

## Contextualizing the UCLA PEERS Program: A Culturally Adapted Model for Pakistani Parents and Teachers of Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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### **Abstract:**

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) significantly affects social, linguistic, and behavioral development, posing challenges for adolescents in building peer relationships. The Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®), an evidence-based intervention, has demonstrated effectiveness globally but requires cultural adaptations for non-Western contexts. This study introduces a culturally adapted UCLA PEERS® model for Pakistani parents and teachers to enhance social skills in adolescents with ASD. A total of 98 adolescents (M age = 14.39, SD = 1.80), along with 98 parents (M age = 41.60, SD = 3.90) and 63 teachers (M age = 36.63, SD = 7.80), participated in a 14-week intervention conducted in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Statistical analyses revealed significant improvements in the experimental group's social skills knowledge post-intervention compared to pre-intervention, with  $F(1, 93) = 41.23, p < .001, \eta^2 = .30$ . No significant changes were observed in the control group. Parents and teachers in the experimental group reported enhanced understanding and application of social skills strategies, which positively influenced adolescents' peer interactions and adaptive behaviors.

This culturally adapted PEERS® model demonstrates its efficacy in improving the socialization outcomes of Pakistani adolescents with ASD. The findings highlight the importance of culturally sensitive interventions to meet the unique needs of diverse populations, offering implications for educators, clinicians, and policymakers.

### **Keywords:**

Autism Spectrum Disorder, PEERS®, Social Skills Training, Adolescents, Cultural Adaptation, Evidence-Based Interventions, Pakistan.