

Cultivating academic success and inclusion: Rethinking education for children with ADHD in Pakistan

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Dear Editor, In Pakistan, 2.49% of children have ADHD, with a boy-to-girl ratio of 3:1.¹ However, the challenge is exacerbated by a prevailing stigma surrounding mental health issues, which often compels potential individuals to shy away from seeking professional help. This predicament not only burdens these young minds but also gives rise to various complications as they transition into adulthood.²

While some training sessions for teachers and parents have been conducted to address ADHD in Pakistan, the extent of these efforts remains limited.^{3,4} The merits of such initiatives are undeniable, as they empower caregivers to understand and adapt their behaviours to support affected individuals better. Moreover, educational institutions have an invaluable opportunity to evolve their teaching methodologies to cater to the unique mental constitution of children with ADHD.

Once teachers are enlightened about the cognitive dynamics of their students, they can craft strategies to help these individuals maximise their academic potential. Guided by recommendations from the Attention Deficit Disorder Association (ADDA),⁵ classroom settings can be tailored to assist atypical students facing academic challenges (Table). Other practical suggestions include

Table.

Strategies	Explanation	Benefits
Seating arrangement	Ensure that the concerned student is seated away from the window or the entrance door	These spots serve as potential sites for distraction
Information delivery	Class lectures should be concise, segmented and incorporate visual aid	This corresponds to the short attention span and helps in keeping the information interesting.
Classroom routines	At least 2 to 3 typical students should be assigned the task of repeating the objectives of all home assignments by the end of the class daily	This allows for reduced chances of forgetting the assignment altogether.
Positive peer model	Peers that would serve as positive role models should be paired with students with ADHD	The positive influence could help the target students stay on track and be motivated throughout the academic year
Additional supervision	The teacher should ask the target student to make a master binder with a separate section for each subject and compartmentalized attachments for assignments	This allows the student to be organized and minimizes their chances of making mistakes.
Permission for movement	The designated student should be allowed to perform a repetitive pattern of movement, like manipulating a squeeze ball	Allowing them to perform patterns of motion reflecting their hyperactive tendencies helps them to grow and learn.
Playtime	Let the children play during recess	Playtime and relaxation are necessary for improving attention and focus

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extending task submission deadlines for concerned students and rewarding those who meet them on time with extra credit. Similarly, allocating extra time during tests acknowledges the extra effort required by this population to accomplish tasks that come more easily to typical children.

In this pursuit of curriculum adjustments, teachers must forge positive relationships with students dealing with ADHD. Creating an inclusive, nonjudgmental environment where students can freely express themselves without fear of criticism or reprimand is paramount.

In summary, embracing innovative teaching methods that promote the inclusion of students with ADHD alongside their typical peers can yield profound benefits for their cognitive development, academic achievements, and social well-being. Providing these essential tools and fostering an inclusive learning environment empowers this young generation to navigate future challenges and lead fulfilling, independent lives.

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