

# NIP newsletter

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## International Conference on “Mental Health of Afghan Migrants: Issues, Challenges, and Solutions for all Stakeholders” (13-15<sup>th</sup> March, 2023)



The International Conference was organized collaboratively by the National Institute of Psychology (NIP), *Centre of Excellence*, Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) Islamabad and International Organization for Migration (IOM) on 13-15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 to offer opportunities for UN Agencies, National NGOs, International NGOs, Government mental health officials, and Academia to highlight mental health of Afghan Refugees in context of various social, cultural, and structural determinants. Prof. Dr. Rubina Hanif was the Chief Organizer and Dr. Humaira Jami was the Organizer of the conference along Dr. Marsela Nyawara (Emergency Health Officer, IOM) and Dr. Shahid Irfan (MHPSS, IOM).

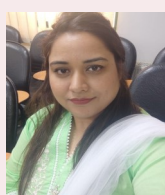
The conference included different pre-conference workshops on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> March, keynotes, guest speeches, panel discussions, and poster presentations. Conference activities on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023 in Sheesh Mahal Hall, Serena Hotel, were divided into three sessions. The first session was based upon inaugural ceremony and keynotes. The second session contained a panel discussion and guest speeches. The third session included a panel discussion followed by closing ceremony.

Three hundred participants from all over Pakistan attended the conference to recognize the significance of addressing the mental health needs of Afghan migrants who have faced unimaginable hardship, displacement, and trauma. Most of the participation was from Punjab and female participants. Main objective of the conference was to promote collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and capacity-building among stakeholders, including refugee communities, healthcare providers, policymakers, and host communities that are encountering challenges in hosting immigrants with unique needs. Experts from academic sector, UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, IOM, health sector, government sector like Ministry of Human Rights and Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reforms, national and international NGOs and trusts were invited to share their and their organization's vision to address mental health issues and challenges that Afghan migrants and host communities are facing. They furnished solutions and discussed existing interventions and preventive measures. Participants embraced the event with a spirit of collaboration and a commitment to profound action to a more just, equitable, and compassionate world for migrants.

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## International Conference

The conference commenced with recitation of the Holy Quran and the National Anthem in Inaugural Ceremony. Dr. Humaira Jami (Organizer, Assistant professor NIP) in her opening remarks introduced the conference objectives. Prof. Dr. Rubina Hanif (Chief Organizer, Director NIP) in her welcome note stated how migration has affected the life circumstances of Afghan refugees and how the conference will help cater to the issues faced by them. She mentioned NIP's vision for organizing such conferences and workshops. Ms. Mio Sato (Chief of Mission, IOM Pakistan) emphasized on factors that play their role in the mental health of Afghan refugees, such as the lack of basic needs, safety concerns, need for social support, and significance of psycho-education awareness. Mr. Faridullah Jan (Chief Guest; Commissioner, Commissionerate Afghan Refugees, Islamabad) suggested measures on how peaceful co-existence can be promoted between the refugees and the host countries/communities.

## Keynotes



The first keynote of the conference titled “Mental Health and Afghan Refugees” was delivered by Mr. Sher Jan Ahmadzai (Director, Center of Afghan (and Regional) Studies, University of Nebraska Omaha, USA). Mr. Ahmadzai reflected upon his life experiences as being an Afghan refugee and how various circumstances affected and challenged the lives of millions of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan and USA.

The second keynote titled “Afghan Refugees: Four Decades of Resilience and Hardiness” was delivered by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Jahanzeb Khan (Vice Chancellor of FATA University, President Pakistan Psychological Association). He emphasized the challenges faced by Afghan refugees who settled in tribal regions of Pakistan where limited resources are available to sustain life compared to other developed areas of Pakistan. He also stressed the difficulties faced by female practitioners while helping the refugees.



The third keynote was delivered by Ms. Tammi Sharpe (Deputy Representative, UNHCR). Ms. Sharpe elaborated on the rising statistics of mental health issues and the prevailing psychological disorders among Afghan refugees, such as depression, psychosis, alcoholism, etc., and suggested recommendations on how these problems can be managed. She suggested training of field workers rather to increase accessibility of mental health services for migrants. Delaying healthcare services by waiting for mental health

practitioners to provide healthcare may affect mental health of refugees markedly. She also shared how UNHCR are providing care in this context.

## Session 1: Panel Discussion on Structural and Social Determinants of Mental Health of Afghan Migrants



In the second scientific session, Panel Discussion “Structural and Social Determinants of Mental Health of Afghan Migrants” was convened by Dr. Aisha Zubair (Assistant Professor, NIP). During discussion, Dr. Shabana Fayyaz (Chairperson, Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, QAU) emphasized providing Afghan refugees with an equal sense of security across borders and implementation of humanitarian laws that are applicable to all people. Ms. Maymoona Sadi (Consultant Psychologist, WHO) talked about the mental health gap, capacity building, and integration of primary health care providers to deal with the structural and social determinants of the mental health of Afghan migrants. Dr. Pervez Shaukat (Public Health Officer, UN) considered migration as an evolutionary process and stressed upon the psychosocial determinants of migration as an opportunity for people across borders. Dr. Inoussa Kabore (Deputy Representative, UNICEF) pointed out that children are most vulnerable in terms of mental health, and they must have access to basic social services. He proposed different remedies to help Afghan migrants cope with their problems.

## Session 2: Guest Lectures



In the next of half of second session, the guest speakers enlightened the attendees of the conference with their valuable thoughts based upon their research and disciplines. Dr. Salma Malik (Assistant Professor, Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, QAU) talked about “Women in Conflict – Victims or Active Agents of Change: Case Study of Afghan Migrant Women - Issues, Challenges and Solutions for All Stakeholders”. She mentioned that the plight and concerns of Afghan women have largely been ignored. Stakeholders can convince and advocate for women's education and platforms referring to ongoing conference that can help with educational and mental health outreach programs. Prof. Dr. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal (Director, School of Politics and International Relations, QAU) gave his talk on “Political Stability: A Prerequisite for Socio-economic progress of Afghan Migrants”. Dr. Jaspal considered instability as the root cause of psychosocial and mental health problems among the refugees. He focused that there is a need for credible and inclusive dialogue which can aid in dealing with the matter more effectively. Dr. Malik Hammad

Ahmad (Director of, the Ministry of Human Rights) spoke on the “Mental Health Issues in Afghan Migrants in Pakistan: A Resilient Approach”. He considered mental health a human rights issue. He suggested that communication, a resilient and empathetic approach to the eradication of human misery and betterment of mental health is the need of the hour. Dr. Asma Humayun (National Technical Advisor; Ministry of Planning, Development, and Reforms) gave her views on “A Rights-Based Digital Solution for Public Mental Healthcare in Pakistan”. Dr. Humayun stressed the importance of a sustainable, regulated system of psychosocial intervention. She suggested stakeholders to collaborate with educational institutes, first responders, health care workers, and law enforcement agencies for psychological first aid. She introduced different digital applications and a multilayered system-tiered approach for the training of professionals.

**Session 3: Panel Discussion on Mental Health of Afghan Migrants: Issues, Challenges, and Solutions**



The third and last session included a Panel Discussion “Mental Health of Afghan Migrants: Issues, Challenges, and Solutions for All Stakeholders”. Ms. Riffat Zahir (Research Fellow cum Assistant

Professor, NIP) convened the discussion. Prof. Dr. Iftikhar-un-Nisa Hassan (Ex-Director NIP) emphasized that there is a dire need for a comprehensive mental health model which includes bio, social, and emotional components. Prof. Dr. Rizwan Taj (Dean of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences) highlighted that mental issues of Afghan migrants are multifold, and all the economic, social, and emotional factors need to be considered while providing solutions for the challenges faced by Afghan migrants. Ms. Naveen Hashim (Founder Af-Pak Women Association) commented that economic empowerment is the key to resolving many emotional problems faced by Afghan refugees especially women. Dr. Syed Aziz Agha (Assistant Professor, University of Baluchistan, Quetta) pinpointed the reasons behind social-emotional problems faced by Afghan women and children, he also stressed the need for proper licencing and registration of clinical psychologists particularly those working with refugees. Ms. Zeba Husain (Director Mashal Trust) stressed upon individual efforts in bringing positive change in current situation of Afghan migrants. Despite economic constraints, everyone, particularly, psychologists are encouraged to step up and play their role in resolving the matter.

**Closing Ceremony**

Thirty two abstracts were submitted for poster presentations, while 30 posters were received and displayed in the conference. These posters were displayed throughout the conference day. Dr. Marsela Nyawara (Emergency Health Officer IOM), Prof. Dr. Tanvir Akhtar (President NIP Alumni



Association), and Prof. Dr. Iffat Batool (Foundation University) were evaluators to decide three best posters explaining mental health of migrants in different contexts. Dr. Irum Naqvi (Assistant Professor, NIP) coordinated the whole process.

In closing ceremony, Dr. Humaira Jami provided an overview of the conference and summarized the recommendations that were made by experts during conference. Dr. Mrasela Nyawara and Prof. Dr. Rubina Hanif thanked participants for attending the conference and shared the vision for future collaboration. Shields and certificates were awarded to three best posters by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Idrees (Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences QAU). Dr. Sobia Masood (Assistant Professor, NIP) coordinated the award distribution Prof. Dr. Muhammad Idrees appreciated NIP and IOM for success of the joint venture and solemnised for future collaboration between academia and international organizations to find solutions to challenges that Pakistan is facing in current scenario.



**Pre-Conference Workshops**



**Preconference Workshop Day 1** National Institute of Psychology conducted pre-conference training workshop titled “Addressing Gender Disparity in Mental health of Migrants” in collaboration

with International Organization for Migrants keeping in view the pressing psychological issues faced by Afghan migrants. The primary objective of the training was to equip the frontline workers with essential theoretical and practical toolkit to deal with Afghan migrants. The workshop was attended by representatives from various national and international organizations and majority of the participants were working as social mobilizers, health officers, program development coordinators, reporting coordinators, psychiatrists, psychologists, consultants, counselors, admin officers, site officers, project assistants, as well as technical advisors. Training consisted of five sessions in total in which first three



sessions were themed around gender based violence (GBV). These sessions were conducted by Ms. Sadaf Zaman who is working as Senior Project Assistant Case Management and has a vast field experience for dealing with cases of GBV. The session incorporated various engaging and effective activities including Power and Vulnerability Walk (where participants were given different roles and they needed to evaluate their powerfulness and vulnerabilities in the

## Faculty Outreach Activities



given situations) and think-pair-and share where participants discussed and presented root causes, contributing factors, types, and consequences of GBV. Trainer emphasized that GBV is prevalent in all types of crisis and elaborated on rights of survivors, survivor-centered case management, assessment of needs, and referral pathways.

Last two sessions took into account the psychological and emotional impact of violence as well as relevance of MHPSS (Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support) while dealing with women survivors of violence. Sessions on psychological wellbeing and MHPSS were conducted by Ms. Fauzia Yasmin who is working as Senior Manager in Rozan. The session was started with a group activity in which participants needed to look for short term and long term effects of violence. The trainer discussed accurate psychosocial assessment of the psychological effects through interview and questionnaires. Additionally, recognizing and assessing suicidal ideation and tendencies was emphasized as suicide is the most adverse outcome of impact of gender-based violence on refugees. Through MHPSS, participants were taught to conduct psychosocial supportive activities through three layers including social consideration in basic security and services, developing family and community support, and focused support which include individualized services for complicated cases



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### Preconference Workshops

**Day 2** of the preconference workshops was loaded with hands-on activities which were targeted at identifying the distress among children, using art therapy as a form of treatment, practicing mindfulness, and understanding conflict and peace. Sixty participants, from all over Pakistan, took part in the training. After a welcome note by Prof. Dr. Rubina Hanif, Director National Institute of Psychology, first session was started by Ms. Sharmeen Khan. She conducted activities through which social, physical, psychological, emotional, environmental, and spiritual factors of distress can be identified in children. As children are a sensitive population, Ms. Sharmeen Khan taught about protocols of conducting interviews with children and the activity was practiced by all the participants. Dr. Uzma Masroor conducted



Dr. Uzma Masroor conducted her first session on art therapy. The focus of the herapy was to teach participants regarding usage of art along with other therapies as well as subsequent interview techniques to reach a decision regarding the issue a child is going through. In her second session, she talked about the philosophy behind mindfulness and the techniques which can be used for developing focus and calmness of mind. Participants were engaged in various mindfulness techniques which were helpful for them as well as for the populations they were working with. The last session of the workshop was conducted by Dr. Patrick Mcnamara who is Emeritus Director of International Studies at University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) and has an extensive experience in peace and conflict studies.

Her session was conducted virtually where he conducted group activities in order to help participants understanding dimensions of conflict, conflict resolution styles, achieving the state of inner peace and relating it to outer peace. Dr. Muhammad Idrees (Dean Social Sciences, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad) were invited as chief guest. The closing ceremony for the second day of preconference workshops included concluding remarks from Dr. Marsela (IOM), Prof. Dr. Rubina Hanif, and Prof. Dr. Muhammad Idrees and distribution of shields and certificates among resource persons and participants.



Dr. Muhammad Idrees (Dean Social Sciences, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad) were invited as chief guest. The closing ceremony for the second day of preconference workshops included concluding remarks from Dr. Marsela (IOM), Prof. Dr. Rubina Hanif, and Prof. Dr. Muhammad Idrees and distribution of shields and certificates among resource persons and participants.

## Faculty Outreach Activities

Dr. Nelofar Kiran Rauf delivered a talk on "Autism spectrum disorder" on 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 in National University for Modern Languages (NUML,) Islamabad. The seminar was attended by psychology students, students from advanced diploma in clinical psychology and faculty members. The seminar is conducted in reference to the World Autism awareness month. The purpose of the seminar was to create awareness in students about the autism spectrum disorder with reference to symptomatology, etiology, intervention and research gaps.



Dr. Irum Naqvi conducted a workshop on "Orientation to AMOS: Hypothesis Testing through

**Structure Equation Modeling** " on March 14th, 2023 at the Department of Psychology, NUML University, Islamabad. Workshop covered the basic assumptions of theory testing and hypothesis testing analysis through AMOS software. Workshop has been attended by a large number of participants including BS/M.Phil/PhD level research students. Dean Faculty Social sciences NUML and head of department NUML presented the shield at the end of the workshop.



NIP faculty, Dr. Sobia Masood, conducted a one-day training workshop on "Writing Journal Articles and Dissertations: Following the APA Report Writing Style" organized by National University of Modern Languages (NUML) on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023). Faculty, PhD, MPhil and BS-research students attended the workshop.

NIP faculty, Dr. Sobia Masood, was a resource person in a one-day awareness seminar on "Psychosocial Health: Factors Affecting Mental Disorders" organized by National Institute of Special Education on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023). Faculty and students of various universities, students of medical colleges and people working in the field of special education attended the workshop.



Ms. Arooj Mujeeb attended a training in National Incubation Centre on "Cyber Security for Women" on 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2023. The training was organized by National Incubation Centre and Secure Purple co-jointly.

Training was conducted by Mr. Adnan Malik (CEO, Secure Purple) who strongly believes in creating secure virtual spaces for women. The training was conducted in two sessions in which first sessions highlighted the physical, psychological, emotional, and identity threats, whereas; second session involved discussion on remedies and making one's virtual presence secure.

Ms. Arooj Mujeeb delivered a talk on "Psycho-preneurship" at Capital University for Science and Technology on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2023. The objective of the talk was brainstorming with students while highlighting the professional areas they can land in after completing degree in Psychology. She, particularly, discussed 54 divisions of American Psychological Association (APA) in order to broaden the vision of students. The overwhelming response and queries of the students was an indication that our students



need career counselling every now and then in order to rectify their misconceptions.

Prof. Dr. Rubina Hanif was invited as a guest speaker in a symposium at Capital University for Science and Technology which was arranged by their Department of Psychology. The event took place on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2023.



The objective of the symposium was to invite experts from various fields of Psychology in order to orient students with contemporary trends in Psychology.

Prof. Dr. Rubina Hanif explained the career trajectories in academia, research, industrial, and clinical fields of Psychology. She also discussed career and educational opportunities in various sectors of Pakistan where Psychology students can apply for their higher education or jobs.

While keeping in view her elaborative work and projects on youth development, University of Gujrat invited Prof. Dr. Rubina Hanif for delivering a training workshop on youth issues titled "Dynamics of Intolerant and Violent Behaviours: Enhancing Skills of Control and Management Among Youth". The workshops started while looking at some of the pull and push factors which are triggers for youth violence and intolerance. After discussing all of the factors, each factor was discussed with reference to the solutions. Solutions were described with reference to youth, teachers, as well as parents. The reason of taking a 360 degree look on youth issues is the philosophy that youth problems can be resolved only by resolving problems in ecological system of the youth.



## Workshops at NIP

### Workshops at NIP

National Institute of Psychology hosted a training workshop titled “Youth as Peacebuilders: Creating Inclusive and Flourishing Community” on 3rd January, 2023 in collaboration with Shaoor Foundation for Education and Awareness (SFEA). Students from various regions attended the workshop in person and virtually. Training was comprised of four sessions including Mental Health Challenges in Youth, Preventing Violent Extremism through Arts, Diversity and Safe Environments, as well as Gender Diversity and Inclusion. All of the resource persons made all the sessions interactive by including hands-on activities in form of brainstorming, imaginary-based body scan, group discussions, videos, scenario-based analyses, and Think-Pair-Share activities.



### Culture Day at NIP

Quaid-i-Azam University is considered “Mini Pakistan” due to representation of every culture and region at one place. In order to celebrate this diversity, 3rd January, 2023 was observed as the cultural and harmony day at National Institute of Psychology, Centre of Excellence. Students dressed up in their local attires and carried hand props. Students represented Punjabi, Pashtoon, Balochi, Sindhi,



Saraiki, Kashmiri, Gilgit Baltistani, and Kailashi cultures. Many students carried indigenous instruments for playing music and singing cultural songs. Additionally, students danced on their cultural songs. It was a great opportunity for all people at NIP to witness the vibrant cultures and to connect with each other wholeheartedly.



## National Consultative Meeting on “Umeed-e-Sehar: Life Is Precious Psycho-Social Risk and Protective Factors of Delinquent and Suicidal Behaviours”

A consultative national meeting "Umeed-e-Sehar: Life Is Precious Psycho-Social Risk and Protective Factors of Delinquent and suicidal Behaviours" was held at National Institute of Psychology, Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad on 13th February, 2023. The meeting was attended by representatives of important stakeholders including the Ministry of Human Rights Government of Pakistan, the Government of Gilgit Baltistan, Hashoo Foundation, Agha Khan Foundation, Representatives from Jinnah Centre for Character and Leadership, Quaid-i-Azam University, Karakorum



In this regard, National Institute of Psychology shared that they have already developed an action plan with the help of the Hashoo Foundation and representatives of MoHR, Govt. of Pakistan, Social Welfare Department, Govt. of GB. It was shared that the first step in this regard was to collect information about the nature and extent of problems. Interviews and focused discussions were carried out with individuals from the community and representatives of local government. A number of factors were discovered. A general list of factors that were found was related to mental health issues, lack of opportunities for the educated youth, lack of communication between parents and children, the financial disparity in the region, a lifestyle marred by difficult weather patterns and conservative values, and lack of positive outlets.



International University and Fatima Jinnah Women University among others. The participants in the meeting discussed factors and causes related to the increasing number of suicides in the province of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) in the recent past. The participants expressed their views and discussed ideas about what actions need to be taken at National level to help and curb the menace in the community of Gilgit Baltistan specifically and other provinces generally. They deliberated upon strategic interventions that need to be developed and implemented to help the suffering community.



The participants unanimously decided that psychosocial interventions are needed to build the resilience of the local community in GB. It was not acceptable to the participant that even one more life should be lost due to hopelessness or adverse circumstances. Each individual in the community deserved to feel content and valued. Representatives of Govt. of GB assured that it is already motivated to offer support to the grieving families and community; they reiterated that all possible support will be provided for the action plan that is developed under Umeed-e-Sehar. Hashoo Foundation and Agha Khan Foundation are committed to provide logistic and technical support in the upcoming phases of the project.

## Featured Alumni Dr. Hafsa Khalil Toor



Dr. Hafsa Khalil Toor is currently working as Assistant Professor at Foundation University, Islamabad Campus. She is not only involved in teaching and research in university but also plays an active part with reference to her role as Team Lead Self-Assessment Report for QEC, Member Board of Studies, Member Interview Panel for MS Intake, Entry Test Constructor for MS and PhD, as well as Editor of Foundation University Journal of Psychology. Previously, she had been working with Women Institute of Science and Humanities (WISH) as Action Researcher. Her major project included "Finding the Causes of Poor Performance of BSCS Students Studying at WISH". Her other responsibilities included working as a Staff Coordinator with Dean Academics, Psychological Consultation for Examination Procedures, Classroom Environment, Workplace Environment and Student Teacher Relationship which indicates the diversity of skills she possesses. She defended her PhD Dissertation in year 2022 from National Institute of Psychology, Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University and she had been studying in the institute since her MSc. Dr. Hafsa Khalil Toor has a significant number of national and international publications and supervised researches on her credit. While using her research skills,

she has won and completed two project grants till date. These projects included Development and Validation of Foundation Online Inventory – Personality and Intelligence Strength (FOI-PAIS) and Role of Maternal Mental State Talk on Perceived Emotional Knowledge of Preschoolers which were completed as Co-PI and PI; respectively. Alongwith academia, she is also providing her services for development sector including Consultant Psychometric Assessment for recruitments of employees for various cadres through National Testing Services (NTS) e.g., Ministry of Defence, NAB, Rescue 1122, Atomic Energy etc. She has recently joined Leicester Institute of Advanced Studies at University of Leicester as post-doc research fellow.

### PhD Public Defence

During first quarter of the year 2023, two PhD public defence were conducting. Details of both of the defence are as follow:

Ms. Syeda Rubab Aftab defended her PhD on 7th February, 2023. Title of her research was "Moral Disengagement and Emotional Manipulation Mediating Between Social Desirability and Well-Being: Moderation by Freud's Empathy and Religiosity". The research



was supervised by Dr. Jamil. A. Malik and external examiners of the defence were Prof. Dr. Jahanzeb Khan (Vice Chancellor FATA University) and Dr. Nazia Iqbal, (Head of Department, International Islamic University, Islamabad).

PhD defence of Ms. Nida Nosheen took place on 21st February, 2023. The title of the research was "A Comparison of Gated and Non-Gated Home Environments". Research was supervised and co-supervised by Prof. Dr. Muhammad Anis-ul-Haque and Prof. Dr. Muhammad Asir Ajmal;



respectively. External Examiners for the defence included Prof. Dr. M. Tahir Khalily (Dean Faculty Social Sciences Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University, Islamabad) and Prof. Dr. Tanvir Akhtar (NUML, Rawalpindi).