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ΨPCD

International Psychology Conference Dubai

PSYCHOLOGICAL PRACTICES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME
OCTOBER 2023

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FOREWORD

326 delegates, 112 volunteers, 52 speakers, 2 days...

October 2023 marked the 10th annual International Psychology Conference Dubai (IPCD). This is not only the Middle East's longest-running psychology conference, but it also one that has been consistently by Heriot-Watt University Dubai (HWUD) campus since its inception in 2013.

IPCD 2023 welcomed 326 delegates, with 52 speakers presenting various topics surrounding the conference theme of 'Psychological Practices in the Digital Age'. A conference cannot happen without talented, expert speakers being willing to share their knowledge with practitioners across the MENA region and the world. And for that, we are grateful for the amazing content that our speakers provided.

We thank Keyani for sponsoring our conference, and the British Psychological Society (BPS) for accrediting our Certified Professional Development (CPD) hours (8 hours each day). IPCD 2023 was also proud to host the soft launch of the Society of Business Psychology Middle East (SoBPME).

IPCD strives to give HWUD psychology students the opportunity to not only network with industry contacts, but get experience in event planning / management. In 2023, we had our largest cohort of volunteers yet. We thank our Volunteer Coordinators – psychology students Sania Menon (also the current President of the HWUD Psychology Society), Ammar Mubeen, Naila Khamis, Srivani Karthikeyan, Thahira Hamsa Sahib and Anthra Cirimulla, and psychology alumni Alaine Fernandez – who oversaw the management of over 100 other student volunteers.

Finally, a thank you to our newest IPCD organizing committee members Akshita Dewan (from The Talent Enterprise), Haya AlAssaf (currently completing her Ph.D. at UCL), and HWUD's Year 3 BSc. Psychology student Hind Hamad, who was our Social Media Manager. Her skills meant that, for the first time, IPCD's marketing materials were able to be released in both English and Arabic.

We look forward to seeing you all at the 11th IPCD!

Dr. Alia Al Serkal

Vice President – People, Learning & Growth, Emirates Integrated Telecommunications Company PJSC ("du")

Dr. Çakıl Agnew

Associate Professor of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai Campus

Dr. Kirin Hilliar

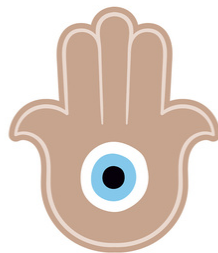
Assistant Professor of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai Campus

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MIDDLE EAST
PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

AGENDA

2023

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14TH

9:00-9:45

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION & COFFEE

9:45-10:00

OPENING SESSION

Professor Dame Heather McGregor, Provost & Vice Principal of Heriot-Watt University Dubai

10:00-11:00

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: DR. DIMITRIOS TSIVRIKOS

Unravelling 'phygital' work practives among employees: Examining the good, the bad, and the ugly

11:00-11:15

BREAK

11:15-12:15

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: DR. JACQUELYN BERRY

Let's use Mobile Research Methods to make Psychology less WEIRD

12:15-13:30

LUNCH BREAK

13:30-14:15

CLINICAL & COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY STREAM

Integrating technology in the assessment and treatment of neuropsychological disorders

Dr. Clarice Mendonca-King & Carla Khalil

ORGANISATIONAL, COACHING & DIFFERENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY STREAM

Menopause and Mental Health: A time for change and the role of psychology.

Dr. Sarah Lawson

CHILD-ADOLESCENT, EDUCATION & DESIGN PSYCHOLOGY STREAM

Fizzy feelings and confident parenting: The benefits and challenges of providing online parenting interventions in the digital era

Dr. Lauren Smith & Dr. Emily Thompson

14:25-15:10

REST BREAK

Building a resilient workforce in the Digital Age: A recipe for a thriving, motivated and engaged workforce

Agata Perepeczko

Personalized learning through technology: A game changer for skills levelopment in children with learning disabilities

Amal Shoaeb Kasmani

15:20-16:05

Enhancing engagement in virtual therapy with people who have a diagnosis of personality disorder

Dr. Emma Smith & Dr. Elena Touroni

The importance of Digital Detox on employee well-being and practical suggestions for organizations and employees

Ayca Demiran

Psychology meets digital media meets pedagogy

Greg Fantham, Lucy Kendra, Colin Morris & Conrado Silva de Farias

16:05-16:45

AFTERNOON TEA

16:45-17:30

Technology & Art Psychotherapy: The pros and cons

Natalia Gómez-Carlier, Sara Powell & Mariam El-Halawani

Dads, diapers & deadlines: How working fathers are balancing work and family life in the Middle East.

Valerie Berthelsen

Humanising learning in the Digital Era

Dr. Sonakshi Ruhela

17:40-18.25

Development of Bibliotherapy and E-Counselling Intervention (BECI) module for parents of intellectually disabled children

Oindrila Paul & Dr. Masroor Jahan

Supporting graduates entering the workplace: Mental health, skills & digital literacies

Dr. Zoë Fortune, Dr. Olga Zayts-Spence, Dr. David Edmonds

Digitally parenting preteens in the UAE: A cross-cultural qualitative study

Luna El Khaldy

18:30

CLOSING SESSION

AGENDA

2023
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15TH

8:30-9:00

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION & COFFEE

CLINICAL & COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY STREAM

*WORKSHOP: Online therapy:
how to use Dialectical Behaviour
Therapy (DBT) skills training for
emotion regulation*

Dr. Elif Celebi Adam

ORGANISATIONAL, COACHING, & DIFFERENTIAL PSYCHOLOGY STREAM

*WORKSHOP: How to improve
communication and clinical
outcomes for patients: E-PILL
and "medutainment" in practice*

Dr. Rafal Sztembis, Martyna
Jasina & Paulina Kruczek

CHILD-ADOLESCENT, EDUCATION & DESIGN PSYCHOLOGY STREAM

*WORKSHOP: Media literacy
meets creative art therapies:
Exploring the use of an artistic
modality to mediate children's
excessive screen time*

Dr. Lamya Tawfik

9:00-11:30

11:35-12:45

LUNCH BREAK

12:45-13:30

*Game Play in a social society:
Exploring the risk factors associated
with Pathological Online Gaming
among youth in Dubai.*

Dr. Nazli Balkir Neftci, Chehek Rattrra,
Shiva Shekari, Meenakshy Nair &
Mia Hayek

*PANEL: Embracing the Digital
Transformation in Business
Psychology: A Path to
Innovation and Impact*

Agata Perepeczko, Dr. Lucy
Bolton, Tanya Gordon, Dr. Tina
Mistry, Dr. Gary Pheiffer &
Rebecca Howard

*Breaking barriers: Unleashing
the potential of an online multi-
modal approach in adolescent
mental health support*

Aditi Nath & Zehra Ahmed

13:40-14:25

*Behavioural addiction in the
digital age: Working clinically
with the harms related to casino-
style gaming*

Dr. Matthew McCourt

*PANEL: Empowering female
managers in the Digital Era:
Overcoming barriers,
harnessing opportunities*

Dr. Gary Pheiffer, Dr. Lucy
Bolton, Dr. Çakıl Agnew, Romina
Shokouhmand, Tripti Tharoor
& Tara Shtayyeh

*Exploring the difference
between Digital personality and
Personality among GEN Z*

Vinita Ramesh Rao Mane &
Bhakti Deshpande

14:35-15:20

*Use of technology to ameliorate
underlying perceptual motor
deficits to see its effect on social
cognition in Schizophrenia
patients*

Arshia Chatterjee & Dr. Masroor
Jahan

*Examining impacts of a virtual
international mentorship
program for psychologists*

Subasri Ashok & Dr. Eva
Fiendler

15:20-16:00

AFTERNOON TEA

16:00-16:45

*What are clients and therapists
wanting - and needing - in the
MENA region? Insights from an
online therapist directory*

Matleena Vanhanen & Dr. Ava
Ghasemi

*Fantasizing between the lines:
Fantasy, imagery vividness and
empathy in the digital age*

Safa Sohail & Dr. Çakıl Agnew

*Using digital tools for early
intervention in young adults
with mental health problems*

Dr. Nafees Sultana

16:55-17:40

*Unleashing the power within:
Hypnotherapy and hypnosis
in the Digital Age - why we
need it now more than ever*

Yasmen Ahmed

*Costs of foreign accents and
benefits of accent switching*

Nelda Ilomelo John & Prof.
Diogo Almeida

*How emotions are memed: The
role of disgust in humour and
online content sharing*

Ramandeep Mungur, Haruno
Doi, Prof. Sophie Scott & Prof.
Lasana Harris

17:50-18:35

*Breaking taboos: A new
approach to mental health in
the MENA region*

Sandra Salame & Dr. Pia
Tohme

*Cultural neutrality in digital
therapy: Therapists'
perspectives through
Hofstede's Cultural
Dimensions.*

Priya Cima & Athiya Kabir

*Innovating boundaries: How
technology saved my
psychological research*

Haya AlAssaf

18:40-18:50

CLOSING SESSION

KEYNOTE

Unravelling 'phygital' work practices among employees: Examining the good, the bad, and the ugly

The advent of the Covid-19 pandemic has catalysed a pervasive transformation in the organizational landscape, particularly with regards to work design. The concept of "Phygital" labour has emerged as a promising paradigm that synergistically combines conventional office-centric work practices with intervals of telecommuting. Within the complexities of this novel operational framework, this talk aims to disseminate an empirically grounded methodology elucidating the profound impact of Phygital work on the psychological well-being, overall mental state, and productivity of employees.

Through a comprehensive evaluation of diverse strategies, our results will elucidate critical practical and theoretical implications concerning employee welfare and the digitization drive in a post-pandemic era, which is anticipated to exert enduring influences on both workforce and enterprises, consequently shaping their trajectory in the foreseeable future.

Dr. Dimitrios Tsivrikos

Dr. Dimitrios Tsivrikos, a prominent Consumer and Business Psychologist, is affiliated with University College London (UCL). His expertise lies in the fields of Business, Consumer/Branding, and Occupational Psychology, focusing on the impact of social identity and group membership on various organizational processes.

These include leadership, communication, organizational change, advertising, and Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A). Dr. Tsivrikos has garnered extensive experience in research, teaching, and consultancy, having held numerous international research fellowships throughout his academic career. He has contributed significantly to the field through a wide range of publications in psychology and business-oriented subjects, featuring in various periodicals and general interest journals. Known as an authoritative voice in consumer behavior/psychology, Dr. Tsivrikos frequently appears as a guest on the BBC and has served as a scientific consultant for esteemed publications such as Property Week, Esquire, and The Guardian. You can see all his details on his website, <https://www.drtsivrikos.com/>



KEYNOTE

Let's use Mobile Research Methods to make Psychology less WEIRD

Psychology is WEIRD (Western, Educated, Rich, Industrialized, Democratic), in both study samples and researchers, making it difficult to draw truly generalizable conclusions about human behavior. Representation from the MENA region is particularly absent, with the Arab region contributing just 1% to global mental health publications between 2009–2018 (Zeinoun, et al., 2020) and contributions from Arab countries representing just 0.77% of articles published worldwide on neurodegenerative disorders between 2005 and 2019 (El Masri et al., 2021). IPCD 2023's theme of "Psychological Practices in the Digital Age" is ideal for addressing this problem.

In this digital age, let us turn to alternative testing methods, such as mobile testing and assessment, to improve representation in research for the MENA region. With today's technology, mobile devices can increasingly be used to reach many more participants who are more diverse, Arabic-speaking, of different ages, incomes and educational backgrounds, and distal to psychology laboratories. If we will not change it, who will?

Dr. Jacquelyn Berry

Dr. Jacquelyn Berry is a Cognitive Scientist who studies learning, expertise and human-computer interaction. She is the first POC to graduate with a doctorate in cognitive psychology from the University at Albany in New York. The American University in Cairo (AUC) first welcomed Jackie as a Fulbright U.S. Scholar in 2019–20, where she used video games to study interface switching in Arabic-English bilinguals. Dr. Berry recently returned to AUC as a permanent faculty member and is now studying how people can learn using Artificial Intelligence (AI) feedback in Tetris. She is a founding member of AI for Afrika and spoke before the U.N. about her work on technology and language. Jacquelyn is currently researching Astronaut Health and Performance as part of the Deep Space Initiative's Andromeda program. Dr. Berry recently started the GameChanger Research organization for helping people to conduct psychological research online and all over the world. Dr. Berry currently holds the title of Dr. World North Africa and will be competing for the title of Dr. World in the fall of 2023. Her motivational book, *Find Your Carrot*, became a bestseller in 2021 and has been translated into Arabic. For more information, visit <https://www.jacquelynhberry.com/>.



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The WHO (2007) defines menopause as a period of natural ageing whereby oestrogen levels decline, and the menstrual cycle ceases. The menopausal transition is a very individual experience, that can be difficult for many women. The psychosocial symptoms of menopause include those that affect the woman's psychological health, social wellbeing, and quality of life. These symptoms can include loss of confidence, issues with self-identity and body image, inattention and loss of memory, increased levels of stress, and a higher risk of developing anxiety and depression.

Despite being a natural part of ageing, there can still be huge stigma attached to this life transition. Research suggests (e.g., Cronin et al., 2020) that many women do not seek help to manage their symptoms due to feelings of embarrassment, the possibility of experiencing adverse reactions from others, or associated cultural taboos. Many women also report feeling underprepared and/or lacking knowledge of the symptoms during their onset of the menopause period.

The menopausal transition is a normal part of a woman's life span that should not be pathologized. However, psychologists can offer support, and a variety of treatments, that can ease symptoms and help create more open conversations and education around women's health.

This presentation will discuss the 'why, 'how' and 'what' of menopause and mental health. It will introduce the current growing research in this area, and how psychologists can use current evidence-based practise to support women's mental health as they go through this life transition. This will include how to adapt, utilize, or recommend digital health strategies to support women as they manage their psychosocial symptoms of menopause.

Dr. Sarah Lawson

Dr. Sarah Lawson is a UK-qualified Clinical Psychologist with over 15 years' experience working in the field of mental health and well-being. She has worked within NHS and private health sectors within the UK before relocating to the Middle East. Dr. Sarah provides evidenced based therapy at Keyani Wellness Centre, Dubai. She works in a holistic and integrative way, providing therapy in an authentic and approachable manner. Throughout her career, Dr. Sarah has worked extensively with adults with a range of mental health difficulties. She has a special interest in women's' health and well-being, stress, and burnout. In addition to her strong background in clinical and health psychology, she has training in workplace and therapeutic coaching. Dr. Sarah is passionate about reducing the stigma around mental health difficulties and the promotion of mental wellbeing. Dr. Sarah is focused on supporting individuals to find balance, reduce stress and build resilience to help them live in a more meaningful and connected way.



PANELS

Embracing the digital transformation in Business Psychology: A path to innovation and impact

Business Psychology is a growing area of psychology in the Middle East region. This is both exciting and potentially challenging. With Business Psychology not being regulated in the region yet, there is a potential risk of those who call themselves 'Business Psychologists' or 'Business Psychology Consultants', representing a variety of levels across psychological practices. As a group of BPS registered Business Psychologists, this is a growing concern for us as professionals as we believe that when working with clients, all Business Psychologists must follow the same code of ethics, incorporate duty of care and ensure client-centred support. Through digital collaboration and innovation, interdisciplinary partnerships will be encouraged to address complex organizational challenges in the digital age. The panel discussion will explore training opportunities that equip professionals with the necessary skills and competencies to navigate the digital landscape effectively, ensuring the delivery of comprehensive and up-to-date solutions.

Embracing the digital transformation in Business Psychology has the potential to make a profound impact on organizations and individuals. By embracing digital advancements, professionals can drive innovation and positive change. This panel discussion aims to inspire attendees to explore the possibilities, collaborate, and shape the future of Business Psychology in the Middle East.

We are creating a Society for all those who are interested in Business Psychology within the GCC region. This Society will enable psychologists working with organisations to access knowledge, experience and the latest best practice guidelines, as well as network and explore potential opportunities for collaboration on a number of projects, including understanding the pitfalls and opportunities around increased technology use in organisations. Our members will have access to discounted CPD events and will have the opportunity to showcase their work in the form of case studies or research papers through such events. This amazing community of practice will create a strong baseline for the future of Business Psychology in the Middle East.

The aim of this panel is to discuss the importance of professional development and cohesion for Business Psychologists in the region with a focus on the digital impact on organisations, leaders, teams and individual employees.

PANELS

Embracing the digital transformation in Business Psychology: A path to innovation and impact

Business Psychology plays a vital role in the Middle East and we will discuss the need for this service for organisations in supporting multicultural workforces, leadership development, employee wellbeing and engagement, change management (with rapid economic growth), and attracting and retaining talent. By sharing psychological insights, and integrating them into digital strategies, organisations in the Middle East can create a competitive advantage and drive sustainable growth in the region within a changing digital landscape.

The Society will also be opened to those non psychologists, who are interested in psychology at work. We will share with you the latest research, solutions and best practices in the area of leadership, wellbeing, assessments /recruitment/ talent development, ergonomics, coaching and many others. Our CPD events will be open to all members and will enhance your knowledge and skills in order to create strong and effective individuals, teams and organizations during the new digital era.



PANELISTS



Agata Perepeczko

CEO and founder of Resilient Workforce, Resilient Workforce Middle East

Business Psychologist, accredited coach and member of BPS, CIPD, EMCC, HCPC, and ABP

Holder of a MSc in Clinical Psychology and Occupational Psychology



Dr. Lucy Bolton

Assistant Professor at Heriot-Watt University, Dubai

Global Director of Studies for Business Psychology, and leader of the MSc Business Psychology Programme at HWUD

Chartered Occupational Psychologist (BPS/HCPC) and a Certified Coach (AC)

Trained Occupational Test User (TUA / TUP) with the BPS



Tanya Gordon

Executive coach and leadership consultant

Accredited coach and trainer facilitator

Holds an executive MBA

BPS accredited



Dr. Tina Mistry

Founder of the Brown Therapist Network

Clinical Psychologist, and corporate mental health consultant

Executive coach

Specialized in occupational well-being and mental health

PANELISTS



Dr. Gary Pheiffer

Assistant Professor of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University

Holder of a Ph.D., BA, BA (Hons), and MA in Psychology

Certified Occupational Psychologist, specialized in HR Management and Change Management

Member of MCIPD, HCPC (UK), and FHEA



Rebecca Howard

Executive with 20 years' experience in Executive Operational roles internationally

Passionate about supporting start-up companies and teams within the region and the UK

Holder of a Hons Degree in Corporate Communication



PANELS

Empowering female managers in the Digital Era: Overcoming barriers, harnessing opportunities

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has brought both opportunities and challenges for female managers in the Middle East, including the UAE. This panel discussion seeks to address the multifaceted barriers and opportunities that arise in the digital era and explore strategies to empower and support the career advancement of women in leadership roles.

The panel will delve into the unique barriers that women face in the digital era, including the digital gender divide, biases in algorithmic decision-making, online harassment, work-life integration challenges, and digital skills gaps. The discussion will analyze the intersectionality of these barriers and their impact on women's career progression.

The panel will explore the digital support mechanisms and initiatives designed to foster the development of female managers. This includes virtual mentoring programs, online leadership development courses, digital networking platforms, and remote work policies. The discussion will highlight successful digital initiatives and their impact on supporting and empowering women in the workplace.

Building upon the identified barriers and digital support mechanisms, the panel will propose strategies to empower female managers in the digital era. This may include advocating for digital literacy and upskilling programs, promoting inclusive digital workplaces, leveraging digital platforms for networking and visibility, and harnessing digital tools for remote collaboration and flexible work arrangements.

The panel discussion will encourage thought-provoking debate on several key issues, such as the impact of digital transformation on gender equality, the role of digital leadership in fostering inclusive workplaces, the ethical implications of AI-driven decision-making, and the potential for digital solutions to address work-life integration challenges.

This panel discussion aims to explore the unique challenges and opportunities faced by female managers in the digital era and propose strategies to empower and support their career advancement. By embracing digital technologies and fostering an inclusive digital culture, organizations can create an environment where women can thrive and succeed in leadership roles in the UAE and the wider Middle East region.

PANELISTS



Dr. Gary Pheiffer

Assistant Professor of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University
Holder of a Ph.D., BA, BA (Hons), and MA in Psychology
Certified Occupational Psychologist, specialized in HR
Management and Change Management
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MSc. Business Psychology Programme at HWUD
Chartered Occupational Psychologist (BPS/HCPC) and a Certified
Coach (AC)
Trained Occupational Test User (TUA / TUP) with the BPS



Dr. Çakıl Agnew

Associate Professor of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University, Dubai
Independent Distance Learning MSc. Business Psychology
Programme Director
Research interest lies in organizational safety, and impact of
Leadership on work performance in high-risk industries



Romina Shokouhmand

Business Psychology with Coaching Masters Graduate at Heriot-
Watt University
Employee at Talogy Dubai, with expertise lying in the HR and
talent management field, as well as digital marketing
Research interest in consumer behavior



Tripti Tharoor

MBA graduate with experience in working in the Aviation
industry.
HR Consultant at GRID Consult Dubai
Research interest lying in gender equality and diversity

PANELISTS



Tara Shtayyeh

Industrial and Organizational Psychologist

Expertise lie in female management in the digital era

Employee at The Talent Enterprise

Advocate for women empowerment in leadership in the Middle East's digital environment.



WORKSHOPS

Media literacy meets creative art therapies: Exploring the use of an artistic modality to mediate children's excessive screen time

Excessive screen time amongst children is a major concern for parents and mental health practitioners alike. The long hours that children spend with the company of their devices has been linked to issues such as obesity, sleep problems, and anxiety, not to mention the deterioration of their interpersonal skills.

The prevalent use of devices as "electronic babysitters", the common sight of the family around the dinner table each on their own device, and the subsequent "addiction" of children and adolescents, is indeed a cause of concern; but is one that must be tackled with an approach that is rooted in reality – the devices are here to stay.

In 1977, Marie Winn wrote a book called 'The Plug-in Drug'. She called television an "insidious narcotic" and said that "it reflects the needs of parents to find a convenient source of amusement for their children and a moment of quiet for themselves." A year later, another book, "Four Arguments of Why TV Should be Eliminated" echoed Winn's sentiments. The author, Jerry Mander, said TV "must be gotten rid of totally if our society is to return to something like sand and democratic functioning". Television stayed and here we are, nearly five decades later, finding a similar, albeit less intense, rhetoric being used with electronic devices and its effects on children.

If there is anything that we have learned, it is that there is no turning back from technological advancement, nor can we look away from its effects. What we can, and should do, is to use the media to teach children about the world, to develop their critical thinking skills and to develop their creativity. Enter: Media Literacy. According to the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE): Media literacy empowers individuals to navigate the complex media landscape, make informed decisions and actively participate in creating media content.

This workshop will focus on the latter – creating media content. We will do that by merging this important element of media literacy with some of the fundamentals of creative art therapies – using artistic expression to promote healing, self-discovery, and emotional well-being. In short, we will explore a modality that can be taught to parents to transform their young children's screen time experience into a window of creativity, exploration, and self-expression. We will look into the different ways that parents mediate their children's media experiences and how they can be coached to be part of the experience and not passive bystanders.

WORKSHOPS

**Media literacy meets creative art therapies:
Exploring the use of an artistic modality to
mediate children's excessive screen time**

Dr. Lamya Tawfik

Dr. Lamya holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Journalism and Mass Communication from the American University in Cairo and a Doctorate Degree in Childhood Studies from the Mass Communication and Child Culture Department, Institute for Postgraduate Childhood Studies at Ain Shams University in Cairo. She is a certified Holistic Integrated Creative Arts Therapies Practitioner and is currently training to be a Kids Life Coach. Dr. Lamya Tawfik is an Egyptian performing artist with an interest in Children's development and culture. She is an actress and storyteller and presenter. Her performing arts journey started in 2009. Since then she has performed in English, Arabic and Italian with several theater groups in Dubai. As a storyteller, she has performed in many children's events, storytelling festivals and also told stories at the Sharjah International Book Fair and the Louvre Abu Dhabi.



WORKSHOPS

Online therapy: how to use Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) skills training for emotion regulation

Dialectical Behavior therapy (DBT) is a comprehensive treatment originally developed for individuals with borderline personality disorder. Since the 1990's, DBT has been studied with many different diagnostic and demographic groups and these studies have gathered evidence of its efficacy and effectiveness.

Standard DBT treatment has four major components: Individual psychotherapy, group skills training, therapist consultation team, and as-needed phone consultation. Because pervasive emotion regulation difficulty is considered to be a core characteristic of BPD, DBT skills were designed to improve emotional experience, expression, and regulation. Specifically, DBT group skills training consists of four modules: mindfulness, emotion regulation, interpersonal skills, and distress tolerance. DBT skills training has been mostly provided in-person until recently. In the last 3 years since the pandemic, online delivery of DBT skills groups has been more in-demand by clients as well as therapists. In this workshop, learning objectives include:

- participants will be presented with the theoretical framework of the skills training used with emotion regulation difficulties
- participants will identify 4 different DBT skills modules and where to use them
- participants will be presented mindfulness, emotion regulation, distress tolerance and interpersonal effectiveness skills to use with emotion regulation issues
- participants will have a chance to do activities and exercises to teach these skills to their clients.

Dr. Elif Celebi

Dr. Elif Celebi is a DHA-licensed clinical psychologist at Thrive Wellbeing Centre in Dubai. She has a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Missouri. She has worked as an Associate Professor teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in psychology and published scientific articles on the intersection of clinical and social psychology. In addition, she has provided trainings in dialectical behavior therapy skills to practitioners. She is also registered in the The Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC) in the UK.



WORKSHOPS

How to improve communication and clinical outcomes for patients: E-PILL and "medutainment" in practice

Communication with patients, with their families, preparation for lifestyle changes that promote effective management of chronic disease and resistance to disinformation, are more and more challenging in contemporary world. Access to information has been democratized and our patients are interesting targets for "miracle sellers" whose advice has frequently had a negative impact on patients' medical adherence.

The healthcare system must find ways to immunize our patients and their relatives against such actions; at the same time, the healthcare system must find ways to provide our patients with reliable, accessible information that builds adequate understanding of medical situation which will improve medical communication. The use of IT tools in combination with different educational tools gives us unprecedented options for such approaches. Based on that as well as concept of medutainment, we devised a clinical model called E-PILL, which will be discussed during the workshop.

E-pill is a medutainment-based concept of in/out-patient education of patients and their families that comprises a series of in- and out-hospital IT educational tools (comprising e-learning platforms, story-telling medical information consents, audio-books, comics, cardiac online rehabilitation tools for traditional exercises and breathing exercises, relaxation music) which allow for psychological screening of our patients in terms of anxiety, depression or psychophysiological profile. This workshop will examine all elements of the E-pill model, using real-life data collected from patients. Attendees will be taken through the process of preparing E-pill model that will suit their medical organization.

During the workshop, attendees will learn:

- how to project different elements of E-pill model considering patients' needs, organization marketing targets; we will go step by step through process of using story telling in medicine and will try to prepare specific complex model of E-pill for chosen group of patient
- how to utilize e-learning and educational platforms using AI tools
- how to implement psychological screening assessment tools into the learning process.

WORKSHOPS

How to improve communication and clinical outcomes for patients: E-PILL and "medutainment" in practice

Dr. Rafal Sztembis

Dr. Rafal Sztembis, MD, Ph.D., is an interventional cardiology consultant, a psychologist Ph.D., a member of the European Society of Cardiology, and a member of the Biofeedback Federation of Europe. He is a Lecturer in medical psychology at the University of Rzeszow (2014-2019), whilst also working as an interventional cardiologist. Dr. Rafal is an author of educational solutions for cardiac patients and their families, including e-learning platforms, comics, audio-books, e-books, story-telling-based informative consents for patients, and educational games. Dr. Rafal is a Medical Advisor in the start-up Ideo Ltd., an IT company creating experimental solutions in tele-medical platforms for online cardiac rehabilitation, medical education of patients and their relatives.



Martyna Jasina

Martyna Jasina is a 3rd-grade Physiotherapy student from the Medical University of Rzeszów. Her research focuses on the well-being of people taking part in gym activities; she is also interested in psychophysiology and cardiac rehabilitation. Since 2021, she has been a member of the scientific group of the Ideo Research Developmental Centre, which focuses on integration of IT technology with cardiac rehabilitation. Martyna has attended and presented at various conferences on physiotherapy and psychophysiology, including presenting at the Biofeedback Federation of Europe 2022 conference the results of her study on the "Effects of guided relaxation script for blood pressure and heart rate during orthostatic test among healthy volunteers."



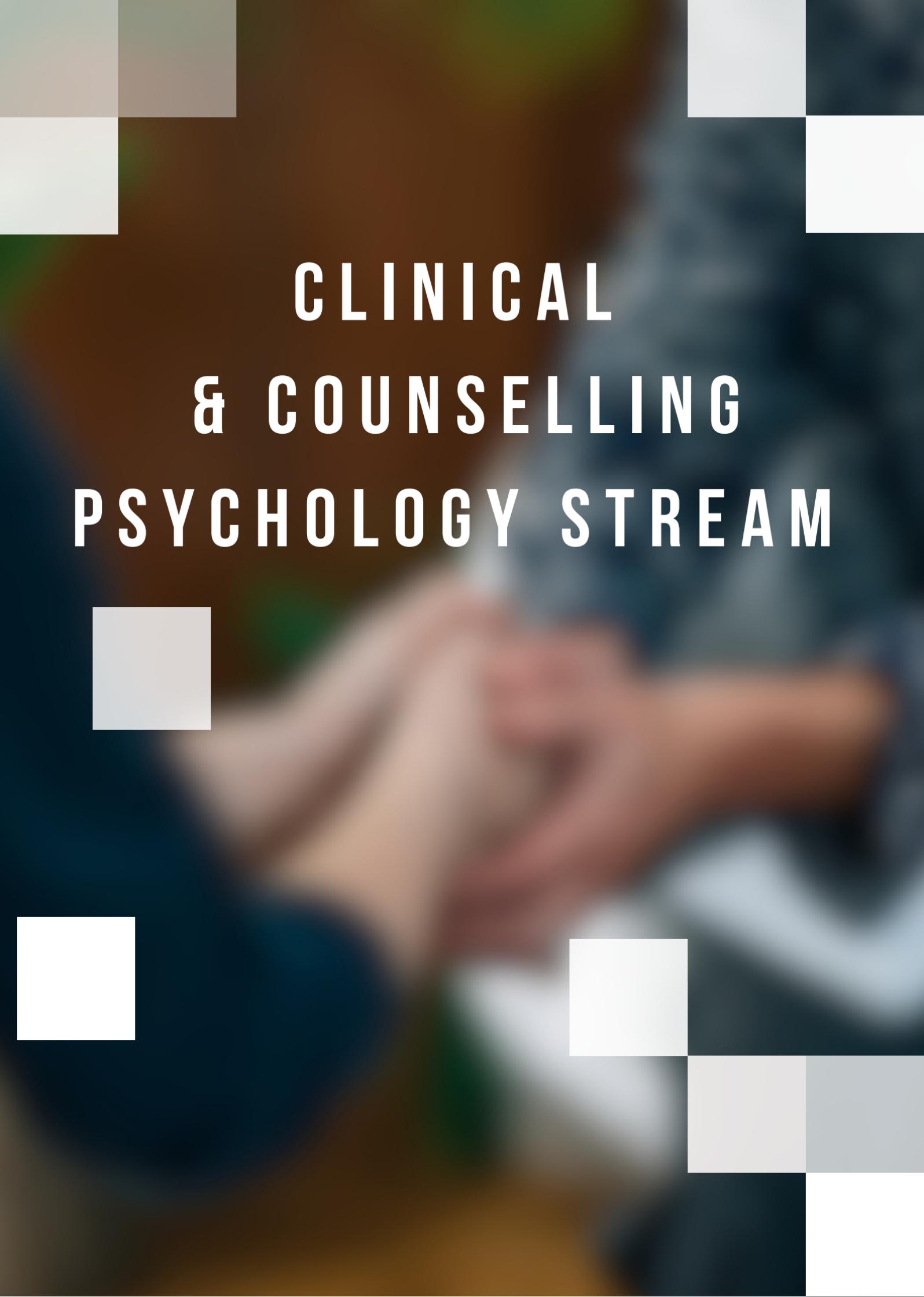
WORKSHOPS

How to improve communication and clinical outcomes for patients: E-PILL and "medutainment" in practice

Paulina Kruczek

Paulina Kruczek is a 3rd-grade Physiotherapy student from the Medical University of Rzeszów. She is interested in psychophysiology, cardiac rehabilitation, and physiotherapy and preventive measures for people with obesity. Since 2021, Paulina has been a member of the scientific group of Ideo Research Developmental Centre, which focuses on the integration of IT technology with cardiac rehabilitation. She is a volunteer for local charities, a scholar of Euroscola program in Strasburg (2020), and has attended and presented at conferences on physiotherapy and psychophysiology, including presenting at the 2022 conference of the Biofeedback Federation of Europe the results of her study on safety and effects of guided breathing among patients after heart attack.





**CLINICAL
& COUNSELLING
PSYCHOLOGY STREAM**

Integrating technology in the assessment and treatment of neuropsychological disorders

Neuropsychological practice currently offers the gold standard in understanding brain-behavior relationships that are not accounted for by structural analyses. Considering that it is founded on using complex behavioral data to inform our understanding of brain functions in the context of psychosocial constructs, there remains scope for enhancing the accuracy and efficiency of data gathering, analyses, and evidence-based neuropsychological intervention. Current challenges with accruing ecologically valid and objective data through standardized methods applied by trained specialists has involved a greater investment of time, effort, and money, relative to other associated healthcare activities and for both service providers and seekers. Thus, the concept of leveraging digital and technological tools to enhance diagnostic accuracy and treatment effectiveness is integral to advancement in the field.

In this presentation, we discuss the application of digital technologies that can be incorporated into the assessment and treatment of neurologically- and psychologically-based cognitive difficulties. For this, we discuss the scope of tools such as biofeedback (Tinello et al., 2022), virtual reality (VR; Denmark et al., 2019; Spreij et al., 2022; van de Wouw et al., 2023), Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS; Pink et al., 2021; Málly, & Stone, 2007), and Artificial Intelligence (AI; Dashwood et al., 2021; Uddin et al., 2019). We further discuss their limitations, challenges that may impede their application, and methods with which these tools can be integrated to leverage data-driven precision, with specific focus on decision-making strategies and developmental processes that ensure effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability (Bilder & Reise, 2019; Germine et al., 2019).

Finally, we consolidate practice standards and research findings (e.g., Fernandez, 2019) to offer suggestions on how neuropsychological practitioners can collaborate with other professionals within the healthcare treatment team and program developers to optimize the integration and adaptation of such technologies to the GCC context, specifically in terms of linguistic, social, educational, and environmental differences from the predominant North American norm.

Integrating technology in the assessment and treatment of neuropsychological disorders

Dr. Clarice Mendonca-King

Dr. Clarice Mendonca-King is a doctoral-level Clinical Neuropsychologist, licensed in the US and the UAE. Currently based in Dubai, UAE, her services are threefold, involving assessments, interventions, and educational development. Psychoeducation in the form of workshops, seminars, media support, academic supervision, and clinical peer consultation for aspiring psychologists and early-career psychotherapists are at the heart of her endeavors. The primary focus of her services is comprehensive neuropsychological and psychological assessments for cognitive problems, including those related to head injuries, neurodegenerative diseases (dementias, Parkinson's disease), functional/psychosomatic disorders, epilepsy/seizures, multiple sclerosis, pre-surgical evaluations, ADHD, and psychiatric disorders. She also offers psychotherapy using a patient-specific integration of psychodynamic, dialectical behavior therapy, and trauma-informed approaches. Her therapeutic areas of expertise includes trauma and abuse, dissociative disorders, psychosomatic and chronic illnesses, personality disorders, and mood problems.



Carla Khalil

Carla is a lifespan-trained Clinical Neuropsychologist deeply immersed in the realm of neuroscience and cognitive training and rehabilitation. She has experience in a diverse range of a clinical settings, including psychiatry, neurology, pediatrics, and geriatrics, in both inpatient and outpatient capacities. Her expertise spans clinical psychology, neuropsychology, and neuroscientific research. Additionally, Carla is adamant on community outreach and raising awareness and advocating for mental health and neurodiversity, and fostering inclusivity and understanding in her field.



Carla specializes in the neuropsychological and psychological assessment and treatment of traumatic brain injury (TBI), epilepsy, Tic disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders (such as Autism, ADHD, and learning disabilities), neurodegenerative diseases (dementias), cerebrovascular diseases (strokes, aneurysms), and psychiatric disorders. She collaborates closely with other professionals, families and schools, consistently underscoring the importance of therapy and intervention. She offers multimodal identity therapy sessions aimed at enhancing the quality of life of individuals, using techniques including CBT, BPT, HRT, Biofeedback, CBCT, Narrative Therapy and ACT.

Enhancing engagement in virtual therapy with people who have a diagnosis of personality disorder

Drop-out rates from evidence-based interventions for people with a diagnosis of personality disorder (PD) are high. The COVID-19 pandemic has likely exacerbated barriers to engagement with the introduction of virtual working. Virtual therapy has a good evidence-base for Axis I disorders, but limited research for Axis II disorders. The aim is to investigate facilitators and barriers to engagement in a Tier 3 PD service virtual group programme.

A virtual group programme was developed in collaboration with service members, and analysed members' attendance rates over a 5-month period pre- and post-COVID-19. Thematic analysis of semi-structured telephone interviews with 38 members is reported, describing their experience of the virtual group programme. Attendance rates were significantly higher pre-COVID (72%) than post-COVID (50%). Thematic analysis highlighted key barriers to attendance were: practical issues, low motivation, challenges of working in a group online and feeling triggered at home. Main promoters of engagement were: feeling valued, continued sense of connection and maintaining focus on recovery.

The results suggest that the pandemic has exacerbated relational and practical barriers to engagement in a Tier 3 PD service. Ways of enhancing engagement are discussed, as well as preliminary recommendation for services offering virtual therapy to people with a diagnosis of PD.

Dr. Emma Smith

Dr. Smith is a consultant clinical psychologist working in Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, and privately with the Chelsea psychology clinic in London. She is trained in several specialist therapies including Mentalisation Based Therapy, Schema Therapy and EMDR. She was leading a Tier 3 personality disorder service when the pandemic hit and had to lead changes to support vulnerable service-users at this difficult time. This inspired her to research the experience of delivering group therapy online with service-users who have a diagnosis of personality disorder in order to learn how best to enhance engagement and attend to the relational difficulties that arise.



Enhancing engagement in virtual therapy with people who have a diagnosis of personality disorder

Dr. Elena Tourni

Dr. Tourni is a consultant counselling psychologist and clinical director of The Chelsea Psychology Clinic, a private psychiatry and therapy clinic based in London, and soon to be opening a new clinic in Dubai. She is trained in several specialist therapies including Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, Schema Therapy, and Cognitive Analytic Therapy. Dr. Tourni worked as the Head of Service in an NHS Personality Disorder Service and is highly experienced in working with complex service-users and designing and developing clinical services. She led on changes in The Chelsea Psychology Clinic during the pandemic and has a wealth of knowledge in delivering therapeutic services virtually to a wide range of service-users, including those who have a diagnosis of personality disorder. She is trained in several specialist therapeutic approaches such as schema therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), mindfulness-based approaches and Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT). As well as holding a variety of NHS positions, Dr. Tourni is the co-founder of a private practice in Central London that has been a provider of psychological therapy for all common emotional difficulties including personality disorder since 2002. She is the founder and one of two directors of The Chelsea Psychology Clinic.



Technology & Art Psychotherapy: The pros and cons

Research in art psychotherapy has demonstrated that it maintains its effectiveness when it is moved to the digital space (Levy et al., 2018; Spooner et al., 2019; Zubala et al., 2021). However, the impact of culture has yet to be considered, and this paper explores how art psychotherapy translates to online, telehealth, and digital services in the Arabian Gulf. This paper will integrate the findings previously published about how COVID transformed art psychotherapy (Gomez-Carlier et al., 2020; Dixon et al., 2022), a report regarding moving art psychotherapy groups for children in the Autism Spectrum to telehealth (Gómez-Carlier & Powell, 2022), developing online services with museums in Qatar (manuscript in preparation), with recent findings in our practice regarding working in trauma and addressing mental health stigma.

As previously reported, online art psychotherapy reduces stigma (Wong et al., 2018) and enhances access. Access is particularly relevant since so few art therapists are practicing in the region. The digital space also shifts the power dynamics, affects engagement, and problem-solving technological problems can cultivate confidence and self-esteem when managed consciously (Collie & Čubranić, 1999). However, it is also important to identify the cases where there might be better choices than the online environment, and the use of technology might not be beneficial. Art psychotherapists have often identified that the capacity to observe the process and the image created are particularly hindered in the digital space (Levy et al., 2018). In cases of heightened risk, interrupting online services was often necessary. Moreover, integrating embodied expression and non-verbal communication (not seeing the whole body, decreased eye contact, and not co-regulating nervous systems) needed constant attention. In this region, it also becomes essential to address privacy and confidentiality issues, as collective cultures have different ways of perceiving the therapeutic relationship (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000; Pope-Davis et al., 2001).

We conclude that creativity plays an important role in how art psychotherapy adapts to the digital age. We hypothesize that when creativity is mindfully integrated, we can observe increased empowerment, engagement, and appreciation for the unique benefits of art psychotherapy. The presentation will also discuss how new technologies, including virtual reality (Kaimal et al., 2020) and working with social robots (Partridge et al., 2022), has been explored in the field of art psychotherapy.

Technology & Art Psychotherapy: The pros and cons

Natalia Gómez-Carlier

Natalia Gómez-Carlier, MAAT, ATR-BC, has a degree in Psychology from Universidad de Los Andes, a Master's in Art Therapy from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and is a Registered Board-Certified Art Therapist with the American Association of Art Therapy. Natalia is currently a Ph.D. student of Transpersonal Psychology at California Institute of Integral Studies. She was a Co-founder and President of the Colombian Art Therapy Association, taught at universities, frequently presents at international mental health conferences, and is a published author. She has practiced as a psychotherapist for more than 20 years in Bogota, Chicago, New York, Muscat, and now Dubai. Natalia is trained in psychodynamics and uses and adapts different techniques and modalities according to the needs of each individual. Incorporating techniques from CBT, Gestalt, Brief Therapy, Depth Psychology, Transpersonal, Mindfulness, and other modalities, her therapeutic approach is oriented by the uniqueness of each individual. Natalia speaks English and Spanish fluently and is a 300HR Jivamukti Yoga Teacher.



Sara Powell

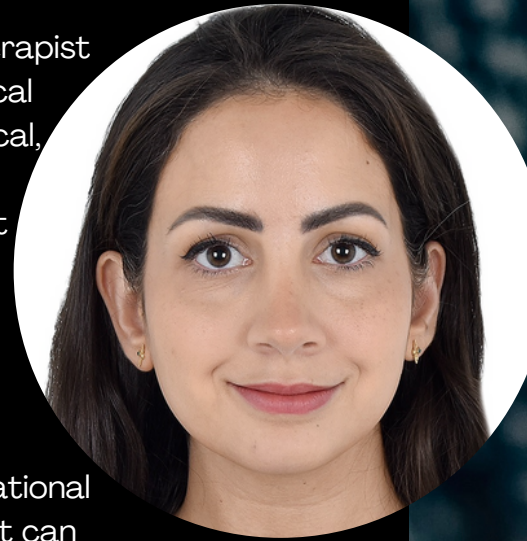
Sara Powell, MA, is the Founder of ATIC Psychological Counseling Center. She is from the UK, a Third Culture Kid, growing up in the Gulf. She is an Art Psychotherapist and is registered with the Health Care Profession Council (HCPC) UK. She is a Registered Psychotherapist (MBACP) with the Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) UK, and a member of the British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT). Sara has over 10 years of clinical experience and has provided psychotherapy to children, adolescents, adults, families, and facilitated a variety of groups and programs. Sara is passionate about supporting women, specializing in child- and adolescent-related disorders, and has worked extensively with people of determination and those who are non-verbal. Sara is a mother to three young children and during her pregnancy, she observed a need for perinatal and postnatal mental health as well as an overall lack of early intervention available for children 6 years and below. This led Sara to the introduction of ATIC's Early Intervention and Child Development services. Sara has overseen numerous projects consulting Government agencies in Singapore and UAE (in forensic and medical settings, with addiction, and with vulnerable children and young people). Sara is a published author and has presented at many national, regional and international conferences.



Technology & Art Psychotherapy: The pros and cons

Mariam El-Halawani

Mariam El-Halawani, MA, ATR, is a US-trained art psychotherapist and has an MA in Art Therapy from NYU, New York. Her clinical experience includes working with clients in psychiatric, medical, educational and clinical settings in different countries including the US, Italy and the UAE. She has a special interest in working with adolescents and young adults experiencing psychological distress, suicidal ideation, self-harm and/or identity confusion. Being born and raised in the Middle East, Mariam's expertise also lies in supporting Arab families in navigating multi-generational patterns, trauma and difficult relational dynamics. She is passionate about bridging generational gaps and different cultural and ideological perspectives that can sometimes surface in Arab families. Mariam is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in International Psychology in order to expand her clinical skills beyond borders. She is a published author and contributor to art psychotherapy journals and books. Her research focus includes vulnerable and stigmatized groups and the use of art psychotherapy services as a form of support. Mariam is also a part-time lecturer and has presented in international and regional mental health conferences.



Development of Bibliotherapy and E-Counselling Intervention (BECI) module for parents of intellectually disabled children

Intellectual disability (ID) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterised by deficits in intellectual and adaptive functioning across conceptual, social and practical domains. Parents of children with ID face significant psychological challenges. However, they prioritise their children's well-being over seeking therapy themselves. Moreover, individuals from rural areas or low socio-economic status struggle to access mental health services due to financial and time constraints. Hence, the researchers have developed the Bibliotherapy & E-Counselling Intervention (BECI) module through which psychotherapy may be provided remotely. The self-help bibliotherapy component included a guidebook having informational content, FAQs and techniques of stress management, acceptance and mindfulness. The E-Counselling component included videoconference sessions.

A cross sectional, tertiary care centre based study was conducted using pre-test post-test design. Through purposive sampling, 50 parents of intellectually disabled children were selected. Children were screened using Vineland Social Maturity Scale and Developmental Screening Test. Pilot studies were conducted to identify the knowledge gap and understand psychosocial issues among participants. BECI Module was developed, then administered over a 3 months period. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to delve deeper into the participants' experiences and Thematic Analysis was used to identify major themes. General Health Questionnaire, Perceived Stress Scale and WHO Quality of Life Scale were administered before and after the intervention. Paired Samples T Test was used to assess the difference.

There was a significant difference in the levels of general health, perceived stress and quality of life (physical, social, psychological and environmental health domains) before and after delivering BECI. Thematic analysis indicated positive outcomes like enhanced awareness and improved emotional state.

BECI is an effective psychotherapeutic module to address mental health issues in parents of intellectually disabled children. Bibliotherapy is a versatile and economical treatment and paired with online counselling, it can be a very effective form of remote therapy.

Development of Bibliotherapy and E-Counselling Intervention (BECI) module for parents of intellectually disabled children

Oindrila Paul

Ms. Oindrila Paul is a young and enthusiastic Clinical Psychologist recognized by the Rehabilitation Council of India. She has an M.Phil. degree in Clinical Psychology from Ranchi Institute of Neuro-Psychiatry and Allied Sciences and is presently working at the Department of Psychiatry, KPC Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata. With her insatiable curiosity for understanding the human mind, Ms. Paul has shined bright throughout her academic journey. As the University topper in M.Phil., she has consistently displayed a holistic understanding of the subject, coupled with a genuine empathy for those in need. Ms. Paul is a keen researcher and is pursuing her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Institute of Psychiatry, PGIMER & SSKM Hospital, Kolkata. She is working in the area of geriatric health and psycho-oncology and her innovative approaches have already caught the attention of fellow professionals. She is determined to push the boundaries of traditional psychology and seek novel ways to address mental health challenges. Ms. Paul is committed towards her goal of enhancing community mental health in developing countries. She is working relentlessly to promote inclusivity and diversity in therapeutic services at the grass root level, in order to provide affordable and accessible mental healthcare to underserved and underprivileged individuals in India.



Dr. Masroor Jahan

Dr. Masroor Jahan is a Clinical Psychologist, academician and researcher from India. She has an M.Phil. degree in Medical and Social Psychology from the Central Institute of Psychiatry, and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the Ranchi Institute of Neuro-Psychiatry and Allied Sciences (RINPAS). She is presently working as the Additional Professor and Head, Department of Clinical Psychology, RINPAS. She is the Founder Member of Indian Association for Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and a member of the Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists. She is a member of the editorial board of Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology. She has around 33 publications, and have presented papers in several conferences. Her interest and expertise lie in the areas of neuropsychological assessments, clinical neuropsychology, cognitive neuropsychology, and cognitive rehabilitation.

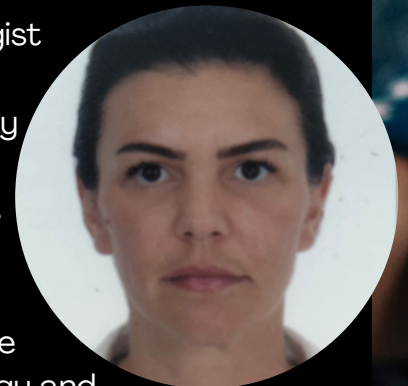


Game Play in a social society: Exploring the risk factors associated with Pathological Online Gaming among youth in Dubai

Concern over pathological or obsessive video game playing among children and teenagers around the world has grown as a result of increased internet use and video gaming. However, the prevalence of pathogenic symptoms is poorly understood in adolescents residing in Dubai who play video games, and the psychometric qualities of the instruments used to measure these symptoms. This analysis comprises surveying 450 students from over 15 universities in Dubai. The findings of this research provide empirical evidence that a variety of risk factors, including internet use and its impact on behavior and communication, regulate vulnerability to pathological online gaming. There is widespread agreement that factors in the development of internet and gaming addiction include players' goals, including overcoming unpleasant sentiments, success, networking, and immersion. Future research could inculcate the opinions of students from public universities as well as other Emirates.

Dr. Nazli Balkir Neftçi

Dr. Nazli Balkir Neftçi is a highly accomplished clinical psychologist and psychotherapist with extensive experience in research, teaching, and clinical practice. She holds a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree in Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy from Ruprecht Karls University in Heidelberg, Germany. Dr. Neftci is the author of several international publications examining the implications of culture on psychological disorders and their treatment among patients, immigrants, and refugees of Middle Eastern origin. With her extensive expertise in clinical psychology and psychotherapy, Dr. Neftçi continues to contribute to the field through her research, teaching, and clinical practice. Her dedication to understanding cultural influences on mental health and her commitment to helping individuals cope with psychological challenges make her a highly respected professional in her field.



Chehek Rattrra

Chehek Rattrra is an undergraduate student at the Department of Psychology, Canadian University Dubai, UAE. With a strong interest in the intersection of the human mind and culture, particularly in the MENA region, Chehek has participated in various research projects related to exploring the human mind and behavior and is particularly interested in understanding the ways in which culture and social context shape our psychological experiences. Chehek's research skills and dedication to the field have earned her recognition as a rising scholar. Chehek's recent publication on the fear of happiness in the MENA region highlights the need for greater focus on well-being and positive psychology intervention programs. Chehek hopes to continue exploring these areas of research and contributing to the field of psychology.



Game Play in a social society: Exploring the risk factors associated with Pathological Online Gaming among youth in Dubai

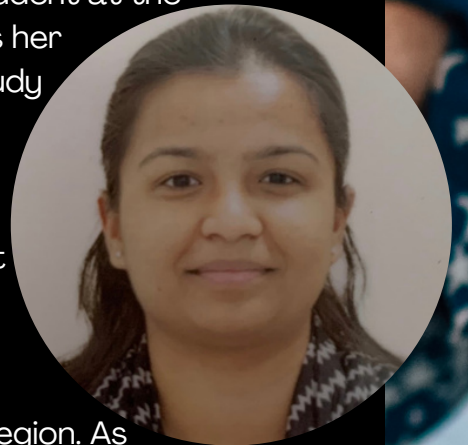
Shiva Shikari

Shiva Shekari is an undergraduate student pursuing a degree in psychology, at the Canadian University, Dubai, UAE. Shiva has engaged in different research projects related to various aspects of psychology, and she found her area of interest in clinical psychology. With the extensive research skills she has acquired, she is now focusing more on topics related to the effects of culture on family formation and the behavioral health of family members. Recently, Shiva and her colleagues published a short report in the Middle East, Journal of Positive Psychology, on the topic of "Unpacking the Fear of Happiness." Due to constant integration in the field of research, Shiva has gained sufficient skill and passion to be known as an emerging researcher, and this will be manifested by her decision to pursue a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology.



Meenakshy Nair

Meenakshy Nair is currently studying as an undergraduate student at the Canadian University Dubai, UAE where she is working towards her Bachelor's degree in Psychology. Bearing an aim in mind to study and dwell on the different aspects of the human mind and behavior, Meenakshy has actively participated in multiple research-based papers and projects which has helped her work towards achieving her goal of understanding the impact of Psychology in the different areas of the world. Recently, Meenakshy worked on a research publication focusing on the domain of Positive Psychology, where the topic of "Fear of Happiness" was researched among the people of the MENA region. As an individual who is on this exciting journey of learning every day, and getting to understand the world through the eyes of a budding psychologist, Meenakshy wishes to keep being inspired by the diversity in the field of Psychology and keep consistently researching and studying, which will help her make extensive contributions to the various spheres of psychology.



Game Play in a social society: Exploring the risk factors associated with Pathological Online Gaming among youth in Dubai

Mia Hayek

Mia Hayek is an undergraduate student at the Department of Psychology at Canadian University Dubai, based in the UAE. Aiming to achieve her bachelor's degree, Mia has participated in various projects and research papers with associates and professors in her department. The fascination with understanding the human mind and behavior has made dedication Mia's most effective trait in ensuring top-notch results. Her most recent publication on the topic of 'The Fear of Happiness' in the MENA region has raised drastic awareness of health, well-being, and positive psychology intervention programs regarding mental health. She will continue contributing and gaining knowledge through research and hard work in the art and science of psychology.



Behavioural addiction in the digital age: Working clinically with the harms related to casino-style gaming

Behavioural addictions have become more widely recognised in recent years, particularly with the publication of the International Classification of Diseases 11th revision (ICD-11). This revision, and the inclusion of “disorders due to addictive behaviours”, highlighted the potential harms of excessive and problematic engagement in behaviours previously thought of to be strictly leisurely in nature: gaming, and gambling.

This has become an issue to such an extent that countries such as Belgium have taken court action to attempt to ban gambling mechanics from video games sold in the country. Furthermore, England now has eight clinics specifically dedicated to treating gambling addiction, with another seven planned to open by 2024. NHS England report that they are responding to “record demand” for gambling treatment clinics. A large contributing factor in the increase of problematic gambling (and therefore the need for treatment centres) comes from the ease of access and availability of gambling opportunities, brought on by the development of online bookmakers and casinos.

Those at risk of (or experiencing) problematic gambling have almost immediate access to gambling through their mobile devices or computer. While the rapid expansion and development of technology in this digital age has meant that we can now be more connected to loved ones, or we can have access to information previously unavailable to us, it has also meant that those suffering with a gambling addiction are never more than a few seconds away from potentially devastating harm.

This presentation will aim to highlight the growing problem that is gambling addiction and it will give an overview of some recent statistics of gambling related harm. Following this, it will highlight some specifics for clinicians to consider during assessment of someone with problematic gambling. It will go on to highlight screening tools and will provide a model used for conceptualising problematic gambling. Finally, it will conclude by touching on some options for treatment.

Behavioural addiction in the digital age: Working clinically with the harms related to casino-style gaming

Dr. Matthew McCourt

Dr. Matthew McCourt is a Clinical Psychologist from Ireland, trained in the UK. He has worked in various mental health settings including community, inpatient, and outpatient since 2013 and has worked with children and adults with varying presenting difficulties. Prior to joining Sage Clinics, Matthew worked in a specialist service in the NHS providing treatment to adults who experienced problematic gambling and who presented other mental health concerns. He was also part of a team specialized in neuropsychological assessments for children within a specialist children's hospital where he assessed cognitive ability as part of a paediatric neuro-oncology service. He specializes in working with adolescents and adults with varying mental health presentations including low mood, anxiety, relational difficulties, and problematic gambling. He has special interests in men's mental health and well-being, and neuropsychological assessment. Throughout his Clinical Doctorate, he gained experience working across the lifespan and with a variety of different therapeutic approaches. These include Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Cognitive Analytic Therapy (CAT), and Psychodynamic therapy. He has also received training in Motivational Interviewing, and Dialectical Behavioural Training (DBT).



Use of technology to ameliorate underlying perceptual motor deficits to see its effect on social cognition in schizophrenia patients

Schizophrenia is a debilitating psychiatric disorder encompassing characteristic psychotic and non-psychotic symptoms. Deficits in social cognition is a hallmark in schizophrenia, effecting social cue perception, experience sharing, inferring other people's thoughts and emotions, and managing emotional reactions to others. Research shows that underlying perceptual deficits contribute to the aberrations in social cognitions in Schizophrenia. Schizophrenia patients experience a range of perceptual deficits, including problems in processing auditory and visual stimuli, ability to recognize and detect human biological motion leading to the overall deficit in sensory-motor perception. Amelioration of the underlying perceptual deficits can improve processing social cues in the environment. Impaired multisensory integration in Schizophrenia is a major disadvantage in complex, information-abundant environments, with a potential negative impact on social functioning. Different psychoeducational approaches integrated with behavioral and cognitive techniques have been designed to restore social functioning. Further, studies have also been done on non-invasive cerebellar stimulation showing promising results in rehabilitation of social behavior in patients. However, there is dearth of studies using technology as a tool to train schizophrenia patients to improve their underlying perceptual deficits to see its effect on social cognition. The present study aims to bridge this lacuna by using talking pen to provide perceptual-motor skill training to schizophrenia patients to study its effect on social cognition by ameliorating underlying perceptual deficits. Talking pen is an automated digital-treatment modality that directly focuses on improving patient's hand-eye coordination, gross-to-fine motor skills, integration of sensory modalities, and visual & auditory discrimination.

The study used a pre-post experimental design. The sample consisted of 16 individuals (8 = N experimental, 8 = N control group) from male and female in-patient units of Ranchi Institute of Neuro-Psychiatry and Allied Sciences. Both the groups were matched on sociodemographic and clinical variables. Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt test, and finger dexterity test were used for assessing perceptual-motor functions, Social cognition rating tools in Indian setting (SOCRATIS) was used for assessing social cognition, and talking pen was used to train and improve perceptual-motor skills for a period of 30 days. For statistical analysis of the data, Wilcoxon sign rank test, Mann-Whitney U test and Chi Square tests were used.

There is a significant improvement in perceptual-motor skills ($p = 0.05$), significant improvement was also found in higher-order theory-of-mind ($p = 0.017$), attribution bias ($p = 0.05$), and social perception ($p = 0.012$). The study findings imply that technology aided intervention can bring about significant improvement in the underlying perceptual deficits in schizophrenia leading to amelioration in higher order cognitive functions like social cognition.

Use of technology to ameliorate underlying perceptual motor deficits to see its effect on social cognition in schizophrenia patients

Arshia Chatterjee

Arshia Chatterjee recently completed her MPhil in Clinical Psychology from Ranchi Institute of Neuro-psychiatry and Allied Sciences. At present she is working as a consultant Clinical Psychologist at Caring Minds in Kolkata. Her research interest includes studies of consciousness in Schizophrenia patients, studies of perceptual deficits in schizophrenia, social cognition, and meta-cognitions. She has two national and one international publications, and have presented papers at conferences in National level.



Dr. Masroor Jahan

Dr. Masroor Jahan is a Clinical Psychologist, academician and researcher from India. She has an M.Phil. degree in Medical and Social Psychology from the Central Institute of Psychiatry, and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the Ranchi Institute of Neuro-Psychiatry and Allied Sciences (RINPAS). She is presently working as the Additional Professor and Head, Department of Clinical Psychology, RINPAS. She is the Founder Member of Indian Association for Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and a member of the Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists. She is a member of the editorial board of Indian Journal of Clinical Psychology. She has around 33 publications, and have presented papers in several conferences. Her interest and expertise lie in the areas of neuropsychological assessments, clinical neuropsychology, cognitive neuropsychology, and cognitive rehabilitation.



What are clients and therapists wanting - and needing - in the MENA region? Insights from an online therapist directory

Hoopfull, an online therapist directory, was launched in March 2022. The purpose of Hoopfull was to benefit the public as well as the therapist community in the UAE. In this presentation, we will share data that we have collected from our website, social media pages and discussions we have had with our members. We will share data on what directory searches visitors are making, what information is most popular among our readers and social media followers, as well as how therapists experience working in the region. We will present and discuss:

- What the public is looking for when searching for a therapist. Are there services that are under-represented and services that are, perhaps, over-represented
- What kind of therapist profiles attract the most attention. What does this tell us about creating a profile or the needs and preferences of the public?
- Which blog posts written by mental health professionals are most popular. What conclusions we can make on the basis of this?
- What needs do mental health professionals working in the region have? Are these needs being met, and if so, how?

Matleena Vanhanen

Matleena Vanhanen is a Co-founder of Hoopfull.com, UAE's first online directory of qualified mental health professionals. She holds an MA in Psychology from Jyväskylä University, Finland and a MA in Counseling Psychology and Post-MA in Existential Counseling Psychology from City University, UK. She is also a Certified Gottman Therapist and a Certified Discernment Counsellor. In the UK, she worked both in private practice and as a Specialist Counseling Psychologist for the National Health Service (NHS). She moved to Cyprus in 2006 where she worked in private practice and for an online counseling and coaching service provider. In Finland, she worked both as a Clinical Psychologist and School Psychologist, working with children, adults and older adults, couples and families in kindergartens, schools and at health centres. She is a member of the Finnish Psychological Association and the British Psychological Society. Matleena moved to Dubai in 2011, and is licensed to practise with the Community Development Authority (CDA) in Dubai.



What are clients and therapists wanting - and needing - in the MENA region? Insights from an online therapist directory

Dr. Ava Ghasemi

Dr. Ava Ghasemi, Psy.D., is a Co-founder and board member of Hoopfull.com, UAE's first online directory of qualified mental health professionals. She is a psychologist in private practice in Dubai having previously co-founded Aurelia Psychology LLC and Insights Psychology DMCC. She holds a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology and a Masters in Counselling Psychology (Adler University, Chicago) as well as a B.Sc. in Psychology (Honors)(York University, Toronto). She has also trained at the Synthesis Institute as a legal psychedelic practitioner. She has an interest in novel treatments for PTSD and depression. She is licensed in Dubai with the DHA, as well as Ontario, Canada with the College of Psychologists of Ontario. Ava has been living and working in the UAE since 2014, working with a wide range of psychological difficulties resulting from stress and trauma. She is passionate about helping the public have access to qualified mental health professionals.



Unleashing the power within: Hypnotherapy and hypnosis in the Digital Age - why we need it now more than ever

Discover the transformative potential of hypnotherapy and hypnosis and understand why these practices are essential in our current digital landscape and how we can efficiently begin to use them. Through engaging storytelling, compelling case studies and practical applications, this presentation will explore how hypnotherapy and hypnosis can unlock our hidden potential, enabling us to navigate the challenges and thrive in the digital age.

As we explore the amazing interaction between our minds and the digital realm, we will see how online hypnotherapy and hypnosis can serve as catalysts for personal development, self-discovery, and improved wellbeing in our society that is becoming more and more computerized.

Additionally, this presentation will tackle the vital topic of ethical considerations in online hypnotherapy. We will dive into the responsible and professional practices required to ensure client privacy, informed consent, and maintain the highest ethical standards in the digital world, learning practical strategies for providing ethical online hypnotherapy sessions. You will leave this presentation with useful tools, action plans for those in the Mental Health field and a renewed confidence to unleash your inner potential.

Yasmen Ahmed

Yasmen Ahmed is a British Egyptian Therapist currently living in Dubai; she also speaks fluent Arabic. As a UK-Certified Cognitive Behavioural Therapist with training in Psychotherapy and Counselling, she has a solid foundation in traditional psychological models. She completed further CBT training in Australia with the Australian Psychological Association. After hitting rock bottom emotionally and physically, having suffered with chronic pain in her early 20's, she ventured beyond the traditional path and became a Certified UK Clinical Hypnotherapist, Neuro-Linguistic Programmer (NLP) and Thetahealer®. Merging traditional Psychology with other modalities that aid in transformation and healing is what inspires her most, so she offers a unique approach to healing and well-being. Over the years, Yasmen has worked in a brain trauma center in the UK, attended numerous mental health conferences, conducted many workshops, worked as a school Psychologist in Al Ain, UAE and in variety of wellness centers. Currently, she runs her own online social media platform called 'Inspire with Yas' where she shares daily tips, videos, tools and resources to help individuals heal and transform. She also offers 1:1 sessions and has written a personal transformation book, which will be published soon.



Breaking taboos: A new approach to mental health in the MENA region

In the past 5 years, Lebanon has suffered multiple social, economic, and financial crises – from the financial collapse in 2019, to COVID-19 lockdowns and social distancing, to the Beirut Port Blast in 2020. This has left the Lebanese population facing the repercussions of multiple traumas, such as stress, anxiety, depression, and trauma symptomatology. Moreover, this is occurring in the context where individuals have decreased accessibility to basic health and mental support – due to material losses in healthcare centers services, difficulties with transportation, as well as increased immigration of healthcare professionals. In addition, Lebanese scholars have identified a monopoly of mental health professionals based in the capital, and a lack of funding to sustain programs in remote areas. The cumulative trauma points to an urgency of setting up more initiatives to provide telemental health services.

This presentation aims to introduce an innovative approach to telemental health service delivery, taking into consideration the many barriers that could halt the use of such services in Lebanon and the wider Arab region. Such barriers encompass stigma in discussing mental health difficulties, misinformation in terms of the efficacy of online approaches, difficulty in building rapport, internet connectivity, and electricity problems.

Siira, meaning “life journey” in Arabic, argues for a comprehensive approach to prevention and to promoting wellbeing. The focus of our model is on the democratization of mental health education. We propose a circular model whereby people have access to live and asynchronous sessions led by mental health professionals discussing topics around the themes of the individual, parenting, couples, and work-related issues. People can also attend support groups whereby they can gain more hands-on experience and tools to overcome some difficulties, and they can virtually attend 1:1 anonymous and confidential discussions with a professional to achieve more tailored strategies. The loop is closed as these various activities help people better understand their actions and reactions, encouraging them to therefore utilize our other resources, tackling related topics.

Through this talk, we will be presenting the results of the one-year pilot of our model and online platform. Findings are promising as users have reported finding the service to be efficient and highly satisfactory. These findings provide a stepping-stone toward our expansion to the wider community as well as the corporate world, building tailored programs based on the results of our pilot.

Breaking taboos: A new approach to mental health in the MENA region

Sandra Salame

Sandra Salame, a mother of 3 and an experienced technology executive with a 20-year career in the IT industry, she is bringing innovation and expertise to the field of mental well-being. With a background in computer and communication engineering and a successful track record of establishing and managing a cybersecurity company, Sandra is now on a mission to transform the way we approach mental health. Her passion for the subject has led her to found Siira, a platform dedicated to providing accessible and effective mental health services to individuals in need. In a region where mental health stigma persists, Siira is breaking down barriers and creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for those struggling with everyday challenges.



Dr. Pia Tohme

Dr. Pia Tohme is a licensed child and adolescent psychologist. She graduated with a Ph.D. from University College London and was trained in Mentalization Based Therapy (MBT) for Children and Adolescents, as well as its application in a school setting, in the UK. She is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology and Psychology Program Lead at the Lebanese American University, works in private practice with children, adolescents and their parents, and is Head of Psychology Services at Siira.



The background of the slide is a light blue gradient. It is decorated with several black squares of varying sizes, some of which are semi-transparent, creating a modern, geometric aesthetic. In the background, there is a blurred image of a group of people, possibly in a meeting or collaborative work environment, adding a human element to the design.

ORGANISATIONAL, COACHING & HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY STREAM

Building a resilient workforce in the Digital Age: A recipe for a thriving, motivated and engaged workforce

As a business psychologist with a clinical psychology background, I have noticed the increased interest and need in exploring and utilizing resilience concepts. During the COVID-19 pandemic, all of my clients naturally moved to online working. This universal shift has shown us how quickly we are able to adapt to change if needed. Those who were more resilient and were looking after their resilience levels consistently were able to adapt to new working environments more successfully. With technology being more advanced everyday, the concept of a resilient workforce is helping leaders and organizations to not only survive during adversity but also thrive. The concept of a resilient workforce is one that is agile, resourceful but most importantly, self-aware and willing to take advantage of new opportunities. During this presentation, I will explore the concept of resilient workforce, share a case study of building a resilient workforce and take participants through the practical solutions of supporting clients on 3 levels: individual, team/leadership and organizational utilizing digital tools, including strengths assessments. I have developed a Resilient Workforce Framework based on research and over 15 years of working with the concept of Resilience. The concept of building a resilient workforce is especially useful when looking at a talent map and how this can be used during Emiratisation processes across industries.

Agata Perepeczko

Agata Perepeczko is an experienced business psychologist, accredited coach and a member of BPS, CIPD, EMCC, HCPC and ABP. She is a founder and a CEO of Resilient Workforce and Resilient Workforce Middle East. She is also a founder of a network for those who are interested in using Psychology in Business. Agata finished MSc in clinical psychology, followed by MSc in Occupational Psychology. Currently Agata is pursuing a Professional Doctorate at Birkbeck University, London, where she is exploring even further the concept of a resilient workforce. Agata has a vast experience of working within clinical psychology and business psychology settings. She has been working across industries from humanitarian, government, non government and healthcare organizations through media, education, financial and professional services. Agata helps her client through individual consultations, assessments and development of clients teams and leaders. She also supports executive boards with strategic thinking around their processes, policies and procedures. All of her work is based on the latest research, best practice and most importantly for Agata is based on collaboration with her clients. This approach enables us to achieve the best results in the most effective and efficient way. Resilient Workforce is also a global partner for a new generation strength assessment tool-TalentPredix. Agata uses this tool to provide insights to her clients on talents, career motivators and values.



The importance of Digital Detox on employee well-being and practical suggestions for organizations and employees

This study discusses the negative effects of work-related excessive use of smartphones and digital technologies on human psychology and suggests the benefits of limiting our relationship with these devices to improve employee well-being. The presentation highlights several advantages of disconnecting from digital technologies, including improved mental health (Scott, Valley & Simecka, 2017; Şentürk et al., 2021), increased concentration, improved sleep quality (AlShareef, 2022), decrease in fear of missing out (FOMO) (Elhai et al., 2016), and improvement in work-life balance (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Nam, 2014). The widespread use of smartphones and the constant bombardment of emails, messages, and social media notifications have increased individuals' stress levels (Mirbabaie, Stieglitz & Marx, 2022). Multitasking and excessive digital stimulation overload the brain, triggering stress hormones. However, individuals who undergo digital detox by limiting their use of digital technology experience decreased stress levels over time, leading to improved concentration, relationships, and job performance (Scott, Valley & Simecka, 2017). Additionally, excessive use of phones and computers, mainly before sleep, negatively affects sleep quality (AlShareef, 2022). Checking messages and e-mails before sleeping and immediately after waking up disrupts the brain's circadian rhythm, leading to insomnia and frequent awakenings at night. Setting limits on checking emails and messages in bed improves sleep quality and improves sleep patterns. This presentation also emphasizes the positive changes in family and social relationships (work-life balance) when people set boundaries with digital technologies (Nam, 2014). The fear of missing out (FOMO) is another negative consequence of excessive digital technology use. The constant need to be online and check emails outside of working hours creates anxiety and affects work-life balance. However, individuals who limit their mobile technology usage report decreased FOMO and increased life satisfaction (Elhai et al., 2016).

The study concludes by discussing the responsibilities of organizations in defining boundaries for work-related communication and technology usage outside of working hours. It suggests that employees should have the autonomy to determine their flexible working hours and the employers should encourage offline physical meetings, which increase engagement and motivation among employees (Roghanizad & Bohns, 2017). Additionally, organizations should encourage employees to take vacations to enhance productivity and well-being (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006). Finally, the organizations define and limit flexible work hours to improve employee satisfaction, stress levels, and productivity (Edvinsson et al., 2023).

The importance of Digital Detox on employee well-being and practical suggestions for organizations and employees

Ayca Demiran

Ayca Demiran holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Middle East Technical University, Türkiye. She is also a Ph.D. candidate in Occupational Psychology at Heriot-Watt University. Alongside her academic career, Ayca has been working in the HR field for more than 15 years with an extensive experience in consumer goods, manufacturing, construction, and for the government in the MENA Region. She has been a Part-Time Teaching Assistant at Heriot-Watt University since 2023. Ayca is passionate about combining literature findings with a professional work environment to create a culture where employees thrive. Her research interests are Workplace Well-being, Leadership, Safety Culture, Psychological Safety, Organizational Development and Workplace Culture.

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Dads, diapers & deadlines: How working fathers are balancing work and family life in the Middle East

The Digital Age has redefined the relationship between our work and family lives as remote working has provided some employees with increased flexibility to manage their personal lives. The expectations and demands on fathers in this changing landscape is a particularly relevant topic as the globalized nature of the Middle East's work environment is predominately male, providing a rich opportunity to explore cross-cultural beliefs about the social roles of working parents, work life balance and gender roles.

Despite men's increased contribution to caregiving and housework in recent years, many men still face the traditional demands in their work life such as long working hours, inflexible work arrangements, and cultural expectations of men as breadwinners and primary earners (Premeaux et al., 2007, Campbell et al., 2022). As Cunningham-Parmeter (2019) argues, for women to achieve workplace equality, men must be able to contribute to domestic responsibilities without facing repercussions at work.

The aim of this study is to explore the views and expectations of fathers in the Middle East and how they are navigating the changes surrounding balancing work and family life. By focusing on men's experiences, we can create family-friendly policies that align organizational support for working fathers with the new societal expectations of men's caregiving responsibilities and promote gender equality for all (Emslie & Hunt, 2009).

Valerie Berthelsen

Valerie Berthelsen serves as the People, Learning & Leadership Manager at AVK in Dubai, overseeing comprehensive employee development initiatives throughout the Middle East and India. Currently, Valerie is pursuing an MSc Business Psychology with Coaching degree at Heriot Watt University in Dubai, focusing her research on the dynamics of cultural and gender roles within the workplace.



Dads, diapers & deadlines: How working fathers are balancing work and family life in the Middle East

Dr. Lucy Bolton

Dr. Lucy Bolton, Assistant Professor at Heriot-Watt University Dubai, is the Global Director of Studies for Business Psychology at HWU and leads the MSc Business Psychology programmes at Heriot Watt University Dubai. Being a Chartered Occupational Psychologist (BPS/HCPG) and a Certified Coach (AC), Lucy lectures on courses in Coaching Psychology, Organisational Change, Diversity and Research Methods at the postgraduate level. Lucy supervises MSc dissertations on various Business Psychology and Coaching in the workplace topics. Lucy is a trained Occupational Test User (TUA / TUP) with the BPS, certified in Trait, TEIQue and NEO-PR-R, and also being trained to deliver psychometric training. Lucy's research interests include coaching, work values, careers, change management, workplace design and AI, having worked with many global organisations to conduct her research e.g., Rolls-Royce, Bentley Motors, M&S, the NHS, REED-NCFE and the UK Government Office of Science. Lucy has published in global academic journals (e.g., Ergonomics, Design Science, Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice) and presented her research at various international conferences including the British Psychological Society's Division of Occupational Psychology (DOP), Academy of Management (AOM), European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology (EAWOP), Applied Human Factors and Ergonomics (AHFE), MEPA (Middle East Psychological Association), and IPCD.



The background of the slide features a low-angle, upward-looking perspective of several modern skyscrapers with glass facades. The buildings are partially obscured by the white text area, creating a sense of height and urban environment. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

Supporting graduates entering the workplace: Mental health, skills & digital literacies

Mental health and workplace mental health are growing global issues (World Health Organization, 2022) and within the UAE, burnout, anxiety and depression are key concerns in the private sector (Business for Wellbeing Council, 2020). The mental health of young people is a particular concern, especially during university-to-work transitions that may impact mental health and wellbeing (Robinson, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has had a further impact on many vulnerable groups (Alzueta et al., 2021; Cheikh Ismail et al., 2021; Halliburton et al., 2021) including young people (Parry et al., 2022; Deloitte, 2020) with additional challenges including revised work orders, changed working environments, remote working and an increasingly digitised world. Further urgent research is required on the impact for such groups (Grubic et al., 2020).

This presentation will report on the findings from the first wave of a cross-disciplinary mixed-methods research project in Hong Kong designed to understand the mental health and skills needs for young people transitioning to work during and post Covid-19. The project was designed to understand the experiences of key stakeholder groups including workplaces, universities and young people and to develop effective interventions to support transitions and protect mental health. In this presentation, we present data triangulated from across surveys and in-depth interviews with workplaces, universities, and students and graduates graduating between 2020-2023. We use standardised and validated measures to examine the mental health, wellbeing (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995; Topp et al., 2015) and skills (Rottinghaus et al., 2012) needs of students as they transition to the workforce and supplement this work with further quantitative and qualitative data to review the impact of new forms of digital and remote working for this vulnerable workplace group. Specifically, we delve into the skills required of young people in the workplace as they relate to technology and entering into an increasingly digitised global world.

We end with a discussion on what these findings may mean for workplaces, universities and for young people. We draw on data triangulated from across multiple stakeholder groups to present recommendations on how graduates can best be prepared for university-to-workplace transitions in the digital age with a focus on mental health and wellbeing. We welcome discussion.

This work was supported by the Research Grants Council, Hong Kong, China.

Supporting graduates entering the workplace: Mental health, skills & digital literacies

Dr. Zoë Fortune

Dr. Zoë Fortune is an Assistant Professor in Psychology at Heriot-Watt University in Dubai, joining in August 2023. Prior to that, she was an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Hong Kong, where she led a Mental Health Communication & Research cluster in the Research and Impact Initiative on Communication in Healthcare (HKU RIICH). Her current research focuses on the mental health needs of graduates and employees. Zoë has conducted research across a variety of healthcare and psychological settings, including mental health, forensic healthcare and primary care, with research on neurodiversity, brain injury, mental and physical health comorbidities and personality disorder. She has also led research within international development and charitable projects across Asia, Africa, and the Middle East with work to support human rights initiatives and improvements in healthcare communication. She is passionate about workplace mental health and in 2017, she helped set up the not-for-profit organisation, City Mental Health Alliance in Hong Kong (CMHA HK), which she led until her move to Dubai in 2021. She remains on their Advisory Group and is now part of new initiatives to support workplace mental health in the UAE. She is also a Trustee of a UK-based mental health charity. Zoë has a BSc. in Psychology from University College London. She is a qualified psychotherapist with a Masters of Counselling from Monash University in Australia and is a member of the Hong Kong Professional Counselling Association. She also holds a Ph.D. in Health Services Research from the Institute of Psychiatry in King's College, London.



Dr. Olga Zayts-Spence

Dr. Olga Zayts-Spence: Dr. Olga Zayts-Spence is an Associate Professor and the Founding Director of the Research and Impact Initiative for Communication in Healthcare (HKU RIICH: www.hkuriich.org) hosted by the School of English, Faculty of Arts, the University of Hong Kong. Dr. Zayts-Spence's background is in sociolinguistics, social sciences and public health. Over the years, she has conducted cutting-edge interdisciplinary research in different healthcare settings, including genetic medicine, dental education, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), cancer clinics, end-of-life care, and most recently mental health. She is the Founding Editor of the "Routledge Studies in Language, Health and Culture". Her most recent book is "Language, Health and Culture: Problematizing the Centers and Peripheries in Healthcare Communication Research" (2023).



Supporting graduates entering the workplace: Mental health, skills & digital literacies

Dr. David Edmonds

Dr. David Matthew Edmonds is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow and Assistant Lecturer in the School of English at the University of Hong Kong. His research takes on a broadly sociolinguistic perspective and utilizes discourse analysis and conversation analysis as methodological tools. Current strands of his research include a focus on the discursive construction of mental health, university-to-work transitions, end-of-life care, and the interactional accomplishment of gender.



Fantasizing between the lines: Fantasy, imagery vividness and empathy in the digital age

Fantasy is often looked at through a psychopathological lens and is often associated with psychopathological disorders (Weibel et al., 2018). In the current research study, fantasy is conceptualised two different constructs, imaginative and creative fantasy. Imaginative fantasy covers individual imaginative propensity while creative fantasy determines extent of engagement in creative production. In a sample of 119 undergraduate students living in the UAE, fantasy and its components were found to correlate with the variables, imagery vividness during reading and empathy. Imagery vividness during reading can be understood as the ability to conjure mental picturizations of a narrative text's contents. To this effect, fantasy and imagery vividness are said to have an impact on empathy, yet no other study has investigated the three variables in conjunction. Results revealed that imagery vividness was a complete mediator between each construct of fantasy and empathy showing the crucial role of imagery vividness in predicting empathy among fantasy personalities. This presentation will examine how this study brings into view a framework upon which to understand the impact of fantasy on personality and emotional experiences. The practical implications of this framework for clinicians, counsellors, educators and AI developers will be explored.

Safa Sohail

Safa recently graduated from Heriot-Watt University, receiving a BSc. Psychology degree, after joining the university in 2018. As a research assistant, she worked alongside her psychology professors at Heriot-Watt in academic research. As an undergraduate student, she also participated in graphic design work for the university and small businesses, and social media management for charity organisations.



Dr. Çakil Agnew

Dr. Çakil Agnew's research focuses on exploring safety in organizations and the impact of leadership on work performance in high-risk industries. She is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Dubai and the Programme Director for the Independent Distance Learning MSc. Business Psychology. After receiving her Ph.D., she worked as a postdoctoral research fellow in the University of Aberdeen's Industrial Psychology Research Centre before joining Heriot-Watt University.



Costs of foreign accents and benefits of accent switching

Speakers of English as an additional language (EAL) face challenges when assimilating into international settings because of accent discrimination. This is particularly true in the present digital age where multiple forms of multimedia relying on audio linguistic elements, such as podcasts and audiobooks are ever-expanding. Here, we report two studies conducted to investigate the issue of accent discrimination. First, we surveyed 32 Africans at New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) on their experiences using the English language in an international institution. Multiple Factor Analysis revealed two main dimensions capturing 25% of the variance and interpreted as X and Y. Dimension X represented factual information about participants' use of English while dimension Y captured subjective attitudes about the relationship between participants' native English accents and Mainstream American accents. In study two, a speaker evaluation experiment was conducted where 165 British participants listened to audio recordings of different voices with six different accents and rated each one across six categories: intelligence, confidence, educatedness, powerfulness, attractiveness, and sociability. Crucially, the study included the manipulation of an accent switch – one voice was presented once with a Ghanaian English accent and emulating what is considered a more prestigious Mainstream American accent. The Mainstream American accent was rated more positively than the Ghanaian accent in most questions, while the Ghanaian emulating an American accent received ratings that were either intermediate or as high as the American. These findings are relevant in the discussion of what factors to keep in mind as we assimilate audio communication into multicultural environments. Research shows that accent cues are more potent than skin colour cues, so understanding the role that accents play in, say, employment, media, and sales is extremely crucial. As personal and face-to-face dialogue is replaced by digital communication, psychologists and other social researchers need to examine ways in which prejudice and stereotyping may be carried over in human social cognition. This research has presented one way in which accent segregation has slipped into digital dialogue and other researchers may benefit from engaging in this conversation.

Nelda Ilomelo John

Nelda has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from New York University Abu Dhabi. She is interested in examining the roots and products of stereotypical representations of minoritized groups, especially African societies. Her work centres on social cognition at the intersections across gender, race, and socioeconomic statuses, and their role in maintaining or enhancing prejudiced systems. Some of her upcoming projects are on the role of self-stereotyping in the endorsement of gender roles in Ghana, xenocentrism in Tanzanian education, and African representation in Hollywood media. In her research, Nelda emphasizes reducing the gap in research that pertains to the lives of non-WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) populations.



Costs of foreign accents and benefits of accent switching

Prof. Diogo Almeida

Professor Diogo Almeida specializes in psycho- and neurolinguistics. His primary research focus is on language processing and the perceptual processes that enable it. He relies on a wide array of methodologies, including cross-linguistic studies and behavioural and brain imaging methods, such as MEG/EEG and fMRI. Before joining NYU Abu Dhabi, he was a post-doctoral researcher at the University of California, Irvine, and an assistant professor at Michigan State University.



Cultural neutrality in digital therapy: Therapists' perspectives through Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

This presentation investigates the relationship between digital therapy and cultural diversity, as well as their significant impact on the therapeutic process. We conducted a short survey with mental health practitioners to understand how cultural bias affects clinical outcomes while working with clients on an online platform. Drawing upon Dr. Geert Hofstede's well-established framework of six cultural dimensions, we illustrate how digital therapy acts as a catalyst for promoting cultural neutrality. This involves recognizing, empowering, and seamlessly integrating individual behaviours and cultural nuances within the psychological interventions and treatment. Through our study, we shed light on the transformative potential of digital therapy, highlighting its role in creating an inclusive and culturally sensitive therapeutic environment.

Priya Cima

Priya's career started in Psychology, and her interest has consistently stayed in this area, expanding to include organizational and individual well-being, as she realized the importance of a holistic approach to community health. Her professional opportunities in the public and private sectors have led her to develop significant insight and skills within areas of sector/organization wide strategic wellbeing initiatives.

Having grown up and worked for over 20 years in the United Arab Emirates, her priority remains to contribute her learning and skills in support of developing individual well-being through establishing safe environments where people can access the tools and resources, they need to build healthy lifestyles. Today she works with Chearful.com, an online mental well-being platform connecting those seeking support with qualified mental health practitioners anytime, anywhere, within accommodating resources.



Athiya Kabir

Athiya's journey started in this field because of her desire to integrate physical, mental, and emotional health into society. Throughout her career, Athiya has gained valuable experience and knowledge from various work and internship experiences in different sectors such as private, public, NGOs, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, and organizations, serving people from different cultural backgrounds, educational levels, and age groups. Each encounter has shaped her understanding and allowed her to be part of a meaningful community and gain valuable experience. Her primary goal is to help break down the stigma surrounding mental health and raise awareness about its importance. She constantly researches new topics and trends in the field to broaden her understanding of various disciplines and gain expert insights. Through her education and services, she aims to empower individuals to take charge of their mental well-being and foster lasting improvements. Her mission is to positively impact people's lives by breaking down barriers and offering unwavering support to those in need. Athiya's dedication and passion drive her to be a catalyst for change, making a difference one step at a time.





**CHILD-ADOLESCENT,
EDUCATION & DESIGN
PSYCHOLOGY STREAM**

Fizzy feelings and confident parenting: The benefits and challenges of providing online parenting interventions in the digital era

Navigating the COVID-19 pandemic was particularly difficult for many children with intellectual disabilities and their families as they faced an increased risk of COVID-19 diagnosis, morbidity and mortality, and limited access to mental health and community support. Many families saw an increase in their child(ren)'s challenging behaviours and mental health difficulties due to issues such as disrupted routines, restricted pleasurable activities and social isolation. The Newcastle and Gateshead Children's Intellectual Disability and Positive Behaviour Support Team harnessed technology to deliver bespoke behavioural interventions that could reach a wide range of families in the North East of England. These online interventions helped empower parents by equipping them with tools and strategies to support their child(ren)'s mental health and manage any challenging behaviours that arose, and improved the quality of life of the family unit as a whole. It also provided ease of access and support to even the most isolated and rural families who ordinarily could not have travelled to group interventions. In this presentation I will discuss what these specific interventions entailed and discuss more broadly online parenting interventions for developmental disabilities, made possible due to the increased prevalence and availability of online technologies. I will also discuss how digital solutions in healthcare have been able to provide a new service delivery model and the benefits and challenges of this.



Fizzy feelings and confident parenting: The benefits and challenges of providing online parenting interventions in the digital era

Dr. Lauren Smith

Dr. Lauren is an Irish Clinical Psychologist trained in the UK with over ten years' experience working with children, teenagers and families experiencing a range of social, emotional and mental health difficulties. She draws on a number of different psychological models and treatment modalities to support with mental health difficulties such as low mood, anxiety, panic attacks, trauma, OCD and emotional dysregulation. Prior to joining Sage Clinics, she worked in two specialist children's hospitals providing psychological therapy to children and teenagers with cancer, heart conditions and those in intensive care. She has also worked in Child and Adolescent Mental Health teams, including a specialist team for children with learning disabilities and neurodiversity who were experiencing mental health or behavioral difficulties. Dr. Lauren specializes in working with young people with long-term physical health conditions who may be experiencing psychological issues related to their condition, injury or illness. This includes support around adjusting to their condition, social and family relationships, managing anxieties around medical treatment and procedures and concerns for the future. Dr. Smith also specializes in working with young people with learning disabilities, ADHD and ASD. She carries out specialist assessment, formulation and individualized treatment interventions and provide tools and strategies centered around improving quality of life. She also carries out neurocognitive assessments and provide consultations on how to adapt settings and ways of working to meet the needs of the young person whilst being aware of the impact of physical and mental health conditions at different developmental stages. Dr. Lauren enjoys teaching and training and delivers a wide range of training to schools and health professionals on topics such as developmental trauma, neurodiversity and sleep hygiene. She was a guest lecturer on the Newcastle University Clinical Doctorate programme and delivered teaching on paediatric health psychology and adapting psychological interventions for children with learning disabilities.



Dr. Emily Thompson

Dr. Emily Thompson is a Principal Clinical Psychologist who works in the Intellectual Disabilities and Positive Behaviour support team in the Newcastle Gateshead Children and Young People's Mental Health Service (CYPS). This service is part of the Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne & Wear (CNTW) NHS Mental Health Trust in England. She is a Clinical Psychologist who has worked with children, young people, and families for a number of years in the NHS.



Personalized learning through technology: A game changer for skills levelopment in children with learning disabilities

The focus of this presentation is on the impact and the use of technology and digital programmes to improve independent skills and personality development in children with learning difficulties. Specific examples through research will include those with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), Dyscalculia, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Speech Language Impairment (SLI), and Intellectual Disability (ID).

Children with learning disabilities face various challenges in a mainstream classroom that hinder their academic potential. These challenges may stem from differences in learning styles, pace, content delivery, and the availability of adequate sensory integration or assistive technology. As a result, many of these children struggle academically, leading to a delay in building a strong foundation in receptive language, literacy and numeracy skills (Muter & Likierman, 2008). These children also face challenges with attention, organisation, study, and social skills. However, the primary focus in school is on their academic development, often causing them to fail in acquiring important transferable skills until much later in life, skills that their peers without learning challenges have the opportunity to develop from a young age (Poore et. al., 2019).

With an equal amount of focus on building transferable skills in these children, we are preparing them to survive in the world. Academic progress alone may not adequately prepare them for success in an environment beyond formative schooling years, where constant guidance is not provided. Without training in these essential skills, they may struggle to effectively apply their intellectual abilities.

There are various research-driven digital programmes that can assist these children in building these skills, using neuroscience principles, and a range of assistive technologies. The benefits of such digital programmes include self-paced learning, continuous progress monitoring and promoting engagement and confidence. Recent literature reviews have shown that e-learning software has multidimensional benefits on the personality of children with learning difficulties, including cognitive, social and psychological skills (Vouglanis & Drigas, 2022).

This presentation will explore some of the benefits and challenges of these e-learning tools when working with children with learning disabilities, either in a 1:1 setting or in a classroom, with realistic suggestions given to overcome identified obstacles. Through collaborative efforts and continued research, we can harness the potential of technology and ensure a brighter future for our children.

Personalized learning through technology: A game changer for skills levelopment in children with learning disabilities

Amal Shoaeb Kasmani

Ms. Amal Kasmani is an Educational Counselor & Special Educator at a school in Muscat, Oman. She has also been associated with Al Ahlam Higher Education Services, providing support and training to children with special needs (SEN). She completed her undergraduate degree from Heriot-Watt University, Dubai Campus. She has over 4 years of experience working with children and is actively involved in various research projects in Child Psychology. Her profound commitment lies in fostering a comprehensive development of personality, ambitions, and abilities in children with special needs. She endeavors to expand their horizons beyond societal expectations, enabling them to flourish as individuals. By instilling these essential skills, she aims to empower children to effectively apply them in their academic pursuits, professional endeavors, and future careers. She has recently co-founded a skills development center named Hidayah Muscat, which provides support to all children to develop their passions, interest, and develop skills beyond academics. The ultimate goal is to unlock and unleash the hidden potential within each child, empowering them to excel in all aspects of their lives.



Psychology meets digital media meets pedagogy

The growth of online learning is spectacular and increasingly disruptive. It predates Covid and continues to gather pace. Registered online learners number hundreds of millions, and the sector attracts tens of billions of dollars of annual investment (World Economy Forum, 2022; McKinsey, 2022). And it is evolving. New generations of online learning design no longer seek to mimic traditional text-based and face-to-face configurations. They are, instead, redefining relationships between academic content producers, media and students; generating new psychological challenges that traditional pedagogies will need to accommodate if they want to keep up with the times.

In line with these advances, a new generation of online courses is being offered at Heriot-Watt University. One of the pioneering degrees in Business and Organisational Psychology is the product of an across-the-globe collaboration between the academic and media teams. This production process has afforded valuable psychological insights into teaching and learning in a digital world. Firstly, a reconsideration of the social identities of both academics and media professionals: academics have a traditional attachment to the printed word, and media professionals a traditional detachment from the nuances of content. Psychological adjustments are negotiated on both sides as they make the transition to the category of “third space professionals” in the intersection of two traditional domains (Whitchurch, 2008). Secondly, the psychological design of an asynchronous online environment to support mentored dialogic inquiry: in essence, a virtual intellectual Escape Room which deploys digital media to motivate and entice students to engage in knowledge-creating dialogues with others. “Others” who are real, imagined, or somewhere in between. There is discussion of the graduated ways in which the enticements, or “bread crumbs” of cues and prompts, might be distributed effectively. The key rôle of engendering a “feeling-of-knowing” (Keil, 2006) ahead of understanding and application is examined and illustrated in detail. Finally, although the relationship between Academic and Student in an asynchronous online setting is an indirect one (literally mediated), the human relationship can be asserted in several ways, which are discussed; and the online setting facilitates, with suitable guidance, the student’s engagement with still wider communities of learning (Wegerif, 2019). The world is changing, and academics must appreciate that video is not an inferior form of teaching, and keeping up does not mean dumbing down.

Psychology meets digital media meets pedagogy

Greg Fantham

Greg Fantham originally graduated in History and Psychology and went on to complete a MSc. (Econ) in International Relations at the London School of Economics. He continued his research in nuclear war in the department of War Studies at King's College, London. Tired of nuclear war, Greg moved into high school teaching for a slightly more optimistic experience, teaching history in a UK comprehensive school and then in Dubai, while upgrading his psychology qualifications. He completed a MSc. Occupational Psychology degree with Leicester University in 2007 and started full-time at Heriot-Watt University Dubai in January 2016, teaching the MSc. Business Psychology programme, as well as undergraduate classes in social psychology. Greg is fascinated by the psychology of teaching and of educational media, which led to his current involvement in the development of Heriot-Watt's online learning MSc. in Business and Organisational Psychology. He has written on psychology topics in most of the UAE's national newspapers, and presented workshops for teachers and pupils in Dubai high schools and Dubai Islamic Bank, on coaching, innovation, AI, workplace design, and leadership. Research publications include a study of clients' coaching style preferences (co-author).



Lucy Kendra

Based in Edinburgh, Lucy has over 20 years' experience in the creative industries, the last 10 of which have been mostly within media education. Her first creative documentary short received recognition at national awards, and her work has since featured in many international festivals, live performances and broadcasts. She has directed, produced, edited, and taught moving image and sound projects at all levels of education (from early-years upwards) – including as course Creative Director for World Bank, and projects in collaboration with CERN and the Tate. She led on media output for the University of Edinburgh's initial cohort of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). Currently, she is the Digital Media Manager for an award-winning team of creative specialists developing learning resources in moving image and sound for Heriot-Watt Online. Lucy has degrees in music (BMus, First Class, Edinburgh; MA, City University, London) and vocational qualifications in visual communication. As a musician she has performed globally, including for the BBC, and collaborated with many artists, including the writer Jackie Kay. Lucy is a board member of Media and Learning, a global, not-for-profit association set up under Belgian law to promote and stimulate the use of media as a way to enhance innovation and creativity in teaching and learning across all levels of education.



Psychology meets digital media meets pedagogy

Colin Morris

Colin Morris is a creative media professional based in Edinburgh, with over 20 years of industry experience. Specialising in documentary cinematography, he has worked on several short films showcased at international festivals and has experience in recording live events, broadcast studio production, marketing production, and educational media creation. Outside of work, Colin has a keen interest in live music and visual art. Colin has a BA (hons) in Fine Art (Sound & Image) from Bath Spa University and completed an MA in Film Directing at The University of Edinburgh in 2015.



Conrado Silva de Farias

Conrado is a sound-designer and filmmaker. After graduating, Conrado worked as a lead sound-designer on a variety of short and feature films and animation. This was followed by a position at BBC Global News where he worked for many years as a Producer. The work involved producing, filming, and editing news and educational videos and sound pieces. In his current position, he produces audio and video for Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh campus. Conrado has a BA in Music from EMBAP (School of Music and Fine Arts – Curitiba, Brazil) and a MSc. in Sound Design from the University of Edinburgh. He is a keen sailor.



Humanising learning in the Digital Era

Education has changed, it demands creativity, collaboration, flexibility, problem solving and sufficient challenges to keep the learner engaged. This, along with, the appropriate and humane use of technology. Post Covid, as most educational institutions faced issues with student attention, student retention and student engagement, this research work was developed with an objective to discuss the delivery of human element to the digital instruction process. It was also to explore the dynamics of quality education practices, positive student- instructor relationship and humanising pedagogy.

This study explores strategies for humanising learning such as liquid syllabus, warm, wise feedback method, micro-lectures method and also draws from Project-based learning (PBL) which is actively engaging in real-world situations and meaningful projects that are personalised in nature. The results exhibited higher student engagement, lesser withdrawal rates, more attendances to online sessions, heightened compassion and learning in students.

This study is well suited to the theme of the conference as it takes into consideration principles of educational psychology, education 4.0 and use of artificial intelligence or digitalisation. The implications of the study ensures that student engagement and student fulfilment with their academic discipline can be retained and maintained.

Dr. Sonakshi Ruhela

Dr. Sonakshi Ruhela holds a Harvard Certification in Higher Education with a Ph.D in Psychology, recognized by the Ministry of Education, UAE. She is an accomplished Educationalist with over 12 years of extensive experience in Undergraduate and Postgraduate teaching, training, mentorship, and research of students from different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. She is also a Co-guide for Doctoral Research Scholars in the field of psychology and mental health. She is a Licensed Psychologist with a comprehensive experience in the field of Counselling, Psychotherapy, Behavioral-Lifestyle interventions, Neuro- linguistic programming and Psychometric assessment. She has worked extensively in the area of adolescent and adult counselling, Relationship management (Couples and Family), Depression, Anxiety and Emotional- Psychological distress, in both India and UAE. She has authored the Book- 'Counseling Interventions for Millennials', published in 9 languages by Lambert Publications in 2020. She is currently designated as a Senior Lecturer and Program Coordinator for Psychological Sciences at Curtin University Dubai. She is the Former Associate Registrar and Assistant Professor of Psychology at Amity University, Dubai. She is the Former Associate Registrar and Assistant Professor of Psychology at Amity University, Dubai. She has a rich Research profile with interdisciplinary Scopus index publications and Research Projects applied at ICSSR & All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), India and Al-Jalila Foundation, UAE. She is a professional member of the APA, Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists and MEPA. She has participated in over 100 national and international events hosted by various bodies.



Digitally parenting preteens in the UAE: A cross-cultural qualitative study

Parenting practices have always centred around keeping children safe, ensuring growth and bio-psycho-social development to help them reach their full potential. In today's world, since digital practices are enmeshed in parenting processes in myriad ways, digital parenting is inseparable from the overall parenting experience. Digital parenting is defined as the guidance, management, and regulation of children's relationships with digital technology. Digital parenting behaviours are complex and nuanced, and while previous studies into digital parenting focused on the strategies parents employ to mediate their children's use of digital technologies, they have largely ignored parents' perspectives, particularly the parents of preteens. Preteen years are a critical stage of development where dependent children begin their journey of autonomy, on their way to becoming healthy, independent adults. Notably, most digital parenting research has been quantitative and lacking in diverse ethno-cultural narratives.

This exploratory study aims to address the paucity in qualitative cross-cultural studies, by offering novel insights on parental mediation in Arab families residing in the technologically advanced United Arab Emirates (UAE). Underpinned by contextualism and using interpretive methodology, reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data gathered from five focus groups with 30 parents of preteens (aged 9–13). Parental perceptions, mediation strategies, and feelings were explored. Results highlighted sociocultural factors impacting digital parenting across two overarching themes: (i) “Digital parenting fatigue”, which captured parental frustrations and concerns, and (ii) “Shedding the past: From restriction to enablement through dialogue” which highlights how parents' own cultural upbringing is impacting the way they choose to digitally parent their preteens differently. The second overarching theme lends the most insight into digital parenting from an Arab sociocultural perspective. It explains the cultural nuances that affected participants in their collectivist upbringing as antecedents to choosing enabling strategies, such as open dialogue and trust-based discourse, to mitigate online risks. Findings enrich existing research cross-culturally, creating a basis for future studies on digital parenting in the Middle East, and can inform policy makers, psychologists, and educators, in creating much-needed support systems for digital parents.

This topic is an insightful addition to the conference theme as it sheds light on parental digital practices and can inform psychologists in the Middle East of the novel insights that can help in their clinical practice given local sensitivities, with discussions surrounding shame in upbringing.

Digitally parenting preteens in the UAE: A cross-cultural qualitative study

Luna El Khaldy

Luna is the co-founder and co-host of the Middle East's leading Arabic parenting podcast, Mishbilshibshib. Luna obtained her Master of Science in Psychology, with a focus on Cyberpsychology in 2022. Her thesis, titled "Digitally parenting preteens in the UAE: A cross-cultural qualitative study", explored the gaps in research surrounding digital parenting in the Middle East, uncovered new findings, and proposed future research recommendations. The findings of her study can inform policy makers, psychologists, educators, and coaches in creating the much needed support systems for digital parents.



Luna will be launching a new initiative named "(un)distracted parenting" in the second half of 2023, where she will focus on the challenges parents face, and will provide a platform to present research on the topic to parents, policy makers, and change-makers to raise a new generation of mindful digital citizens. She will also be practicing as a Consciously Digital Coach, helping parents and adolescents find balance in their tech saturated lives by seeking digital wellbeing. Additionally, as a trained Transformational Parenting Coach, and using her CBT training, Luna strives to provide parents with supportive strategies to help them digitally parent their children in the modern era. Her passion for the topic stems from her learnings with her own two adolescent children.

Breaking barriers: Unleashing the potential of an online multi-modal approach in adolescent mental health support

Online platforms provide greater access to mental health support for children. They can receive assistance regardless of their geographical location, eliminating barriers such as distance or transportation. While online talk therapy is convenient and accessible, it does present unique challenges for children and teens. Discrepancies in technological knowledge, intangibility, lack of privacy, difficulties in cognition, and inability in maintaining focus through digital platforms, hinder its effectiveness. The absence of non-verbal cues online and potential misinterpretation of emotions may impede the development of a strong therapeutic alliance, crucial in successful talk therapy.

To overcome these limitations, a multi-modal approach is necessary. The program structure for this approach involves incorporating Cognitive Training, online CBT/Talk Therapy, and Expressive Arts Therapy within a virtual platform, over a structured period, provided by qualified and trained individuals in all modalities of this 'Virtual Therapeutic Program'.

The Cognitive Training component target specific cognitive deficits and challenges. Through interactive exercises, children and teens can improve attention, memory, executive functioning, and overall cognitive development. Online CBT/Talk Therapy sessions are structured to address emotional and behavioural issues. Using secure video conferencing platforms, young individuals can engage in therapy sessions, providing a safe space for expression, exploration of thoughts and emotions, and the development of effective coping strategies.

Expressive Arts Therapy is facilitated through secure AI platforms that allow children and teens to engage in creative activities from the comfort of their own homes. Qualified therapists can guide individuals through art, music, drama, or dance exercises, promoting self-expression and emotional exploration. Participants can create and share their artwork, participate in virtual performances, and engage in expressive activities that foster personal growth and development.

In conclusion, a multi-modal approach that integrates all three approaches addresses the limitations of online talk therapy for children and teens. By utilizing a structured "Virtual Therapeutic Program" we not only evolve with the digital times, but this approach also promotes engagement, yield better results, and fosters positive changes. Such a comprehensive approach significantly enhances accessibility, effectiveness, and overall mental health support for children and teens in the online therapy setting.

Breaking barriers: Unleashing the potential of an online multi-modal approach in adolescent mental health support

Aditi Nath

As a Licensed Psychologist and Cognitive Expert, Aditi Nath specializes in providing Counselling and Cognitive Psychological services to individuals of all ages. Her expertise truly shines when working with emotionally challenged teenagers, children with specific learning delays, ADHD, dyslexia etc, with over seven years of experience in the field of Cognitive Training. Through an empathetic approach, she has helped countless individuals navigate challenging emotional and cognitive obstacles, empowering them to achieve personal growth and improved mental well-being. She holds an MSc. in Mental Health and Psychiatric Research from King's College London. Equipping her with a solid academic foundation and a deep understanding of psychological theories and practices. Additionally, she has experience as a Research Assistant with the original research, exploring VR-based interventions for Paranoid Schizophrenic Patients with IOPPN London, and as a Psychology Assistant with Delirium Patients in St Thomas's Hospital London. Outside of her professional achievements, Aditi Nath is a passionate performing artist. Currently working professionally with the UAE theatre community. This creative outlet not only adds depth to her approach but also encourages connectedness with clients. Aditi Nath is currently The Cognitive Training Director at the Brain Workshop, a franchise of the Global Cognitive Training Network LearningRx (USA). And the Counselling and Cognitive Psychologist at Seed Special Education Centre. She embraces a multi-modal approach at her work, drawing from various psychological modalities to create personalized treatment strategies. This comprehensive method acknowledges the multifaceted nature of individuals. With her unwavering commitment to improving the lives of others and their diverse potential, Aditi Nath applies her energy to ensuring that learning delays and cognitive deficiencies do not hinder her clients and their families from living lives on their terms, equipping them with the tools that will allow all their goals and dreams to be within their grasp.



Breaking barriers: Unleashing the potential of an online multi-modal approach in adolescent mental health support

Zehra Ahmed

Zehra Ahmed is a Senior Research Consultant in organisational psychology at Research Europe working across industries. She has a MSc. in Organisational Social Psychology from the Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science at the London School of Economics (LSE) and MSc. in Education Systems from Birkbeck, University of London. She is interested in the psychosocial development of identity and life transitions in social contexts such as work and school.



Exploring the difference between Digital personality and Personality among GEN Z

In the digital age, GEN Z has grown up surrounded by technology and social media platforms, providing a unique context for personality development and expression. This study explores the difference between GEN Z's digital personality and physical personality traits, and sheds light on the interplay between their online personality and real-life traits. The study begins with an in-depth examination of the concept of personality, highlighting its complexity and the established psychological frameworks for understanding individual traits and behaviours. Building on this, it examines the emergence of digital personality, which encompasses the traits and behaviours specifically exhibited in the digital world. The study addresses issues of authenticity, self-presentation and the extent to which digital personas match or diverge from a person's core personality traits. Drawing on a variety of studies, surveys and psychological research, it highlights the potential implications and challenges of the co-existence of GenZ digital personas. The study also addresses issues of self-esteem, social comparison, psychological well-being and the impact of online interaction on real-life relationships. Understanding these dynamics can help in developing strategies to effectively navigate the digital landscape while promoting healthy self-expression, self-esteem and meaningful connections for the younger generation.

Vinita Ramesh Rao Mane

Ms. Vinita Mane is an experienced and licenced psychologist currently based in the United Arab Emirates. In her career of more than 8 years, she has gained extensive experience in the field of psychology and has contributed significantly to mental health. Currently, Ms. Vinita Mane is a psychologist at My Conscious Mind Mental Health Centre where she provides comprehensive counselling therapy and psychological support to people from diverse backgrounds. In addition, Ms Vinita Mane is a valued faculty and course coordinator at Westford University College, affiliated to Liverpool John Moores University. With a desire to contribute to the scientific community, she is currently pursuing a Ph.D in Psychology in Malaysia.



Exploring the difference between Digital personality and Personality among GEN Z

Bhakti Deshpande

With a background in Psychology and Economics, Bhakti has pursued her Masters in Counseling Psychology, conducting research on “Spiritual Intelligence among Young Adults”. She has been a practicing counselor in India and a lecturer of Psychology in the UAE for the past 6 years. Having worked with more than 250 clients across the globe, she has expertise in family therapy, CBT, Mindfulness, adolescent counseling, and couples therapy. She aims to make people aware of mental wellbeing, delivering a number of workshops and seminars to organizations, schools and colleges on various topics such as stress management, body positivity, self-care and self-love, healthy lifestyle and mental health. Currently, she is working at Westford University College as an Associate Faculty for Psychology subjects.



Examining impacts of a virtual international mentorship program for psychologists

Following the successful weekly mentorship consultation between a psychologist from an APA accredited clinical doctoral program and a Tanzanian psychologist (Feindler & Kimangale, 2019), the awareness of the tremendous need for training and supervision for Tanzanian psychologists was realized. The Tanzanian Mentorship Program (TMP) was developed to enhance and implement CBT strategies and discuss clinical cases while enhancing multicultural competencies about clinical work. Using an internet-based platform, advanced US PsyD graduate students and Master-level Tanzanian psychologists worked virtually together for the academic year. This paper is a description of the form and functioning of this program with highlights on challenges faced in international mentorship. Individual weekly meetings with a focus on individual client consultations have occurred over 4 years. Overall the program held 383 individual mentorship sessions. At the start and end of the mentorship year, mentors (n=21) and mentees (n=17) completed measures including the Evidence Based Practice Attitude Scale (EBPAS: Aarons, 2004) and the California Brief Multicultural Competence Scale (CBMC: Gamst et al., 2004). Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare mentors and mentees on baseline scores. Data from the CBMCs indicated differences where mentors scored significantly higher on multicultural awareness than mentees. There were also differences at baseline on subscales of the EBPAS where mentees reported significantly higher levels of Openness to evidence-based practice as well as Divergence from evidence-based practice in their current practice than mentors. Post-training data will be coded, and paired samples t-tests will be conducted to pre-post changes in each group. Results are discussed with implications for international mentorship, multicultural training for US graduate students, and attitudes towards evidence-based practice considering different cultures.

Subasri Ashok

Subasri Ashok, MSc. is a clinical psychology doctoral candidate pursuing her PsyD in Clinical Psychology at Long Island University, New York. She specialises in trauma work both within her research and clinical work. She has worked in different clinical settings such as Stonybrook University Hospital, Sagamore Psychiatric Centre and Yale Esteem Lab as a clinical psychologist in training. She is currently an intern at Zuckerhillside Hospital specialising in trauma work and DBT with adolescents, young adults and adults with a special focus on women's mental health.

Subasri's extensive knowledge encompasses various fields, demonstrating her commitment to comprehending the intricate inter-relationships among psychology, trauma, mental health, culture, and the global distribution of mental health resources. Her interests lie in complex trauma and international mental health. She has presented at numerous conferences such as ABCT and APA and is involved in multiple international psychology groups.



Examining impacts of a virtual international mentorship program for psychologists

Dr. Eva Feindler

Dr. Eva L. Feindler, Ph.D. is professor of psychology at the Long Island University Doctoral program in Clinical Psychology. As a faculty member of the concentration in High-Risk Family Interventions and as former Director of the Doctoral Program and the Psychological Services Clinic, she is directly involved in programs to help children and families manage their anger and resolve conflict. She received her undergraduate degree in psychology from Mount Holyoke College and her graduate degrees from West Virginia University. Prior to her position at LIU, Dr. Feindler was at Adelphi University where she also directed the graduate program in Applied Behavioral Technology. She has authored or edited several books: Adolescent Anger Control: Cognitive-Behavioral Techniques, Allyn & Bacon, 1987; Adolescent Behavior Therapy Handbook, Springer, 1990; Assessment of Family Violence: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners, APA, 2003; Anger-Related Disorders: A Practitioner's Guide to Comparative Treatments, Springer, 2006 and TAME (Teen Anger Management Education, 2022); numerous articles on the assessment and treatment of parent and child anger. She has conducted training workshops across the US and internationally. She is featured on the Aggression Replacement Training DVD, Research Press, 2003, that presents the various components of Aggression Replacement Training and has presented at APA, ABCT and most recently SEPI conferences. In 2010 she completed a two year post graduate program at the Stephen Mitchell Center for Relational Psychotherapy in NYC and in 2018 she completed a program at Widener University for advanced training in Affirmative Therapy for Transgender Communities. She is a Fellow in Divisions 42 and 12 of APA and in ABCT.



Using digital tools for early intervention in young adults with mental health problems

The onset of mental health issues during adolescence and early adulthood can have profound effects on education, personality, relationships, and day-to-day functioning. In recent times, there has been a concerning increase in mental health issues among young adults, necessitating urgent attention and support. However, due to the stigma and attitudes surrounding mental health, many young adults experiencing mental illness or the onset of mental health issues refuse to seek professional help or support. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the use of technology across various industries, including counseling services, in unprecedented ways. Digital and hybrid pedagogical methods have proven to be highly beneficial in reaching a larger number of adolescents and young adults in need of counseling. Within a digital environment, counselors and therapists aim to empower individuals, detect problems early, and ensure timely treatment and support. The selection and utilization of digital tools in counseling, along with various service settings, have significantly complemented traditional face-to-face therapy.

Case managers and practitioners have successfully intervened early and provided immediate mental health first aid through digital practices. This paper explores the remarkable impact of using digital methods and practices for early intervention in treating mental health issues among young adults. It highlights how digital approaches enhance accessibility and anonymity, facilitate check-ins and detection of problems, and enable timely treatment and support. Furthermore, it discusses the integration of digital practices into various therapeutic approaches, providing examples and success stories.

In conclusion, the use of digital methods and practices for early intervention in treating mental health issues among young adults holds immense potential. By embracing digital platforms and techniques, we can bridge the gap between mental health services and individuals in need, ensuring timely and effective support.

Using digital tools for early intervention in young adults with mental health problems

Dr. Nafees Sultana

Dr. Nafees Sultana is a highly experienced Senior Counselor at the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), specializing in counselling, well-being, and serving individuals of determination. With over 20 years of dedicated service in this field, she has made a significant impact on the lives of countless individuals. Dr. Sultana holds a doctorate in Psychology and a Licensed Psychologist (Social Therapist) recognized by the Community Development Authority, Dubai. Her expertise lies in counselling university students, their families, and students of determination, demonstrating her commitment to fostering their emotional and psychological growth. Within her role at HCT, Dr. Sultana assumes primary responsibility for conducting personal counselling, guidance and advice to students on an individual or group basis. She utilizes counselling sessions, student development workshops, special events, campaigns, and innovative initiatives to enhance student awareness and engagement. Dr. Sultana firmly believes in recommending the most comprehensive range of special accommodations and support for students of determination. As a counselling psychologist and well-being coach, she ensures that each student, including those academically at risk, receives tailored support systems to create an optimal learning environment. Dr. Sultana's expertise and contributions extend beyond her institution. She has been a featured presenter at various international conferences and published articles in the field.



How emotions are memed: The role of disgust in humour and online content sharing

Disgust evolved for pathogen detection and has been co-opted to detect social and moral violations, protecting both the body and the in-group from contamination. Laughter facilitates social bonding, and functions as a signal of environmental safety, whilst humour occurs when one's expectations are violated in a benign setting. In-group environments are the safest environments hence laughter must signal this. Memes are a recent cultural phenomenon that may play a key role in social bonding, particularly online.

Hypotheses include that disgust-based memes will be perceived as funnier than memes that elicit other emotions, disgust as a feature of the meme will predict funniness, and there will be a reduction in negative emotions from seeing the premise to seeing the punchline. Sharing target research is exploratory owing to a contrasting predictions of ingroup preference and familial power dynamics.

Participants viewed memes and rated them on various emotions when presented with the meme's premise, and again after having seen the punchline. They are then asked to evaluate their funniness and other aspects of the meme, and to whom they would share the meme.

Results show that disgust-associated memes are no more frequently perceived to be funny vs other emotion-associated memes. Moreover, memes that are sent to friends are funnier than memes sent to other kin, or non-kin. There was no effect of emotion. Finally, there is a small but significant reduction in negative emotions from seeing the premise to the punchline of a meme.

There may be no special role of specific emotions in humour. The disgust stimuli used, however, were perhaps not social enough. There is a specific role of humour sharing in non-kin in-group bonding – further research should be conducted into the relationship of humour-sharing online in the context of co-rumination. An increase in positive emotion coupled with the decrease in negative emotion may associated with humour. A context switch from threat to play may also explain why negative emotion was reduced but not abolished when seeing the punchline. Play in adults and online itself is understudied and future research should explore this.

Ramandeep Mungur

Ramandeep is a doctoral student at UCL researching disgust in the social sphere. His interests include: Disgust, intergroup interactions, humour, morality, evolutionary psychology, social neuroscience, and psychoneuroimmunology. He has recently co-authored a chapter in the handbook of morality with Lasana Harris, and is also studying disgust in a VR gaming context.



How emotions are memed: The role of disgust in humour and online content sharing

Haruna Doi

Haruna has recently graduated with a first class honours her BSc. in Psychology at UCL. Her interests include: Social Psychology, Risk, Decision-Making, Cognitive Neuroscience, and Bias.



Prof. Sophie Scott

Professor Sophie Scott's research originates in the neurobiology of speech and sound processing, where she has made fundamental contributions to our understanding of how models of auditory processing from non-human primate neurophysiology and neuroanatomy can be used to guide our understanding of the human speech processing. She also established the first systematic approach to the neurobiology of non-verbal emotional expressions, which resulted in an influential paper on the ways that amygdala damage affects the perception of fear and anger from the face and the voice. She has contributed to the fourfold increase in laughter related scientific publications since 2005 (source: Web of Science). More recently, she has been emphasising the important of studying the human voice in a social context.



Professor Scott was elected as a Fellow the Academy of Medical Sciences in 2012, and Fellow of the British Academy in 2016. In 2015 she gave the Physiology Society prize lecture. In 2017 she gave the Royal Institution's Christmas Lectures. In 2020 she was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the Queen's Birthday Honours, for services to Neuroscience.

How emotions are memed: The role of disgust in humour and online content sharing

Prof. Lasana Harris

Prof. Harris' research uses a social neuroscience approach to explore the neural correlates of person perception, prejudice, dehumanization, anthropomorphism, social learning, social emotions, empathy, and punishment. This research addresses questions such as: How do we see people as less than human, and non human objects as human beings? How do we modulate affective responses to people? How do we decide right from wrong? By combining social psychology, affective and cognitive neuroscience with philosophy of mind, developmental psychology, evolutionary anthropology, economics, law and policy, this research focus is a comprehensive strategy to explore human behavior.



Humanized perception is malleable because people can take away human attributes like mental life from other people, but imbue mental lives to animals and objects that presumably lack minds (like ours); people make internal attributions to objects for behavior just as readily as they do to people. Prof. Harris explores the separate yet overlapping neural networks involved when people make attributions to people, animals and objects. Moreover the lab examines the affective correlates of these processes and their subsequent influence on helping, punishment, and social decision-making.



Innovating boundaries: How technology saved my psychological research

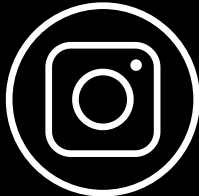
Adaptability and technology, terms that often go hand-in-hand - terms that most definitely define my Ph.D. journey. Starting a research degree during a global pandemic, I knew I would have to overcome certain struggles; however, what I did not anticipate was how many opportunities it would grant me as well. With a focus on a forensic psychology perspective, this presentation highlights the implication of the acceleration of technology and acceptance of digital research practices in psychology, and how this culminated in a viable, collaborative, and resilient start to a career in academia and psychology in the region.

Haya AlAssaf

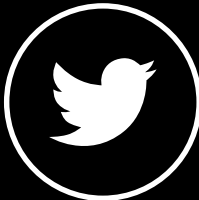
Haya specialises in the integration of forensic psychology, social cognition, law, and policy. Currently pursuing a Ph.D. at University College London, she also serves as an associate in the risk, forensic, and compliance practice at Ankura Consulting. Haya's expertise spans multiple disciplines, reflecting her dedication to understanding the intricate connections between psychology, society, and the legal system.



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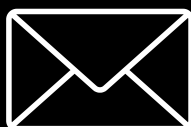
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