

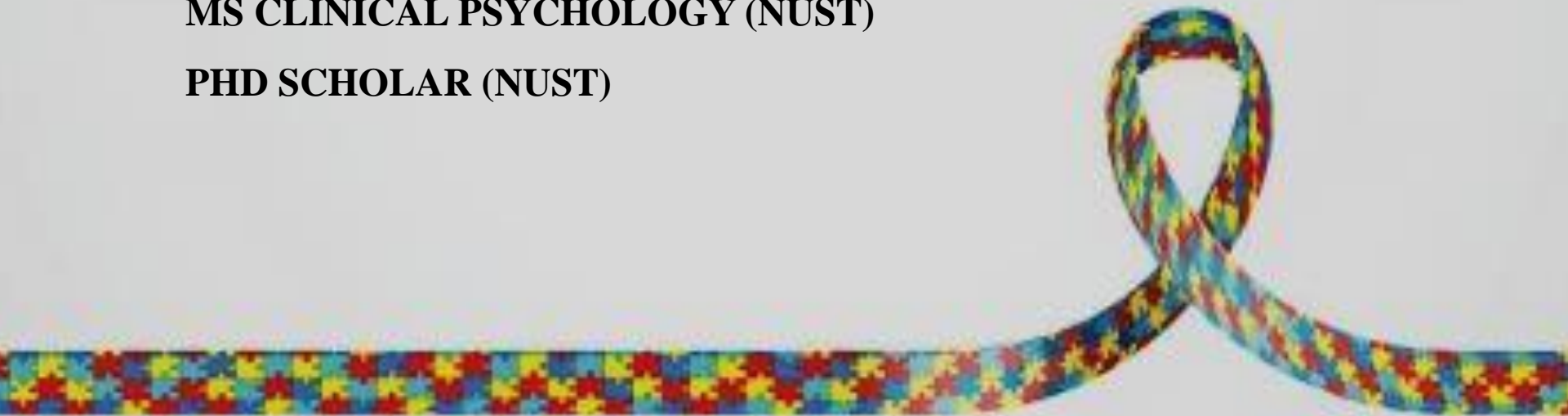
AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

AISHA SALEEM-LECTURER & CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST

(AYUB MEDICAL COLLEGE, ABBOTTABAD)

MS CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY (NUST)

PHD SCHOLAR (NUST)



What is Autism Spectrum Disorder?

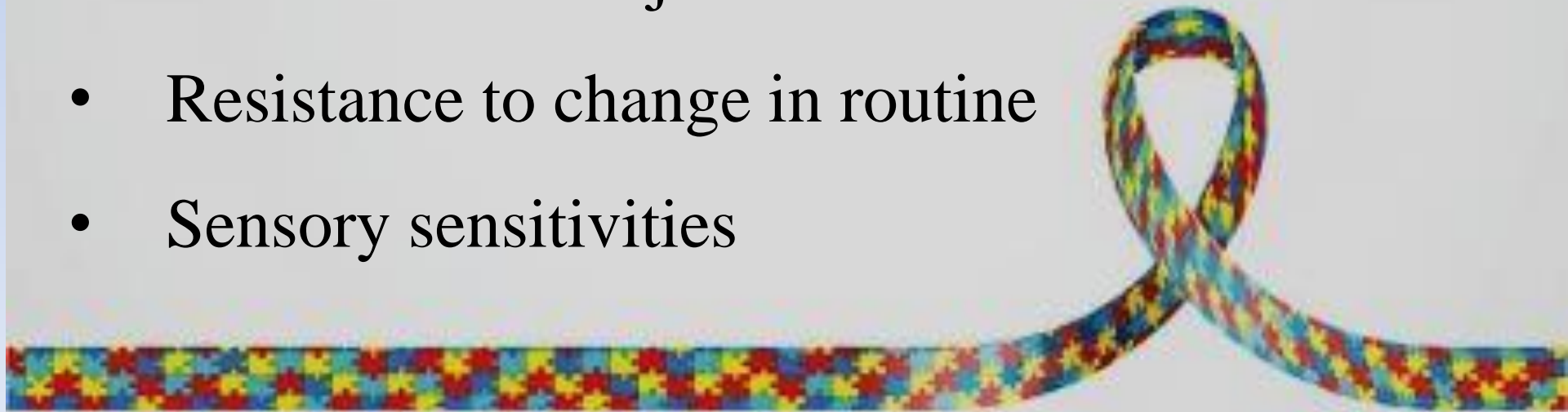


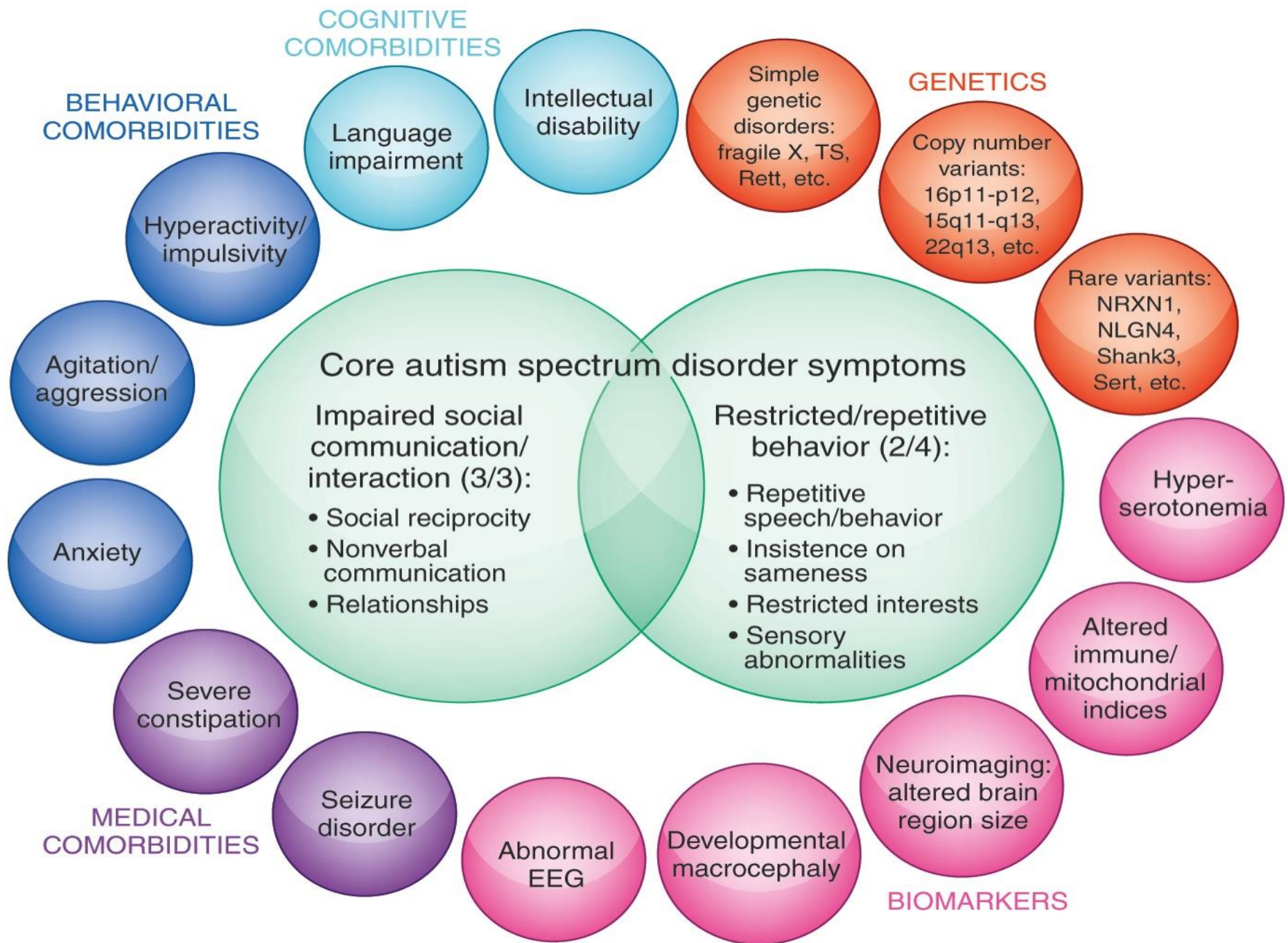
Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by social communication difficulties and restricted repetitive behaviours that can continue in daily life beginning in early childhood.



Common Symptoms of Autism

- May exhibit repeated body movements (hand flapping, rocking).
- Unusual responses to people
- Attachment to objects
- Resistance to change in routine
- Sensory sensitivities





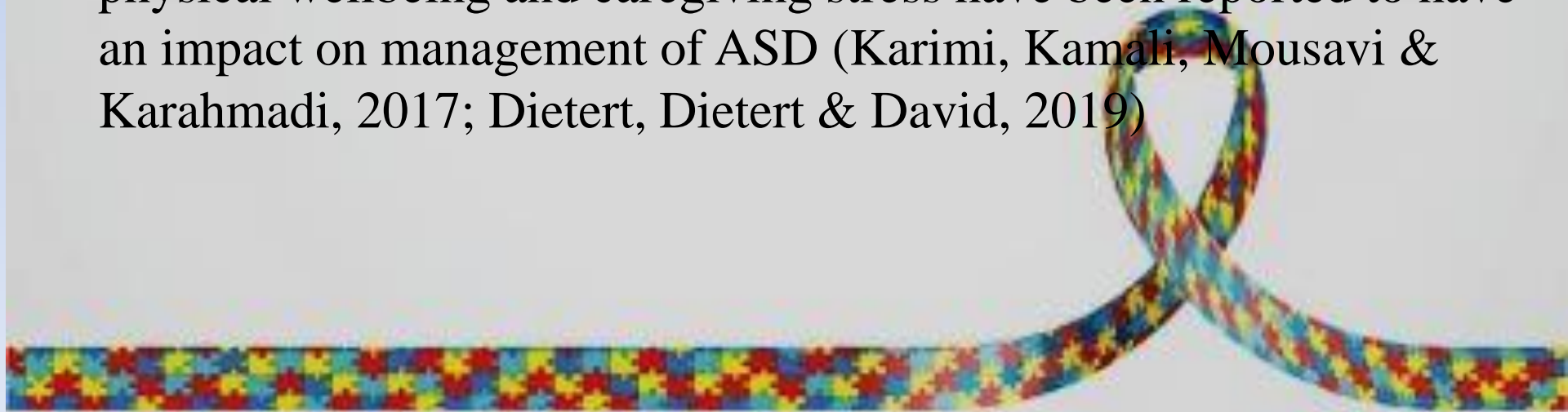
Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder

- ASD is a major problem in the today's world.
- The prevalence of ASD has increased 20–30 fold in the last 40 years worldwide.
- According to research, the prevalence of ASD has risen rapidly worldwide to 1 in 132 (Jarmołowska, 2019).
- Some studies also report 1 in 54 ratio of ASD (Cardy et al., 2021)



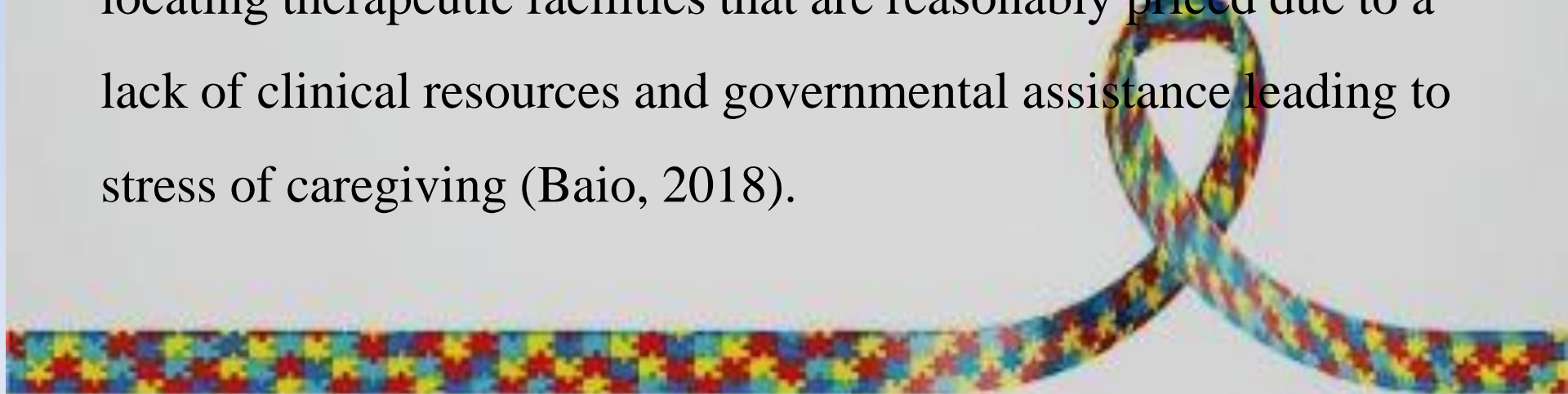
Causes of Autism Spectrum Disorder

- Autism Spectrum Disorder is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder which has multiples associated risk and protective factors (Muhle & Trentacoste, 2014)
- Genetics is one of the foremost causal factors, however, multiple psychosocial factors are associated with increasing symptom severity and perpetuating the disorder (Leonardo et al., 2019; Gialloreti et al., 2019; Nuttal, 2017)
- In psychosocial stressors, maternal and paternal age, their mental and physical wellbeing and caregiving stress have been reported to have an impact on management of ASD (Karimi, Kamali, Mousavi & Karahmadi, 2017; Dietert, Dietert & David, 2019)

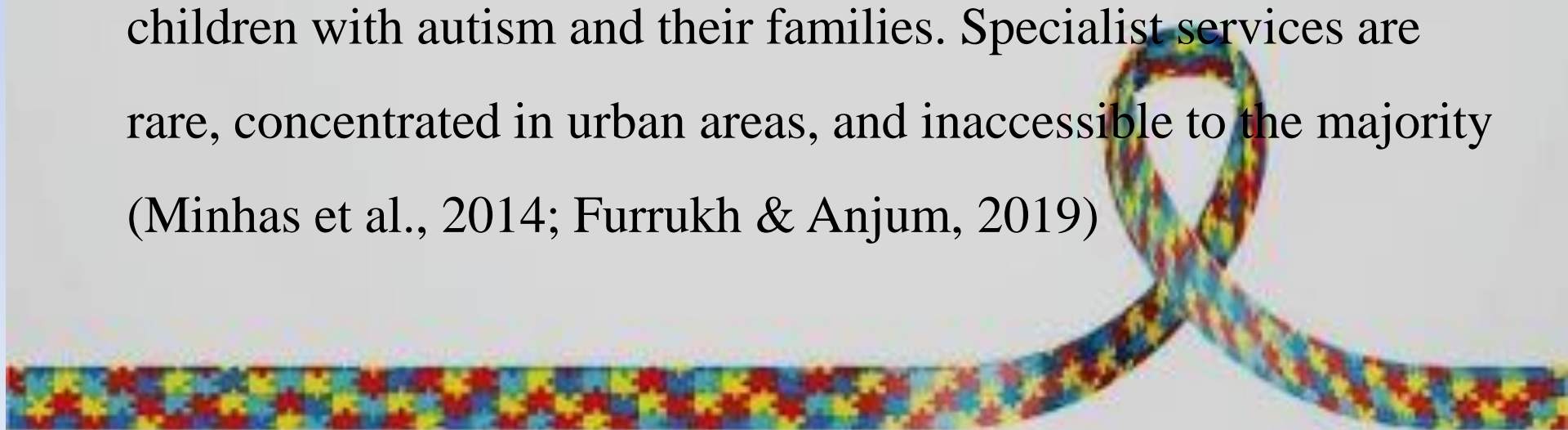


Parental Caregiving Stress

- Parents with ASD children are key members of their ASD children's health teams, and serve as the primary nurses for their ASD children.
- May encounter more caregiving issues than parents of typical children, such as higher costs of therapy, childcare difficulties, locating therapeutic facilities that are reasonably priced due to a lack of clinical resources and governmental assistance leading to stress of caregiving (Baio, 2018).

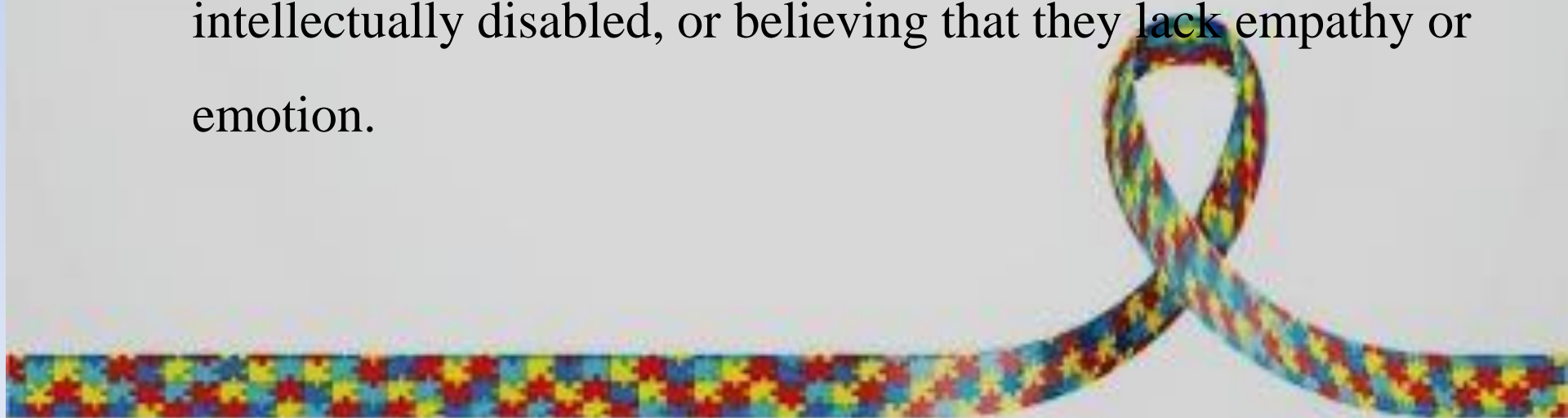


- Studies from Pakistan and India suggest that the burden of care is almost entirely on the mother, leading to high levels of stress.
- Poor awareness of the condition in both family members and front-line health-providers leads to delay in recognition and appropriate management.
- There is considerable stigma and discrimination affecting children with autism and their families. Specialist services are rare, concentrated in urban areas, and inaccessible to the majority (Minhas et al., 2014; Furrakh & Anjum, 2019)



Associated Stigma and its Impact

- Individuals with ASD are often misunderstood, leading to misconceptions and stereotypes.
- Some common misconceptions include viewing ASD as a result of bad parenting, seeing individuals with ASD as intellectually disabled, or believing that they lack empathy or emotion.



- Stigma can have significant negative effects on individuals with ASD and their families.
- It may lead to social isolation, bullying, and exclusion from educational or employment opportunities.
- Families may experience shame, guilt, and stress due to societal judgments and lack of understanding.



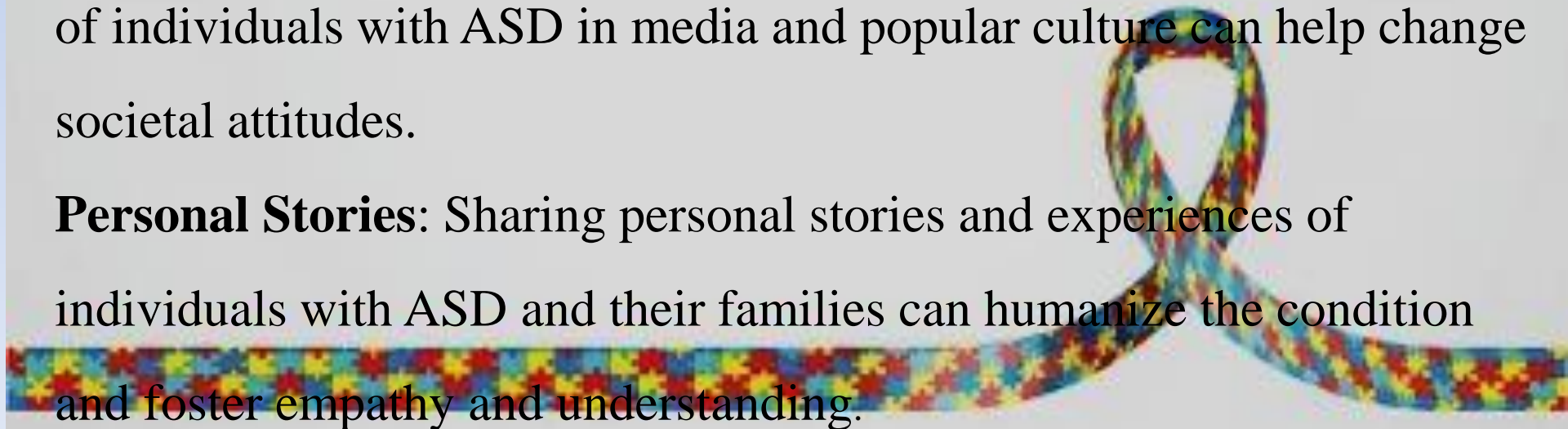
Addressing Stigma

Education and Awareness: Promoting accurate information about ASD can help challenge misconceptions and reduce stigma.

Advocacy and Support: Advocacy efforts can help promote inclusion, acceptance, and access to resources and services for individuals with ASD.

Media Representation: Encouraging accurate and positive portrayals of individuals with ASD in media and popular culture can help change societal attitudes.

Personal Stories: Sharing personal stories and experiences of individuals with ASD and their families can humanize the condition and foster empathy and understanding.



Treatment Strategies

Behavioral Interventions

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA): ABA therapy focuses on increasing desirable behaviors and reducing challenging behaviors through positive reinforcement and systematic teaching methods.
- Positive Behavior Support (PBS): PBS aims to understand the function of challenging behaviors and develop strategies to address them effectively while promoting positive behaviors and skills development.



Educational Interventions

- Individualized Education Plan (IEP): Schools develop IEPs to meet the educational needs of students with ASD, including specialized instruction, accommodations, and support services.
- Inclusion Programs: Inclusion programs promote integration into mainstream classrooms with appropriate support and accommodations to facilitate learning and social interaction.



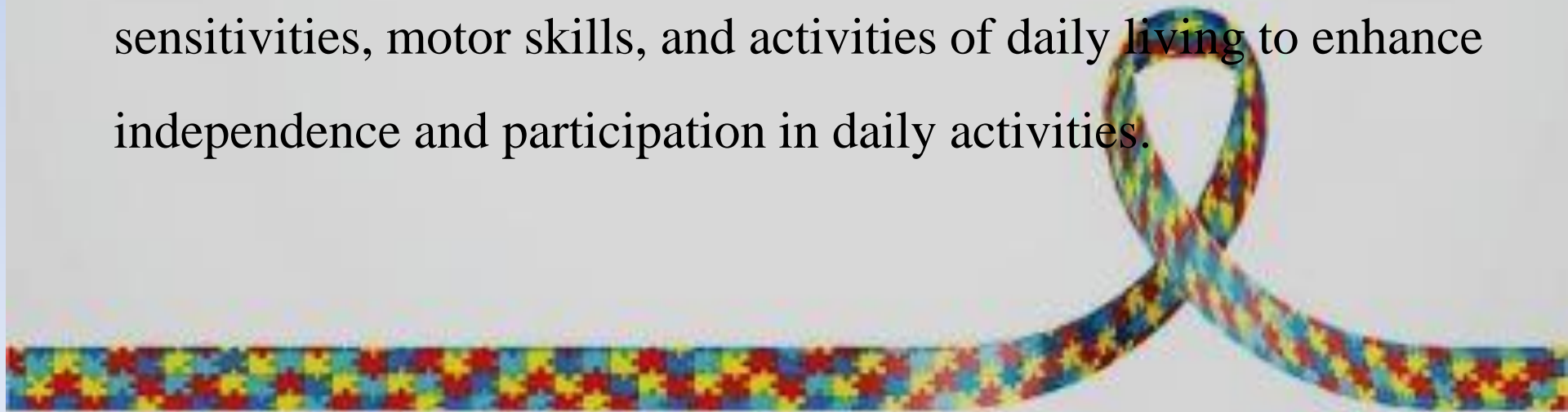
Medical Interventions

- **Medication:** While there is no medication that specifically treats the core symptoms of ASD, medications may be prescribed to manage co-occurring conditions such as anxiety, ADHD, or epilepsy.
- **Medical Management:** Routine medical care, including monitoring for any medical conditions or co-occurring disorders, is essential for individuals with ASD.



Therapeutic Interventions

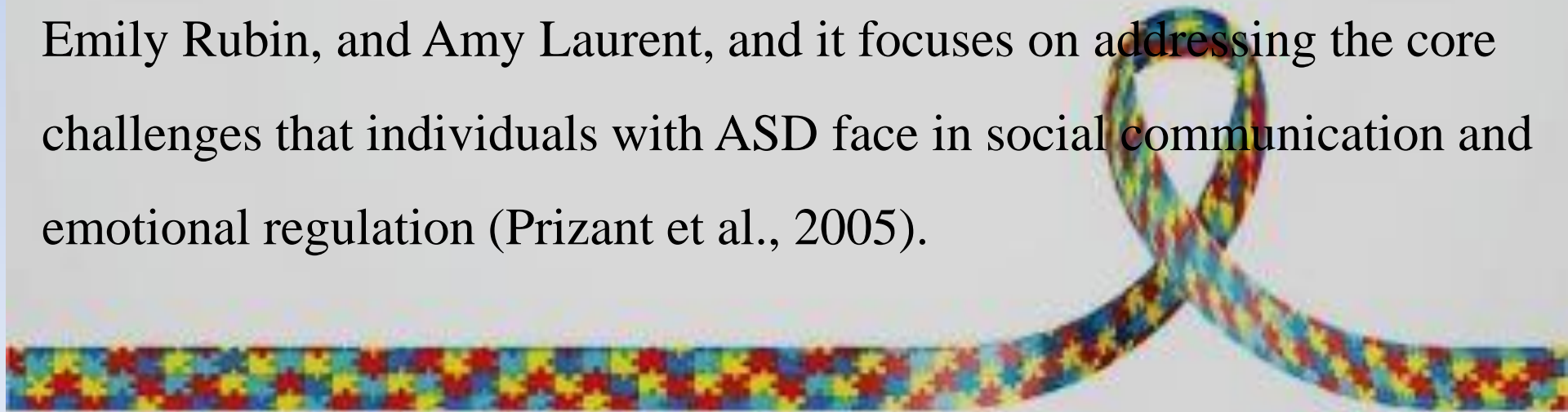
- **Speech Therapy:** Speech therapy focuses on improving communication skills, including language development, articulation, pragmatic language (social communication), and nonverbal communication.
- **Occupational Therapy:** Occupational therapy addresses sensory sensitivities, motor skills, and activities of daily living to enhance independence and participation in daily activities.



SCERTS

SCERTS i.e. Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, and Transactional Support." It is an evidence-based, comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach designed to enhance the communication and socio-emotional abilities of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Molteni et al., 2015).

The SCERTS model was developed by Barry Prizant, Amy Wetherby, Emily Rubin, and Amy Laurent, and it focuses on addressing the core challenges that individuals with ASD face in social communication and emotional regulation (Prizant et al., 2005).



Family Support and Training

Family support and training are integral parts of ASD treatment, helping families understand ASD, develop coping strategies, and support their loved ones effectively.

Parent training programs provide education, guidance, and practical skills to manage challenging behaviors and promote positive interactions and communication.



Autism Resource Centers in Pakistan

- Autism Society of Pakistan
- The Special Education & Autism Center (SEAC)
- Autism Resource Centre, Lahore
- Hope Development Organization (HDO) - Karachi
- Karachi Autism Welfare Foundation (KAWF)
- Autism Resource and Training Centre (ARTC)
- OASIS - One Autism Support & Intervention Services
- Special Education & Rehabilitation Centre (SERC)
- BASES (Behavioral Analysis and Special Education Services)



Autism Resource Centre, ATH, Abbottabad

- Established in 2019
- Run by Psychologist and Speech Therapist
- Liaison with Special Schools of Abbottabad





