessment tools and align measurement time points to enhance comparability across studies.

KEYWORDS: Pregnancy, postpartum period, maternal and fetal development, energy balanced diet

Transforming Maternal and Child Health through Nutrition: Pakistan's Experience with the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement

Hira Iftikhar (Lecturer, Institute of Home Sciences, University of Agriculture Faisalabad)

Pakistan has made significant progress in improving maternal and child nutrition in recent years, particularly since joining the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement in 2013. Despite challenges (inflation and environmental factors), the country has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing malnutrition, which affects nearly half of its children under the age of five. Notable successes include the development of a national nutrition policy, establishment of a nutrition coordination body, and implementation of evidence-based interventions such as micronutrient supplementation and breastfeeding promotion. However, challenges persist, including inadequate funding, limited access to healthcare, and socio-cultural barriers. To sustain progress, Pakistan must continue to prioritize nutrition, enhance coordination among stakeholders, and address underlying determinants of malnutrition. By leveraging the SUN movement and domestic resources, Pakistan can accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring a healthier future for its mothers and children. The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement has played a pivotal role in mobilizing global action against malnutrition, with Pakistan being one of the 64 countries to join the movement. As a SUN country, Pakistan has demonstrated its commitment to addressing malnutrition through a multi-stakeholder approach, involving government, civil society, private sector, and donors. To further accelerate progress, greater collaboration and coordination among stakeholders must be made to ensure a cohesive and sustained response to malnutrition. By implementing these recommendations, Pakistan can build on its progress and make significant strides towards achieving the SUN movement's vision of a world free from malnutrition.

The Role of Early Learning Opportunities on Holistic Development in Preschool Children (Everyday Learning in a Nurturing Environment)

Pari Bano (Senior Manager Academic Rupani Foundation)

Providing favorable early learning opportunities allows children to develop holistically. It is widely recognized as a crucial factor in child' holistic development, encompassing social-emotional, cognitive, physical, and linguistic dimensions etc. Rupani Foundation developed a model that focuses on parental engagement programs for children from prenatal stages to eight years old, incorporating components such as home visits, newlywed couple sessions, "Me and My Dad" sessions, grandparent sessions, prenatal conferences, valley conferences, and community mobilization initiatives. The purpose of this research is to examine the significance of offering children varied and enriching early learning experiences, especially those that enhance language development, problem-solving abilities, social interaction, and emotional regulation. This research employs a critical review framework to examine existing literature about the importance of early learning opportunities in the holistic development of young children. The findings emphasize the significance of delivering high-quality early learning experiences through both structured programs and family involvement. These findings have significant ramifications for policy and practices concerning early childhood development.

Keywords: Early Childhood Development, Early Learning Opportunities, Holistic Learning Approach, Parental Involvement, Prenatal Development

Building Resilient Early Childhood Education Systems: Community-Based Insights on Climate Change and Learning in Pakistan

Dr. Zahid Majeed Director, Academic Planning & Course Production, AIOU, Islamabad,
Pakistan

This study aims to examine how climate change affects Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Pakistan and to identify community-based strategies for building resilient and adaptive early learning systems. In a context where extreme weather events such as floods, heatwaves, and displacement, frequently disrupt schooling, young children remain among the most vulnerable, facing interruptions in learning, unsafe environments, and limited access to educational continuity.

The research adopts a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data were collected from selected climate-vulnerable districts through surveys of ECE teachers (n=150), semi-structured interviews with school heads and caregivers (n=20), and focus group discussions (n=04) with community stakeholders. In addition, policy document analysis was conducted to examine the integration of climate resilience within existing ECE frameworks. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed to identify recurring patterns and community-driven practices.

The findings reveal that climate-induced disruptions significantly affect attendance, learning continuity, and psychosocial well-being of young children. However, community-based adaptation strategies, such as flexible learning arrangements, local resource mobilization, and parental engagement play a critical role in sustaining early learning. The study also identifies gaps in teacher preparedness, limited integration of climate resilience in ECE curricula, and weak coordination between policy and practice.

The study concludes that building resilient ECE systems requires integrating climate-responsive pedagogy, strengthening teacher training, and institutionalizing community participation. It offers practical recommendations for policymakers and practitioners to enhance adaptive capacity, ensure continuity of learning, and develop inclusive, resilient early childhood education systems in climate-vulnerable contexts.

Faith-Based Parenting: Managing Stress to Enhance ECD (Early Childhood Development)

Nimra Saeed (Final Year BDS, Peshawar Dental College, Peshawar; Saeed Anwar (Professor of Public Health, Peshawar Medical College, Peshawar)

In sex-disaggregated cultures, engaging both parents in ECD (Early Childhood Development) is essential while ensuring they manage parental stress effectively to prevent its transmission to children. Research indicates that parental stress can negatively impact child well-being, leading to long-term emotional and cognitive vulnerabilities with intergenerational effects on neurodevelopment. For instance, a study led by the University of Granada found that high levels of stress experienced by pregnant women, especially during natural disasters, increased the risk of neurodevelopmental issues in their children. The study highlighted that maternal stress could cross the placenta, affecting neurotransmitters crucial for fetal brain development, leading to potential emotional and cognitive challenges in children. In an Islamic society, faith-based stress management offers a powerful solution. Practices such as Tawakkul (trust in Allah), Salat (prayer), and Dhikr (remembrance of Allah) foster emotional resilience, helping parents create a nurturing environment for their children. Research indicates that Tawakkul mediates the relationship between religious orientation and stress among Muslim adults, suggesting that trust in Allah can alleviate stress levels.

Keywords: Stress; Early Childhood Development; Tawakkul; Emotional Resilience; Mental Health; Child Well-Being

Exploring the Role of Positive Education in Early Childhood Education: A Pathway to Socio-Emotional Well-Being

Riffat Bano (AIOU Islamabad)

Positive Education embeds Positive Psychology into formal schooling, offering benefits for students' academic, emotional, and social well-being. In Early Childhood Education (ECE), fostering well-being is important as early experiences shape long-term emotional resilience, cognitive growth, and interpersonal skills. Through the perspective of a qualitative research design, a document analysis, and a thematic analysis, this paper looks at global guidelines like the PERMA model, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks, global case studies, to highlight structured well-being curricula and national policy documents, including the Single National Curriculum of Pakistan. The results showed that Positive Education has a great contribution to the socio-emotional strength, and cognitive growth of children. Models like the PERMA and the SEL uphold major competencies like empathy, self-regulation as well as relationship-building. The study, however, pinpoints key weaknesses in the ECE system in Pakistan such as inadequate assimilation of socio-emotional learning, inadequate teacher training, and excessive focus on academic performance. In this analysis, the author also emphasizes the necessity of the cultural adaptation of Positive Education to include indigenous values like patience and gratitude to make sure that it can be more relevant and efficient. This research paper finds that Positive Education can offer a long-lasting solution to enhance educational opportunities and future well-being as it is introduced as a part of the ECE system in Pakistan. It suggests policy changes, training of teachers and curriculum, and community engagement to facilitate successful realization of well-being-based education.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, PERMA model, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Single National Curriculum, Pakistan.

Effect of Play Based Activities on Development of Social Skills among Early Graders

Muhammad Mumtaz Khan (M.Phil. Education, AIOU Islamabad); Dr. Rahmat Ullah Bhatti (AIOU Islamabad); Zeeshan Mumtaz (MS scholar COMSATS University Islamabad)

For the holistic development of the child, it is necessary to shift the focus from academic achievement toward life skills, especially at the early stages of childhood. Therefore, this study has been designed to explore the effect of play-based activities on social skills among early graders. It is evident from different research that play is a big source to develop children's social skills. Social skills acquired through play-based activities comprise pride in succeeding, skills on handling what is expected of them, communication skills, cooperative skills as well as friendship and self-reliability skills. All the students of class two of district Haveli AJK were the population of study. Simple random technique was used to select class two as a sample for investigation. The researcher used the Randomised Post-test- Only Group Design for the conducted study. SPSS software was used to analyse the data. A t-test was employed to compare the mean scores of the participants' social skills development of both groups. The findings of the study proved that social skills such as cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy and self-regulation have been developed in young children through play-based activities. It is recommended that government consider this aspect of child development seriously and provide essential facilities such as space, playing essentials and budget for schools needed for executions of play-based activities. It is recommended that school principals or head teachers make a comprehensive play plan for the whole year and provide essential requirements for playing activities. The researcher recommends that the policy maker give equal weightage to social skills development as given academic achievement.

Scaffolding Higher Order Thinking Skills Through Visuals at ECE Level

Amir Hussain (School Education Department Khushab, Punjab; Syed Nasir Hussain, AIOU)

This qualitative study examines the effectiveness of visuals in developing higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) in early childhood education (ECE). Conducted over eight weeks, it involved young students engaging with visual tools like storyboards, diagrams, and interactive displays. The research aimed to explore how visuals foster skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which are challenging to measure quantitatively in young children. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data was collected through systematic observation in a natural classroom setting, focusing on children's interactions and responses to visual aids.

Findings revealed that visuals significantly enhance curiosity, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Children showed improved abilities to make connections, draw inferences, and articulate thoughts, indicating the potential of visuals as powerful educational tools. Visual aids integrated into daily activities promoted deeper understanding, retention, and active participation, with children engaging in discussions and thinking critically.

The study highlights the importance of incorporating visuals into ECE programs to support cognitive development and HOTS. It recommends professional development for teachers to effectively use visual tools and suggests further research to explore long-term effects and identify the most effective visual interventions for different age groups and learning styles. Overall, visuals provide a strong foundation for lifelong learning and intellectual growth in early childhood.

Study on Exploring the Caregiver-preschoolers Interface: A Review of Factors Influencing Healthy Eating Habits

Hadiqa Qaisar (HBS Medical College, Islamabad)

The dietary habits of young children are profoundly shaped by their primary caregivers. This review explores how caregivers' individual traits, household environments, and attitudes towards nutrition intersect to influence preschoolers' eating patterns. A comprehensive literature search was conducted across PubMed, CINAHL, and PsycINFO databases, yielding 10 peer-reviewed articles published from 2019 to 2024. The search and reporting processes were informed by the expanded PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The findings highlighted the importance of caregivers' personal attributes, household factors, and feeding practices in shaping preschoolers' dietary habits. However, caregivers' good intentions were often thwarted by real-world challenges. The influential role of caregivers' beliefs, intentions, and feeding practices is evident. Future research should investigate the complex interplay between caregiver factors and preschoolers' eating behaviors to inform tailored, caregiver-focused interventions. Ultimately, this will enable healthcare professionals to develop culturally sensitive and contextually relevant strategies for enhancing childhood nutrition.

KEYWORDS: Healthy eating habits, preschool children, parental influence

Role of Government of Balochistan in Meeting Educational Needs of Children with Disabilities in Balochistan

Salma Durrani (Social Welfare and Special Education Department, Balochistan)

The researcher designed a study titled as “Role of Government of Balochistan in meeting the Educational Needs of Children with Disabilities in Balochistan” which aimed to determine Physical facilities for Children with disabilities in Schools of Balochistan, to analyze level of satisfaction of curriculum and to analyze training facilities for Special Education Teachers in Balochistan. The researcher adopted descriptive approach. The sample of the study consisted special education institutions of Quetta, Sibi and Mastung districts of Balochistan. The respondents and participants are Administrators, Special Education Teachers and Special students. A check list and two questionnaires for curriculum satisfaction and for teachers training ,a checklist consisted of 15 items. Questionnaire for curriculum satisfaction consisted of 10 items and for teachers training consisted of 10 items. The collected data were analyzed and treated statistically through the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) by using frequencies and Percentages and T-Test. The result of data analysis indicated that Government really played important role in meeting special educational needs for children with disabilities. Government was facilitating children with disabilities in provision of physical needs such as appropriate building, user friendly wheel chairs, walkers, accessible wash rooms, and well equipped class rooms, furniture, uniform and stationary provisions but there was lack in adapted buildings of schools for children with disabilities in rural areas, insufficient physical facilities due to unawareness. In the light of these findings, the study recommended that the focus should be more on provision of physical facilities and training facilities for Special students.

Keywords: Role of Government, Special Educational needs, Students with disabilities

Unlocking Play -based Teaching: Analysing the Attitude and Practices of Teachers at Early Childhood Education Level

Robina Altaf (AIOU); Mubeshera Tufail (AIOU, Islamabad)

The study aimed to investigate teachers' attitude and practices for using play-based teaching method at early childhood education (ECE) level, and to assess challenges faced by ECE teachers in implementing play-based teaching method at ECE level. Quantitative research design and survey research method was adopted to conduct this study. The research population included all 3,517 male and female ECE teachers in government schools of Khushab District. The research sample consisted of 348 early childhood education instructors selected through stratified selection technique. Self-developed research instrument was used to collect the data from the respondents. It was found that ECE instructors had a favourable attitude to the play-based teaching at ECE level. They were of the view that play-based instruction enhances engagement of children in learning however, organizing activities for play-based instruction was labour-intensive. ECE Teachers implemented regulations and facilitated play-based activities while considering the intellectual abilities, emotional traits, and sociocultural backgrounds of their pupils. Teachers are suggested to design play-based teaching activities considering students' interests, individual characteristics, and time constraints. Providing the required support, guidance and professional development opportunities to the teachers through online and face-to-face mode can be helpful for adopting play-based teaching at early childhood education level.

Keywords: Attitude and practices of teachers, Early childhood education level, Government schools, Play-based teaching method

A Study on the Significance of Equality and Inclusion in Early Childhood Development at the Primary Level in District Lakki Marwat

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University of Lakki Marwat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

The present study examined the significance of equality and inclusion in early childhood development at the primary level in District Lakki Marwat. The main objective was to investigate how equitable and inclusive educational practices influenced the cognitive, social, and emotional development of young learners. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were collected from primary school teachers and headteachers in public sector schools. The population comprised all primary school teachers in the district, from which a sample of 120 respondents was selected through a simple random sampling technique. A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was used as the research instrument. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The findings revealed that equality and inclusion significantly enhanced students' participation, social interaction, and academic performance. Inclusive classroom environments fostered a sense of belonging and supported diverse learning needs. However, challenges such as lack of teacher training, limited resources, and insufficient awareness of inclusive practices were also identified. The study concluded that equality and inclusion are critical components of effective early childhood education and recommended the provision of training programs, adequate resources, and policy support to strengthen inclusive practices at the primary level.

Keywords: (Equality, Inclusion, Early childhood Development, Primary Education, Inclusive Education, Lakki Marwat)

Exploring the Efficacy of Digital Storytelling in Enhancing Language Acquisition in Early Childhood Education

Dr. Nuzhat Saadia Qureshi (AIOU); Hammad Ahmad (AIOU)

This study explored the impact of digital storytelling on English language learning in early childhood education in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. A quasi-experimental design was employed, with 60 students divided into an experimental group exposed to digital storytelling and a control group receiving traditional instruction over an eight-week period. Pre-tests and post-tests measured students' comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and overall language development. The results indicated that digital storytelling significantly improved the language skills of the experimental group, enhancing both cognitive development and student engagement through interactive multimedia content. Grounded in Constructivist Learning Theory and the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, the study demonstrated the effectiveness of digital storytelling as a pedagogical tool in a Pakistani context. These findings highlight the potential of digital storytelling to innovate language teaching practices in early childhood education, offering valuable insights for educational policy and practice in Pakistan.

Central Asia Stunting Initiative (CASI) Program Overview and Achievements

Sanober Nadeem, Dilafroz Beg, Nigar Ali, Aminah Jahangir (Aga Khan Health Service)

According to “Convention on the Rights of Children”, every child has the right to receive good and adequate nutrition from conception. First 1000 days of life are very critical for optimum neural connections and lifelong trajectories of health and learning. Undernutrition during this period is associated with morbidity, mortality, severe nutrition deficiencies: including stunting, wasting, severe acute malnutrition and long-term cognitive deficit. The provision of adequate nutrition during early years reduce can increase child survival promote healthy growth and development. The Central Asia Stunting Initiative (CASI) is an Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) led initiative to reduce stunting and wasting among under five children and undernourished mothers at Gilgit and Chitral region with the support of Government. The interventions are multidisciplinary in nature following the nurturing care framework, IYCF and MIYCN practices including provision of food supplement, regular growth monitoring, education on health and sanitation, responsive caregiving and play and stimulation. Currently, around 120000 population of 136 villages are taking benefit from the program. In Pakistan, around 40% under five children are stunted and in some areas of Sind Province, Balochistan, KPK and Gilgit this figure is much high. There is a dire need for multisectoral approach and the inclusion of nutrition as first component in each early child development programs either implement at health centers, education sectors or at community level running by any ministry or public or private institution.

Beyond the Classroom: The Impact of Outdoor Activities and Storytelling on Early Childhood Development

Samina Islam (Dy. DEO EE-W, Tehsil Gujar Khan Rawalpindi; Dr. Rao Nadeem Alam, former Assistant Professor, QAU Islamabad)

This study explores the impact of outdoor activities and storytelling on early childhood care and education (ECCE) children in preschool settings in Pakistan. A qualitative research design was used to understand participants' experiences and observations. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 22 participants from Rawalpindi and Multan, including teachers, parents, and caregivers with direct experience of ECCE children. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that outdoor activities and storytelling supported children's participation, engagement, communication, peer interaction, curiosity, confidence, and emotional comfort. Participants also highlighted challenges in implementing these activities, including limited resources, classroom management issues, and differences in school contexts. Overall, the study suggests that outdoor activities and storytelling are valuable approaches for supporting young children's learning experiences and development in Pakistani preschool settings.

Keywords: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), outdoor activities, storytelling, preschool education, qualitative research, thematic analysis, child development, Pakistan

From Training to Transformation: A Hybrid ECCE Model for Sustainable Teacher Development in Pakistan

Sadaf Rabbani (Cantab Publisher)

Despite national investments in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Pakistan continues to face gaps between teacher training and classroom practice. While pre-service and in-service programs have introduced child-centered content, their long-term impact remains uneven due to the lack of sustained mentoring, limited follow-up, and infrastructural constraints in public-sector schools. This paper presents findings from a larger mixed-methods study evaluating the effectiveness and implementation of Pakistan's national ECCE teacher training program. Data were collected through 517 structured surveys, 60 semi-structured interviews, and 48 classroom observations. The study used a convergent parallel mixed-methods design aligned with Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Training Evaluation Model to explore teacher satisfaction, learning, behavior change, and long-term results. Preliminary analysis shows high satisfaction with the training content (Levels 1 & 2), especially its focus on play-based and child-centered pedagogy. However, Levels 3 and 4 reveal persistent challenges: teachers return to classrooms lacking materials, support, and monitoring. Additionally, the cost-heavy model—relying on TADA, accommodation, and centralized workshops—is unsustainable for national scaling. To address these systemic constraints, the paper proposes a Hybrid ECCE Training and Mentorship Center piloted in Lahore. This model features smart classrooms with digital tools, enabling expert trainers to deliver real-time mentorship and model lessons to remote teachers. Promotion-linked certification will incentivize engagement, while some logistical funds will be redirected to improve classroom infrastructure. This model offers a scalable, cost-effective, and equity-driven solution, with actionable insights for policymakers, partners, and teacher educators working in low-resource contexts.

Keywords: ECE Teacher Training, Classroom Implementation, Teacher Mentorship, Digital Training Models

Mental Health and Nursing Care: Interventions to Support Caregivers and Children

Ms. Musarrat Rani (Irshad Amtul Reproductive Health and Midwifery Services)

The prevalence of mental health disorders among children has escalated globally, placing substantial emotional, physical, and social burdens on their caregivers. Nurses, as frontline healthcare providers, play a critical role in bridging clinical mental health interventions with everyday family dynamics. However, there remains a notable gap in structured, nursing-led strategies that simultaneously address the needs of both children and their caregivers. This study aimed to (1) identify effective nursing interventions supporting mental health in children and their caregivers, (2) evaluate the role of nurses in delivering these interventions, and (3) explore strategies for integrating family-centered care into routine mental health support. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining a systematic review of literature published between 2015 and 2024 with qualitative interviews from 25 healthcare professionals, including pediatric nurses and mental health specialists. Thematic synthesis and descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze intervention trends, roles, and outcomes. Caregiver-inclusive interventions like psychoeducation and school programs improved mental health for both children and caregivers. Nurses played a key role in early detection, emotional support, and continuity of care. Culturally competent and community-based approaches proved more effective and sustainable. Family-centered strategies boosted caregiver resilience and strengthened collaboration with healthcare providers. Nurses are essential architects and facilitators of interventions that support both caregivers and children facing mental health challenges. Transitioning towards holistic, family-inclusive care models, coupled with targeted institutional training and support for nursing staff, can substantially improve mental health outcomes and caregiver resilience.

Identifying and Removing Barriers that Limit Fathers' Involvement in Raising their Children

Ms. Musarrat Rani (Irshad Amtul Reproductive Health and Midwifery Services)

Fathers' involvement in child-rearing is crucial for children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. However, numerous barriers limit fathers' active participation. These barriers include cultural norms, social expectations, personal challenges, and systemic obstacles within service environments. Understanding and addressing these barriers is essential to promote father engagement and improve child welfare outcomes. Aims of this study is 01. To identify and analyze the key cultural, social, and personal barriers that restrict fathers' involvement in raising their children. 02. To propose practical strategies to remove these barriers and enhance father engagement. A qualitative research approach was employed, synthesizing findings from 23 qualitative studies and focus groups involving fathers from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and thematic analysis. The study revealed four key categories of barriers limiting father involvement: Cultural: Traditional gender roles, cultural expectations, and immigration-related issues discourage active care giving. Social: Fathers face stereotypes, lack role models, limited support, and sometimes encounter resistance from co-parents. Personal: Economic stress, mental health challenges, limited parenting knowledge, and work constraints reduce engagement. Service-level: Institutional shortcomings, like absence of father-friendly policies, outreach, and male representation -lead to exclusion. Facilitators included targeted outreach to fathers, inclusive services, skilled practitioners, and positive co-parenting dynamics.

Keywords: father involvement, cultural barriers, social barriers, personal challenges, father engagement, parenting, child welfare, father-inclusive services, co-parenting, qualitative research.

Strengthening Inclusive Early Childhood Education through Regional Knowledge Exchange, Capacity Building, and Teacher Preparedness

Syeda Fatima Kazmi (The Millennium University College Pakistan (in affiliation with University of Hertfordshire, UK)); Salma Nazar Khan (The Millennium University College Pakistan (in affiliation with University of Hertfordshire, UK))

This research study explores how Early Years teachers in Pakistani mainstream schools comprehend, experience, interpret, and navigate inclusive education within their professional contexts. By integrating regional knowledge exchange, teacher capacity building, and inclusive education frameworks, this study addresses a critical gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities. I have used an exploratory sequential mixed method design by collecting qualitative data from 14 schoolteachers through semi-structured interviews and quantitative phase is still in progress (Survey questionnaire has been shared with over 200 teachers). Based on the qualitative data findings, there is less understanding of how Early Years teachers perceive and navigate inclusion in their daily classroom practices, especially when engaging with children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Teachers use inclusive classroom practices, most of what they say comes from personal experience from what they've observed, tried, or learned on the job rather than from formal training. Limited teacher training, fragmented implementation of inclusive policies, and the absence of structured cross-country learning platforms hinder effective classroom inclusion. Drawing on the experiences and professional standards, the study highlights how shared learning, teacher professional development, and exposure to inclusive pedagogical models can positively influence teachers' attitudes and instructional practices. This research amplifies the perspectives of Early Years educators, providing significant insights into the realities of inclusion within Pakistani classrooms and contributing to broader dialogues concerning policy, teacher education, and inclusive schooling in analogous contexts.

Cognitive Growth or Cognitive Overload? Exploring Digital Learning and Parental Mediation in Early Childhood Education

Benish Saif (The Millenium Universal College); Salma Nazar Khan (The Millenium Universal College(University of Hertfordshire UK))

Early childhood is a critical period for the development of cognitive, emotional, and social capacities, with the home environment playing a central role. The rapid expansion of digital and AI-driven tools in ECE has transformed learning environments, particularly through digital parenting platforms and remote learning applications. This paper examines the impact of home-based screen exposure on cognitive overload and its influence on children's socio-emotional interaction during early childhood, drawing on parental perspectives within the Pakistani context. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, Cognitive Load Theory, and Parental Mediation Theory, the study employed a mixed-methods, convergent parallel design. Quantitative data were collected through a survey from 160 parents, while qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with sixteen parents. The findings indicate that while digital and AI-driven tools offer opportunities for access, personalization, and parental engagement, their unregulated and excessive use has led to cognitive overload, reduced attention spans, and limited meaningful social interaction. In many home-based learning contexts, especially where parents lack adequate digital literacy or pedagogical guidance, prolonged and unsupervised screen exposure was identified as a contributing factor to emotional dysregulation, behavioral frustration, and social withdrawal. However, that reliance on screens was rarely rooted in neglect; rather, it was shaped by practical constraints, emotional fatigue, household duties, and the perceived calming effect of digital devices. Parental guilt emerged as a prominent theme, highlighting parents' awareness of potential risks alongside their dependence on screens as a coping strategy. The study infers that children's socio-emotional outcomes are influenced not solely by screen duration but by the quality, context, and regulation of screen use within daily family routines.

Future-Ready Beginnings: Reimagining Early Childhood Education in a Rapidly Evolving World—Evidence from Urban Karachi

Dr. Nuzhat Naz (College of Education, Ziauddin University, Karachi); Muhammad Nizam Uddin (M.S. Scholar, Sindh Madrasatul Islam University, Karachi)

Early childhood education (ECE) serves as the foundation for lifelong learning and holistic development, particularly in the rapidly evolving world. As educational systems respond to technological advancement, changing societal expectations, and diverse learner needs, there is a growing need to understand how early childhood education is being reimagined at classroom level. This study explores future-ready practices in early childhood education through lived experiences of early childhood educators working in urban schools of Karachi area. Adopting a phenomenological research design, the study seeks to capture teachers' perceptions, experiences, and understandings of emerging trends shaping early childhood education. The sample comprised 14 early childhood education teachers from seven urban schools in Karachi. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and meanings across participants' experiences. The findings reveal key themes related to curriculum adaptation, child-centered pedagogical practices, integration of technology, professional preparedness of teachers, and challenges associated with resource availability in urban school settings. Participants highlighted importance of play-based learning, socio-emotional development, and continuous professional development in preparing young learners for the future educational demands. The study concludes that while urban ECE settings in Karachi are gradually moving toward future-ready approaches, sustained institutional support, targeted teacher training, and context-responsive policies are essential for meaningful transformation. The findings offer valuable insights for educators, school leaders, and policymakers aiming to strengthen early childhood education in rapidly changing world.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Phenomenological Study, Future-Ready Learning, Urban Schools, Teacher Perspectives

Managing Early Childhood Education Programs in Islamabad: Challenges Faced by School Leaders in 100 Public Schools

Sumaira Bibi (Principal Islamabad Model School for Girls FDE Islamabad)

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is more than just the initial stage of schooling; it lays the foundation for children's lifelong learning, curiosity, and confidence. In Islamabad, 100 public schools have established ECE classrooms to provide children with a strong start. While infrastructure has been developed and teachers trained, the sustainability of these programs largely depends on effective school leadership. This study explores the challenges faced by headteachers in managing ECE programs, with a focus on resource management, integration with primary grades, and long-term sustainability. A quantitative survey design was used, and data were collected from 30 school leaders through a structured questionnaire. The instrument focused on key areas including decision-making authority, availability of resources, and alignment of ECE with primary education. The findings reveal that limited leadership autonomy is a major constraint, as headteachers often rely on higher authorities or project management for decisions related to budgeting, staffing, and procurement. The absence of a dedicated budget further restricts the provision of age-appropriate learning materials and classroom enrichment. Additionally, integrating ECE with primary grades remains challenging due to the mismatch between play-based, child-centered learning and the exam-oriented nature of primary education. The study concludes that strengthening leadership autonomy, ensuring dedicated financial resources, and developing practical strategies for curriculum alignment are essential for sustaining quality ECE programs. Addressing these challenges will not only enhance leadership effectiveness but also support the creation of nurturing and sustainable early learning environments.

.Keywords: Early Childhood Education, School Leadership, Integration, Sustainability

Reimagining Teacher Preparation for STEAM Integration in Early Childhood Education

Zehra Khushal (AIOU), Dr. Rukhsana Durrani (AIOU Islamabad)

This qualitative descriptive study investigates STEAM implementation in early childhood classrooms with a specific emphasis on enhancing the professional capacity of the ECD workforce. Based on the interpretivist paradigm, the research investigated the process of how teachers' pedagogical practices shape observable learning behaviors, such as curiosity, collaboration, and problem-solving. The data were collected through non-participant observation in twelve early childhood centers in Islamabad using a contextualized STEAM Activity Observation framework. The results showed a large degree of variation in pedagogical skills. While the classrooms were well-organized and supportive, a STEAM implementation continuum was observed, ranging from teacher-directed to inquiry-based STEAM facilitation. A large degree of capacity was noted, including the lack of intentional technology integration and a superficial understanding of the engineering design process. While collaborative behaviors were observed among children in all classrooms, deep inquiry, curiosity, and systematic problem-solving were more observable in classrooms where teachers used facilitative and dialogic approaches. The study points out important workforce development needs in early childhood education. It emphasizes the need for improving pre-service education, in-service professional development, and mentoring approaches to enhance teachers' competencies in inquiry-based STEAM pedagogy. By providing contextually relevant evidence from resource-constrained settings, the study contributes to the existing debate on improving teacher capacity and quality reform in the ECD workforce.

AN ANALYSIS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM IN MALAYSIA

Shamaila Haleem (IMCG (PG), F-7/2, Islamabad)

Early childhood curriculum models of other countries provide an insight to better learning experiences of children. Malaysia, a rapidly developing Southeast Asian Muslim country, is a good example for developing early childhood curriculum in Pakistan. This research study analyses early childhood education curriculum in Malaysia. This qualitative study is based on interpretivist paradigm of research and uses document analysis as a research method. In Malaysia, several curriculum types are used for early childhood education such as Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf, Play-based, Thematic, Religious, and Language immersion. The study analyses these curriculum types of early childhood education in Malaysia. Based on the needs of children these early childhood curriculum types can be used by the teachers, parents, caregivers, curriculum developers, policy makers and researchers for the education of preschool children.

**Development and Piloting of a Qualitative Measure of a Home Observation Tool on
Caregiver-Child Interaction and Engagement in the Context of Pakistan**

Taiba Baig (Agha Khan University Human Development Programme); Dr. Seema Lasi (Agha
Khan University Human Development Programme); Yasmeen Mehboob (Agha Khan
University Human Development Programme)

Early years relationships and interactions with caregivers have a significant impact on young children's growth and development. Early caregiver-child interaction quality is positively related to later social, emotional, cognitive and linguistic development. Therefore, this paper describes the process of development and piloting of the Home Observation Tool (HOT) to observe and capture the interaction and engagement patterns between caregivers and children (0-3 years) in their respective households in the context of District Ghizer, Pakistan. The tool mainly consists of 7 important domains i.e. physical setup/environment, activities, caregiver's position in relation to the child, play materials/items, caregiver's behavior/attitude, caregiver's communication/responses, and interaction and engagement (positive, negative, or both). This paper is divided into two parts. The First parts provided the entire process of the development of the tool followed by the guideline. Whereas the second part provided the process of pre-testing and piloting of the tool in field settings. Based on the key findings from pre-testing and piloting, the tool shown to be reliable, simple, contextual relevant and easy to implement in field for researchers to capture high quality child-caregiver interaction and engagement in actual household settings.

**STEAM Integration and safe use of technology to enhance the learning & teaching
in ECE.**

Khet Kumar (Red Pi)

The primary goal of this is to promote hands-on learning in the classroom. In the early years, children demand learning which happens by doing. I will introduce the integrated way of learning through STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), when we teach young children through blend & integration of different subjects, then that is the right time they start building the cognitive skills, team building, improve the communication, start asking the right question, collaboration, etc. Overall, this supports soft skills, motor skills & cognitive skills. Young children start solving real-life problems through these skills. It is very important when we introduce the technology-backed approach, it is of utmost important to train our teachers, caregivers and parents on such technology. My goal beside integrating the STEAM curriculum, is to train the staff on effective and safe use of technology in their classroom while implementing the STEAM curriculum. In technology introducing gamification and; artificial intelligence to make learning an immersive and thought-provoking experience for young learners. This will not only impact the learning, but it will empower the teaching experiences.

Involvement of Fathers in social development of children at Early Childhood Education in Pakistan: A phenomenological Study

Uzma Mazhar (NUML); Qurat Ul Ain Hina (NUML)

The study aimed at exploring fathers' perspective towards their role in social development of children at ECE level and the response of fathers towards the opportunities and challenges in involvement of parents, especially fathers in social development of their children at school and out of school activities in pre-schools of Islamabad. The theoretical framework of the study was drawn from the attachment theory that suggests that responsive, available and emotionally involved fathers can play an important role in social development of their children by developing trust and sense of security in children. Qualitative research approach was adopted. Phenomenological research design was adopted. The population of the study included fathers of pre-school children studying at Montessori level in Islamabad. Ten fathers were included as sample through purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to get the perspective of parents and especially fathers. Interviews from fathers mainly focus on the point of view of fathers regarding the social development of their children at ECE level, their role in improving the environment and relationship of teachers and students and challenges that they face in involving in social development of their children. Findings suggested that mostly fathers suggested for indirect support as they believed that mothers can better communicate with female teachers at school. Still, some fathers consider it important to participate directly in academic activities, especially social development events with their children to provide a more comprehensive social understanding. Some fathers highlighted the reluctance from teachers in communicating matters specially about girls' students. The study suggested that teachers at ECE level need to focus involvement of fathers more so that they can get a more enriched and comprehensive perspective.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Father Involvement, Parental perspective

**To Observe and Compare the Classroom Quality Indicators of Early Childhood
Education (ECE) in Public and Private Schools in Gilgit Baltistan**

Meher Kamil

This study examines the quality of Early Childhood Education (ECE) classrooms in public and private schools in Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan, for children aged 3 to 5 years. Using systematic classroom observations, the study compares teaching practices, learning environments, teacher–child interactions, and levels of child engagement across both sectors. The findings reveal notable disparities in the availability of resources, pedagogical approaches, and teacher responsiveness, with private schools generally offering more child-centered and interactive learning environments. These results underscore the urgent need to strengthen public ECE classrooms to ensure equitable access to quality early education, which is essential for children’s holistic development. Accordingly, the study strongly recommends that both public and private sectors adopt modern, child-centered pedagogies for teaching and learning. It further emphasizes the need for continuous professional development, particularly training in the effective integration of technology into ECE teaching practices. In addition, the study recommends the formal regularization of Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs in public schools and the appointment of designated, professionally trained ECE teachers to enhance instructional quality and sustainability.

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION IN AZAD JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Jawad Zareen Shah (Arid Agriculture University); Imran Yousuf (PMAS-Arid Agriculture University)

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is globally so significant that subsection 4.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals described this level of education. Similarly, ECCE also has its significance and strengths at policy level in Pakistan. The study's objectives include assessing ECCE practices in the schools and analysing leadership's role in promoting ECCE. The study was conducted using a mixed methods approach, both qualitative and quantitative. Three districts, i.e., Bagh, Mirpur, and Neelum, were selected. There were a total of 1644 schools. From this population set, educational leaders and teachers were sampled through a simple random sampling technique. There were 320 teachers and 180 educational leaders (principals, district education officers, and assistant education officers) who were part of the study. Questionnaires and an interview guide were the tools of the study. The tool consisted of four major parts, i.e., demographic information's, role of leadership, assessment of practices, and open-ended questions (to get the opinion of teachers). Both respondents (teachers and principals) accepted the statements related to the government budget allocation for ECCE, advertisement of ECCE admissions, and inclusive education at ECCE level. Respondents rejected the statements regarding furnished classrooms, planning of assessment, continuous professional development of teachers, and availability of washrooms for children. Thematic analysis concluded with themes that policy development, facilitation, issues of monitoring visits, political will, and continuous professional development (CPD) are major challenges to promoting ECCE in AJK. Additionally, some issues were identified in the thematic analysis of interviews, such as budget, human resource training at the ECCE level, curriculum, support to the private sector, and infrastructure. The study recommended that policy development for ECCE level is dire need of time.

STRATEGIES FOR NATURE-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Shamaila Haleem (IMCG (PG), F-7/2, Islamabad)

Nature-based education is very necessary for better understanding of environment and resolving climate change issues. Early years of life lay the foundation for the later life years. Children educated in natural environment develop an overall balanced personality. Nature-based education helps in physical, mental, social, psychological, moral, and emotional development of children. It develops motor skills, creativity, empathy, communication skills, cooperation, and aesthetic sense of children. This paper is aimed at finding strategies for nature-based early childhood education. This qualitative study used literature review as a research method and the interpretivist paradigm of research. Nature-based strategies as discovered by this study include forest schools or nature preschools, outdoor play, outdoor storytime, nature-inspired art activities, nature walks, gardening activities, nature-based curriculum, creating a nature-rich classroom environment, connecting indoor and outdoor learning experiences, and so on. The study is an addition in the fields of early childhood education, environmental sciences, ecology, art and literature, biology, and earth sciences.