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ΨPCD

International Psychology Conference Dubai presents

Connectedness in a **post-COVID** world.

Book of Proceedings

2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 FOREWORD**
- 5 AGENDA**
- 7 KEYNOTE
SPEAKERS**
- 10 PANELS**
- 14 WORKSHOPS**
- 18 CLINICAL, HEALTH AND
POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY
STREAM**
- 26 ORGANIZATIONAL AND
EDUCATIONAL STREAM**
- 36 MEET THE
TEAM**

FOREWORD

Hello everyone, and welcome to the 8 th International Psychology Conference Dubai (IPCD). On behalf of the IPCD committee, we are proud to bring you our first hybrid conference (online on Friday 8 th October, and in-person on Saturday 9 th October). As the world transitions from a largely online, remote existence to more face-to-face interactions, IPCD continues to be in awe of the support that psychologists and mental health professionals have provided to their local, national and international communities. The after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to ripple across the world, and psychologists across a range of specialties persist in their provision of research, resources and assistance to individuals, groups and entities.

The committee wants to express our utmost appreciation for the team members who have helped us behind the scenes. Madeleine Harling again (like in 2020) provided technical online support for Friday, whilst Heriot-Watt B.Psychology graduate Kriti Kothari supported us both online and in-person, including managing our social media marketing campaign.

Thank you to our speakers, who brought an insightful array of online presentations and panels as well as in-person workshops – providing some of the earliest opportunities for face-to-face professional development since the start of the pandemic.

A big thank you to our sponsor PSI Middle East, and to Heriot-Watt University Dubai Campus (HWUD) – our home since our inauguration way back in 2013. We also want to thank the British Psychological Society (BPS) for accrediting our conference for CPD hours. Finally, thank you to all our attendees, for your continued support of IPCD and our mission to bring you high-quality, practice-focused professional development. Be sure to stay connected with us through LinkedIn ([International Psychology Conference Dubai group](#)), Facebook ([@ipcd.psychology](#)), Twitter ([@PsychDXB](#)) and Instagram ([@ipcd_psychology_conf_dxb](#)), and of course, our home website of www.psych-me.com.

DR. ALIA ALSERKAL

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

DR. ÇAKIL AGNEW

Assistant Professor of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai Campus

DR. KIRIN HILLIAR

Assistant Professor of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai Campus

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THE ΨPCD AGENDA

FRIDAY, 8th OCTOBER

Time	Clinical, Health and Positive Psychology Stream	Organizational and Educational Stream
8.45 - 9.00am	Conference Log-in	
9.00 - 9.15am	Opening Session	
9.15 - 9.45am	Dancing in the Dark: The Role of Autonomy and Following the Steps of the Client (Dr Chasity O'Connell)	How Ontological Coaching can promote connectedness and resilience in a post-COVID world (Mrs Roberta Pagliarulo)
9.50 - 10.20am	Individual and systemic factors that impact "sense of belonging" (Ms Reema Baniabbasi)	AI and personality assessment in the workplace: The future of personality assessments in a post-COVID world (Mrs Nashwa Tantawy)
10.25 - 10.55am	Burnout and Ethical Practices of Mental Health Professionals (Ms Shubhika Agarwal & Dr Ananya Sinha)	Key competencies in the reshaped world of work (Amanda White)
11.00 - 12.00pm	Keynote: Preventing suicide through harnessing connection (Professor Rory O' Connor)	
12.00 - 12.30pm	Lunch Break	
12.30 - 1.00pm	The (urgent) role of connecting with nature for greater subjective wellbeing (Dr. Louise Lambert)	Coaching competency frameworks: How coaching skills and competencies are perceived by practicing coaches and coaching psychologists (Michael Saint & Dr Dasha Grajfoner)
13.05 - 13.35pm	Maintaining Social Distance and Social Connectedness by Using Mindfulness: Protective Factors for Wellbeing during COVID Pandemic (Dr. Rizwana Amin)	Autism parenting: Increasing connectedness in challenging circumstances (Mrs. Monica Beck)
13.40 - 14.40pm	Panel Discussion: COVID-19, Telehealth and Art Therapy in the Arabian Gulf (Mrs Natalia Gomez Carlier, Sara Powell, Mariam Halawani, Michelle Dixon & Alan Weber)	Panel Discussion: The role of coaching psychology in a post-COVID world (Facilitator: Silvia King; Panellists: Dr Clare Beckett-McInroy, Dr Lucy Bolton, Dr Dasha Grajfoner, & Dr Guek-Nee Ke)
14.40 - 15.10pm	Afternoon Break	
15.10 - 16.10pm	Keynote: Evidence-based practice in I/O psychology: Not (quite) there yet (Professor Rob Briner)	
16.15 - 16.45pm	Social Motivation, Mental health, and Autism (Dr Mary Stewart)	Fostering Learner Engagement and Establishing Connectedness in Online Learning (Dr. Randa Soliman)
16.50 - 17.20pm	Correlates of Psychological Testing Variables with Institutional Violence and Length of Stay in a Maximum Security Forensic Hospital (Dr Sami Farhat)	How are academics thought of by society? Social representations and perceptions of academics among different social and professional groups (Dr Mioara Cristea, Ms Farah Abdulrahman, Mr Reece Docherty, & Dr Louise Delicato)
17.25 - 17.35pm	Closing Session	

THE Ψ PCD AGENDA

SATURDAY, 9th OCTOBER

Time

Workshops

9.00am - 12:00pm

Grief counselling (Dr. Ananya Sinha)

Working with children and families to promote attachment, nurture and connection through play-based therapeutic interventions and strategies (Esra Uzsayilir & Sara Callaghan)

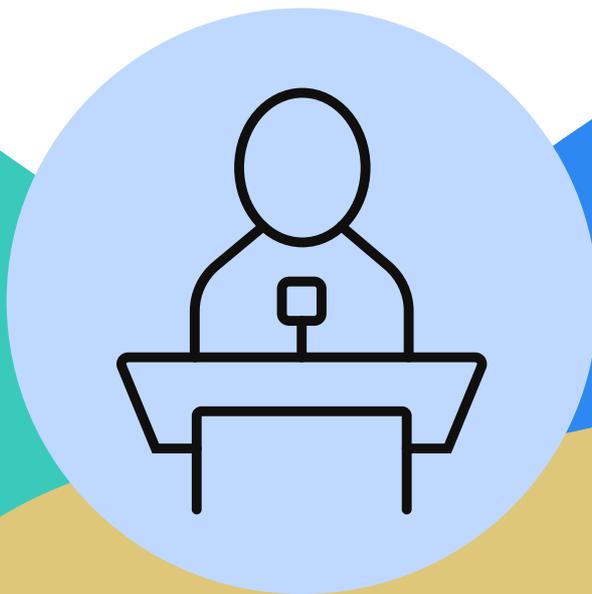
1.00pm - 4:00pm

LEGO® SERIOUS® PLAY® for Positive Psychology (Nicola Barrington)

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KEYNOTES



OUR KEYNOTES

PROFESSOR RORY O'CONNOR

Professor of Health Psychology at University of Glasgow



Rory O'Connor PhD FAcSS is Professor of Health Psychology at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, President of the International Association for Suicide Prevention and a Past President of the International Academy of Suicide Research. Rory leads the Suicidal Behaviour Research Laboratory (Web: www.suicideresearch.info; Twitter: @suicideresearch) at Glasgow, one of the leading suicide/self-harm research groups internationally. He has published extensively in the field of suicide and self-harm, specifically concerning the psychological processes which precipitate suicidal behaviour and self-harm. He is also co-author/editor of several books and is author of *When It is Darkest. Why People Die by Suicide and What We Can Do To Prevent It* (2021).

Title: Preventing suicide through harnessing connection

In this presentation, I will draw from my new book *When It Is Darkest: Why People Die by Suicide and What We Can Do To Prevent It* (Vermilion, 2021). My aim in the book is to get to the heart of this most tragic of human outcomes, challenging myths and misunderstandings as well as bringing together the personal and the professional. Suicide and self-harm are major public health concerns with complex aetiologies which encompass a multifaceted array of risk and protective factors.

In this presentation, I will dispel some of the myths associated with suicide as well as describing the Integrated Motivational-Volitional (IMV) Model of Suicidal Behaviour (O'Connor & Kirtley, 2018). The IMV model outlines the pathways to the emergence of suicidal ideation and the transition from suicidal thoughts to acts of suicide. This tripartite model maps the relationship between background factors and trigger events, and the development of suicidal ideation/intent through to suicidal behaviour. Crucially, the IMV model identifies clinical targets for treatment. As I have done in *When It Is Darkest*, I will present an overview of some of our clinical, experimental and intervention studies to illustrate how psychological, physiological and social factors increase suicide risk and what we all can do to tackle suicide.

OUR KEYNOTES

PROFESSOR ROB BRINER

*Professor of Organizational Psychology at
Queen Mary, University of London*

Rob Briner is Professor of Organizational Psychology at Queen Mary, University of London and also co-founder and Scientific Director of the Center for Evidence-Based Management. His research has focused on several topics including well-being, emotions, stress, ethnicity, the psychological contract, absence from work, motivation, work-nonwork and everyday work behaviour.



Title: Evidence-Based I-O Psychology: Not There Yet

Evidence-based practice is now well established in several fields including medicine, nursing, and social policy. This article seeks to promote discussion of whether the practice of industrial-organizational (I-O) psychologists is evidence based and what is needed to make I-O psychology an evidence-based discipline. It first reviews the emergence of the concept of evidence-based practice. Second, it considers the definitions and features of evidence-based practice, including evidence-based management. It then assesses whether

I-O psychology is itself an evidence-based discipline by identifying key characteristics of evidence-based practice and judging the extent these characterize I-O psychology. Fourth, some key strategies for promoting the use of evidence in I-O psychology are considered: practice-oriented research and systematic reviews. Fifth, barriers to practicing evidence-based I-O psychology are identified along with suggestions for overcoming them. Last is a look to the future of an evidence-based I-O psychology that plays an important role in helping consultants, in-house I-O psychologists, managers, and organizations become more evidence based.



International Psychology Conference Dubai presents

PANELS



OUR PANELS

Title: COVID-19, Telehealth and Art Therapy in the Arabian Gulf

This panel will discuss the impact of COVID-19 in the development of art therapy in the region and identify both the challenges and advantages that this global pandemic brought to art therapists practicing in the UAE and Qatar. The panelists will discuss the use of telehealth and other mediums to improve art therapy services in both inpatient and outpatient settings.

The panel will reflect on regional developments and identify both challenges and advantages the pandemic brought to mental health practices in both UAE and Qatar. The panelists will present differing needs and postures in both inpatient and outpatient services. The pandemic evidenced a need for telehealth, became a springboard into online services, and created an opportunity to increase mental health access. Cultural observations around confidentiality, stigma, trauma, family dynamics, and spirituality will be addressed. Within a hospital setting in Qatar (from a frontline perspective), new regulations in response to the pandemic required adaptation in the workplace and contributed to heightened professional stress and anxiety. In addition, similar challenges were observed and experienced by patients.

Unexpected outcomes resulting from the pandemic included: issues around stigma, openness from patients and families, increased investment in the therapeutic process. COVID-19 and telehealth has brought increased awareness around cultural competence that needs to be addressed through ongoing research. Initial recommendations and future areas of study will be highlighted. This panel expands on findings reported in a published article (Gomez Carlier et al., 2020) and discusses how the changes during COVID have impacted services in the post-COVID world.

Keywords: telehealth; art therapy; culture; Arabian Gulf; COVID-19; pandemic

Area of Psychology: art therapy, cyberpsychology



THE PANELISTS

Title: COVID-19, Telehealth and Art Therapy in the Arabian Gulf



Mariam El Halawani | Art Psychotherapist MAAT, ATR

Mariam El Halawani, MAAT, ATR Mariam is a US trained art psychotherapist and has an MA in Art Therapy from New York University, 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.

Sara Powell | Founder of ATIC, MAAT, AThR

Sara is from the UK and is the founder of ATIC. She has an MA specializing in Art Psychotherapy from LASALLE University Singapore. She is a registered member of the association for Creative Arts therapists in Australia, New Zealand and Asia (ANZACATA). Sara has over 10 years clinical experience and has provided Art Psychotherapy to children, adolescents, adults, families, and has facilitated a variety of groups.



Natalia Carlier | Registered Board-Certified Art Therapist

Natalia Gomez Carlier, earned her degree in Psychology from Universidad de Los Andes, a Masters 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. She was Founder and President of the Colombian Art Therapy Association, taught at Universities and frequently presents at International Mental Health Conferences.

Dr. Alan Weber | Professor of English

Dr. Alan S. Weber, PhD, has taught the Medical and Health Humanities—including the history, philosophy and sociology of medicine and Islamic Medical Ethics at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar for the past fourteen years. He is the author of a widely used textbook on the history of science and medicine, 19th Century Science (2000). He has directed a number of narrative medicine and medical humanities projects in Qatar at the national and institutional level



Michelle Dixon | Art Therapist, MAAT AThR

Michelle Dixon, MAAT AThR has worked as an Art Therapist over the last 10 years, completing a Masters of Art Therapy at La Trobe University, Australia. Registered with the Australia, New Zealand and Asia Creative Arts Association (ANZACATA) and American Art Therapy Association (AATA). Working across family violence, adult palliative care and bereavement. Specializing in pediatric hospital settings including Oncology and Hematology.

OUR PANELS

Title: The role of coaching psychology in a post-COVID world

Coaches and coaching psychologists around the globe have been in a unique position to support individual clients, teams, leaders and entire organisations through the vast array of challenges created by the COVID pandemic (e.g., Kniffin et al., 2021; Okabe-Miyamoto & Lyubomirsky, 2021). At the same time, they also had to adapt to a rapidly changing environment, while researchers began to explore the various roles coaching can play during and after the pandemic (e.g., Jarosz, 2021; Panchal et al., 2020; van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2021).

This panel aims to bring together both recent research as well as practical challenges encountered by researchers and practitioners in the Middle East, Malaysia and the UK. From the perspective of the pandemic as a watershed moment, the panelists will explore the past, present and future of coaching and coaching psychology research and practice. Specific topics to be addressed are:

- The mental health and wellbeing challenges of the pandemic brought positive psychology coaching centre stage, especially coaching for wellbeing and resilience (e.g., Rashid & McGrath, 2020; van Nieuwerburgh et al., 2021; Waters et al., 2021). What are the role and contributions of coaching psychology in the post-COVID recovery?
- New ways of working created a myriad of challenges for organisations like leadership, team cohesion, coordination and culture (Kniffin et al., 2021). New challenges like “Zoom fatigue” (Fosslien & West Duffy, 2020) and “health anxiety” (Trogakos, Chawla, & McCarthy, 2020) have become part of coaching conversations, while the work-from-home (WFH) effects seem to differ depending on individual circumstances like personality, work or family context (e.g., Cornell et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Wei, 2020). How can coaches and coaching psychologists support individuals and organisations in this new way of working, and how can practitioners and researchers collaborate to create an evidence base that informs practice?
- Practitioners had to adapt to a virtual coaching environment. What are the coaching skills and competencies required for this new way of working with clients? Technology fatigue, ethical issues and expanded exposure to cultural diversity (e.g., Dodds & Grajfoner, 2018; Kanatouri, 2020; King & van Nieuwerburgh, 2020) are just some of the issues coaching practice and research had to address. The panel will discuss how this impacts on coaching and coaching psychology training, and which skills and competencies are coming to the fore.



THE PANELISTS

Title: The role of coaching psychology in a post-COVID world



Clare Beckett-McInroy
(EdD, ICF MCC & Registered Mentor Coach, EMCC MP & ESIA)

Dr Clare Beckett-McInroy is passionate about co-creating positive transformation in partnership with people & organisations. Her work spans culture transformation, executive & board coaching, EDI, systemic team coaching, bespoke leadership development, 360 psychometrics, instructional design & experiential contextually based blended learning, performance management, & research. She is Founder of BECKETT McINROY CONSULTANCY and #CoachME Coaching Model, including #TAP360 team level profiling tool.

Dr. Guek-Nee Ke | Assistant Professor

Dr Ke Guek Nee is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Malaysia. She obtained her PhD in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from the National University of Malaysia (UKM). Dr Ke is a chartered member of the British Psychological Society (BPS), member of the American Psychological Association (APA) and Malaysian Psychological Association (PSIMA).



Dr. Dasha Grajfoner | Assistant Professor and Director of Coaching Lab

Dr Dasha Grajfoner is Coaching Lab Director and Assistant Professor in Psychology at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh. With a PhD in Psychology (University of Edinburgh), Dasha is a Registered Coaching Psychologist (BPS), Chartered Psychologist, Chartered Scientist, Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, Accredited Coaching Psychologist (ISCP) and a Past Chair of the Special Group in Coaching Psychology.

Dr. Lucy Bolton | Chartered Occupational Psychologist (BPS/HPCP)

Dr Lucy Bolton is an Assistant Professor at Heriot Watt University Dubai leading the MSc Business Psychology / Coaching degrees. She is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist with the British Psychological Society, a Certified Business Coach and a trained user in occupational psychometrics. Lucy has a background in research and consultancy in the areas of change management, career development and work values.



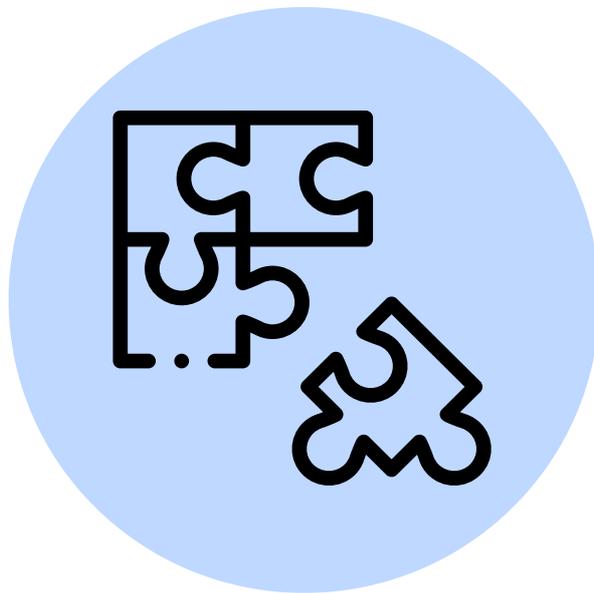
Silvia King | Positive Psychology Coach

Silvia King is a positive psychology coach and enthusiastic empowerer of people. She holds an MSc in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology (MAPPCCP), an MA in business management and is a graduate member of the British Psychological Society (MBPsS). Her coaching work started in cross-cultural corporate communications. Today, with her pragmatic approach to coaching, she helps people and teams to thrive, including through workshops and trainings.

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WORKSHOPS



OUR WORKSHOPS

LEGO® SERIOUS® PLAY® for Positive Psychology - A meaningful interaction that increases our well-being, positive emotions and connectedness

LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® is a visual and interactive tool that can be used in multiple ways to explore social connectedness in a post-COVID world. As positive psychology focuses on the development and enhancement of positive aspects such as well-being, emotions and physical health, LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® is useful as a stimulating tool. LEGO® can be used to implement positive psychology interventions for positive storytelling about being connected in these challenging times.

When doing this, we may expect a positive impact on the following outcome variables:
Intrinsic motivation: Ryan and Deci (2008) post two fundamental types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Using components of play is frequently associated with fun, thus potentially tapping into one's intrinsic motivation.

NICOLA BARRINGTON

Nicola is a Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology Consultant, providing research-based coaching, training and consultancy for educational, governmental and commercial establishments.

She has a MSc (Dist) in Applied Coaching Psychology and Positive Psychology from the University of East London. Her dissertation, which investigated the impact of a school-based resilience programme on student anxiety, depression and mental toughness, has been published in Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology.

She is also a Certified Positive Psychology Practitioner/ Nicola is a Professional Certified Coach (PCC) with the International Coaching Federation (ICF) and a Senior Practitioner with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC).



OUR WORKSHOPS

Grief counselling

Grieving allows us to heal, to remember with love rather than pain. It is a sorting process. One by one, you let go of things that are gone and you mourn for them.

One by one, you take hold of the things that have become a part of who you are and build again. —Rachael Naomi Remen.

Grief counselling refers to counseling offered to individuals who have suffered a loss, typically the death of a loved one, in order to help the bereaved through the process of mourning and recovery. The workshop will help develop the knowledge, attitude and skills required for grief counselling.

Learning outcomes:

- Familiarised with the relation between attachment, loss and the experience of grief
- Understand the mourning process
- Familiarised with the goals of grief counselling
- Familiarised with the procedures and useful techniques of grief counselling
- Familiarised with the special considerations of grief counselling
- Familiarised with the Trauma Informed Response to COVID 19 grief and loss

DR. ANANYA SINHA

Dr. Ananya Sinha is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist with over 10 years of experience. She is an International Affiliate Member of the American Psychological Association (APA) and a former Assistant Professor of Psychology at Christ University, India. She pursued her M.Phil. in Clinical psychology from the Institute of Human Behavior and Allied Sciences (IHBAS) and her Ph.D. from the prestigious Department of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, Institute of national importance, India. Her PhD topic was ethical practice among mental health practitioners, based on which she developed a training manual on ethics. She has extensively worked with multicultural clients and is specialized in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, Trauma focussed work, Couple therapy, and LGBT affirmative therapy.



OUR WORKSHOPS

Working with children and families to promote attachment, nurture and connection through play-based therapeutic interventions and strategies

A workshop suitable for psychologists, therapists and educational professionals working with children and families who have experienced trauma, disrupted attachment relationships and/or where there are parental safeguarding concerns. There is no doubt that Covid-19 has changed family life with serious implications; school closures, increased anxiety and health fears alongside financial challenges, have placed families under high levels of stress, making them vulnerable to relationship breakdowns and mental health difficulties. Enhancing the child-caregiver relationship is frequently a key goal of practitioners and professionals working with young children and families.

Attachment theory offers a major developmental paradigm for understanding children's experiences in terms of the implications for relating and learning later in life. Attachment-based interventions use a theoretical understanding of attachment to improve family relationships through increasing parental responsiveness, caregiver-child attunement and the child's sense of emotional safety and security. This workshop will offer an introduction to the principles underlying play therapy and the appropriate use of techniques in the play therapy tool-kit.

EZRA UZSAYILIR

Esra is a UK trained Educational Psychologist who has experience working with children and young people from 0-18 years. She qualified as an Educational Psychologist in 2009 from The University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. Esra supports children and families with a wide range of concerns from learning difficulties to social, emotional and behavioral needs.



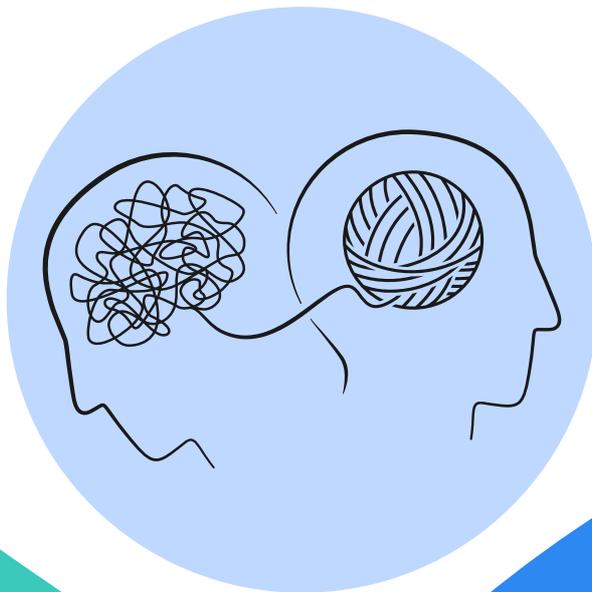
SARA CALLAGHAN

Sara Callaghan originally began her career working across inner city schools in special education needs and behaviour management. She gained a huge insight into how certain circumstances, issues and insecurities experienced by many children and young people profoundly impact their life. This sparked a true passion which has led to over 9 years working within a range of educational settings as a proponent for social and emotional wellbeing in education.

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CLINICAL, HEALTH AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY STREAM



DR. CHASITY O' CONNELL

Dr. O'Connell is a professor at American University of Sharjah (AUS) and a licensed clinician (in the USA and UAE) at the Thrive Wellbeing Centre. She has a doctorate in psychology (USA), a masters in psychological science (USA), and a masters in counseling (USA). She has authored publications on social media and psychological well-being, psychological well-being in the UAE, and the practice of telehealth in the UAE. She is NBCC board-certified in the USA and also conducts research on topics related to psychological well-being, social media, parenting stress and depression and anxiety.



DANCING IN THE DARK: THE ROLE OF AUTONOMY AND FOLLOWING THE STEPS OF THE CLIENT

The quality of the therapeutic relationship and alliance play a major role in influencing positive therapeutic outcomes (Norcross & Lambert, 2011). It is precisely the unfolding of a supportive, validating, and connective therapeutic experience that characterizes good therapy. At the same time, the research is dynamic and complex on identifying specific factors that facilitate this therapeutic alliance due to the synergistic effect between these relationship variables (Norcross, 2010). One of the most important and often overlooked factors is that of the role of the client: “it is the client, more so than the therapist or technique, who makes therapy work. The client’s abilities to use whatever is offered surpass any differences that might exist in techniques or approaches” (Bohart & Tallman, 2010, p. 94).

Despite the importance of the client, there is often an under-emphasis on client factors and characteristics, and an over-emphasis on therapist role, technique, and theory (Bohart & Tallman, 2010). As a result, the self-healing capacity of the client may often go unharnessed in therapy as a side-effect of a therapist-and-theory (or intervention)-centric emphasis in therapy. One construct worth exploring as a tool of eliciting client involvement is that of autonomy. Autonomy—which concerns the degree to which the choices and decisions made are of one’s own volition—is one of three basic psychological needs and is an integral part of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Reeve, 2015). SDT is a wide-ranging collection of mini-theories aimed at understanding human behavior and motivation.

SDT research has investigated themes ranging from identifying what factors help children eat their vegetables (Shim, Kim, & Lee, 2016), to increasing workplace performance (Howard, Gagne, Morin, & Van den Broeck, 2016), to engaging students in schools (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, and Rosseel, 2012), and supporting people to quit smoking (Williams, McGregor, Sharp, Kouides, Levesque, Ryan, & Deci, 2006), reducing drinking, and increase physical activity (Keeler, Skidmore, Leenstra, MacDonald, & Stewart, 2019). All of these are incredibly health-supportive and resilience-building themes and work to promote a supportive therapeutic relationship. For this presentation, I will briefly introduce the concepts of relatedness, competence, and autonomy, delve deeper into the role of autonomy in the therapy, as well as explore practical ways to incorporate this concept into the therapeutic relationship.

REEMA BANIABBASI

Reema Baniabbasi is an Emirati US-trained counseling psychologist at The Psychiatry & Therapy Centre, a columnist at Sail E-Magazine, and an expert advisory board member at Takalam and Generation Unpack in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. She is also a poet with English publications in literary journals.



INDIVIDUAL AND SYSTEMIC FACTORS THAT IMPACT "SENSE OF BELONGING"

Sense of belonging refers to the psychological experience of feeling connected to a place or a group, feeling that one has a role to serve in that group or place, and feels accepted in that group (Raman, 2014). Attempts to limit the spread of COVID19 have brought about challenges in maintaining community connections some of which may remain after the pandemic has passed (Okabe-Miyamoto & Lyubomirsky, 2021). Research indicates that connection with community and fostering a culture of mutual support are key in promoting resilience in the face of collective trauma and crisis (Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness, 2019). Revisiting what the literature from multiple disciplines reveal about what impacts people's sense of belonging in a place or a group would help to inform what individuals, families, community centers, workplaces, and governments can do to foster it during and post-pandemic.

SHUBHIKA AGARWAL

Shubhika Agarwal: MSc (Counselling Psychology), BA (Psychology).

Shubhika Agarwal is a counseling psychologist and teacher based in India. Her works include providing therapy sessions to individuals dealing with issues of anxiety, depression, workplace stress, interpersonal concerns, grief, and other mental health concerns.



Ms. Agarwal believes in forming a collaborative relationship with the client and enjoys working on her research in her free time. She is also associated with India based mental health organization called Pause for Perspective. Currently, she is in the process of getting trained in different therapeutic modalities and believes in the process of continuous learning.

BURNOUT AND ETHICAL PRACTICES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Background: Burnout has become a growing concern amongst mental health professionals (MHPs) during the COVID-19 pandemic. It typically arises due to prolonged stress and leads to emotional exhaustion, detachment from job, and a sense of lack of accomplishment (Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Hence, concern arises about the ethical implications associated with practicing during this experience.

Aim: This qualitative study aims to explore the impact of burnout on the ethical practices of mental health professionals in India.

Method: Around 1000 individuals pan India were approached through an online medium. 127 individuals responded and were screened for burnout and ten participants were selected for the study who fulfilled all the inclusion criteria. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed and expert validated for the purpose of this study. Participants were interviewed and data was transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results: Despite the availability of professional ethics guidelines, ethical violations often emerge unintentionally during therapy practice due to the pervasive nature of burnout. The prominent ethical areas that participants seemed to be struggling with in this time are a sense of competence in their practice, ability to maintain regular records, forming an effective therapeutic alliance, and areas of confidentiality.

Conclusion: It becomes apparent that burnout is a reality and interferes with the clinical effectiveness of MHPs and can even lead to ethical misconduct. It becomes important to support clinician well-being through a person-centered workplace and adequate training facilities. **Keywords:** burnout, ethical practices, mental health professional, psychotherapy, covid 19, counseling

Relation of the topic to the conference theme: Online modality is here to stay and is a new emergent form of therapeutic connectedness in a post covid world. Hence, it becomes important to be aware of the possible ethical issues that may arise due to the increased workload imposed by online modality.

DR. LOUISE LAMBERT

Dr. Louise Lambert is a Canadian psychologist, clinical supervisor (College of Alberta Psychologists), researcher, author of the first positive psychology textbook in the MENA region, program developer, and professor with 20 years experience in mental health, higher education, and healthcare. Her expertise is in positive psychology and the empirical strategies used to attain greater sustainable subjective wellbeing not only for individuals, but employees, teachers and students alike. Her work includes the positive education programs at Dubai College and Kuwait's Al Nowair Foundation. She is the resident podcast host of "A world of wellbeing", a partnership between Gallup and the Global Wellbeing Initiative. She is the Editor of the Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology in Dubai, UAE.



THE (URGENT) ROLE OF CONNECTING WITH NATURE FOR GREATER SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING

We don't often include the words happiness and sustainability in the same sentence; after all, having to forgo a Hummer for a bicycle doesn't seem like fun. Yet, happiness is tied to climate change; but, how do we make individuals want to take on more sustainable lifestyles and do so with joy?

Research is pointing to the role nature plays in our subjective wellbeing: the more we connect with, notice, appreciate and feel a sense of closeness with nature, we become happier, less stressed, and kinder. In fact, the evidence shows we connect with nature as we do with other humans and its disappearance affects us greatly. Nature connectedness (Capaldi et al., 2014) plays a large role in life satisfaction. Yet, we are losing this connection with nature as a result of our urban lifestyles and the loss of nature altogether.

The effects of climate change on mental health are growing, in part, for this reason. The impact of extreme weather on post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicides is documented (Burke et al., 2018; Clayton, 2020; Hayes et al., 2018; Lai et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2020; Manning & Clayton, 2018). New forms of mental distress are also rising: ecoanxiety, helplessness and dread regarding climate change, alongside solastalgia, the distress and isolation generated by the loss of nature's comforts (Albrecht, 2011; Clayton, 2020).

More than interventions to deal with the psychological effects of climate change is the need to motivate individuals and societies towards adopting new lifestyles. From consuming less and entertaining new forms of social organization, i.e., circular economy, collective housing, socio-political action, remote work, PPIs designed to make people excited and willing to adopt new behaviors are needed as the current view of sustainability implies duty. Such a lifestyle will also require us to connect with one another differently too. But, this assumes there is nature to be had. Positive psychologists need to expand their interventions to include natural settings and act to promote and protect nature in urban and rural areas, as well as workplaces and homes. They must adopt an ecological approach to effectively prescribe a complete state of wellbeing, which has been divorced from the natural world so far.

DR. RIZWANA AMIN

Dr. Rizwana Amin serving as Associate Professor in Department of Professional Psychology Bahria university Islamabad. She has experience of 9 years for teaching and research at undergraduate and post graduate level. Currently supervising 4 PhD scholars.



She is an active researcher and has 31 publications on her credit. Moreover, she has participated national and international conferences. Her area of interest is clinical psychology, health psychology, positive psychology, psychometrics, aggression and violent extremism.

MAINTAINING SOCIAL DISTANCE AND SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS BY USING MINDFULNESS: PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR WELLBEING DURING COVID PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted life worldwide. Globally, governments have attempted to slow the spread of the disease by promoting "social distancing" guidelines. Physical separation decreases the spread of the virus, yet the practice of physical distancing inherently limits people's in-person social interactions, which may narrow their sense of social connection, leading to a negative affect on wellbeing.

The present study is about maintaining connections while distancing to protect the psychological well-being of individuals. By using convenient sampling technique 400 participants (Male & Female) were approached through online survey. Social connectedness scale (Lee & Robbins, 1995), Social Distance Scale (Prachthauser, et al., 2020), Mental Health Inventory (Veil & Ware, 1983) & Mindfulness Scale, (Baer et al, 2006) were used to collect data. Findings of the study suggested that mindfulness is essential in maintaining social distance and social connectedness to regulate psychological wellbeing, social activities and good family functioning during and post COVID.

DR. MARY STEWART

I am a Reader in Psychology. I lead the social interaction, mental health and wellbeing lab at Heriot-Watt University. I am interested in identifying which factors are related to mental health and wellbeing and how we can best support autistic individuals at any age.

My interests lie in understanding the social and cognitive barriers to accessing the social world – for instance access to social support, education, employment and healthcare, and in identifying the most appropriate supports for individuals.



SOCIAL MOTIVATION, MENTAL HEALTH, AND AUTISM

Background: Autistic people often face barriers to social participation. Differences in social motivation are thought to be central to an autism diagnosis, and to the conceptualisation of autistic traits, however, this construct is not clearly operationalised and constructed (1). It is important to understand how social motivation is constructed and how it relates to mental health and wellbeing (2).

Objectives: These studies test the measurement of social motivation in autistic participants and non-autistic participants, and test the pathway connecting autistic traits to depression via psychosocial factors.

Methods and Results: Study 1 tests the measurement of social motivation in autistic (n=173) and non-autistic adults (n=492). The Strivings Assessment Scale (Emmons, 1986) was adapted to ask individuals about their social motivation and social interaction. Exploratory factor analysis revealed two factors: Social Desire, and Social Emotion and Difficulty. Mokken analysis revealed a Social Desire Scale of 5 items in both autistic and non-autistic samples. Autistic adults showed a wide range in their Social Desire scores which contradicts the social motivation theory in autism, meaning that autistic people do show social motivation. Social Desire showed small and negligible correlations with depression scores ($r=0.1$, $r=0.07$) in autistic and non-autistic samples. Study 2 found that the relationship between autistic traits, and depressive symptoms was mediated by social self-efficacy, social motivation, and loneliness ($\beta[\text{indirect}]=.005$, $z=2.63$, $p < .01$; $\beta[\text{direct}]=.05$, $z=1.58$, $p > .05$), in 660 adult participants.

Conclusions: These studies found two factors which relate to social motivation, Social Desire, and Social Emotion and Difficulty. Social Desire scores are variable in autistic adults suggesting that Social Desire is not a characteristic which defines autism. These studies highlight the importance of clearly defining social motivation, and the facets of social motivation that are related to mood and depression.

DR. SAMI FARHAT

I'm a forensic psychologist from Michigan in the US. I'm currently based in Little Rock, Arkansas where I'm working as a forensic evaluator for the criminal courts. I received my PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Detroit. My primary interests are forensic evaluations of those with schizophrenia spectrum disorders, the assessment of malingering, non-actuarial forms of violence risk, and personality assessment. I received extensive training in psychodynamic psychotherapy in my graduate program and have found it incredibly useful in identifying interactive dynamics in those with criminal or violent behavior.



CORRELATES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING VARIABLES WITH INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE AND LENGTH OF STAY IN A MAXIMUM SECURITY FORENSIC HOSPITAL

Institutional violence and length of stay are pervasive problems in forensic settings. Given the nature of forensic commitments (e.g., the need to ensure public safety, mounting pressure on facilities to evaluate, commit, and treat forensic defendants), forensic patients often remain hospitalized for significant periods of time. Whereas most previous studies relied on demographics and diagnoses; this study is one of few that used psychological testing measures as a method of identifying problematic patients.

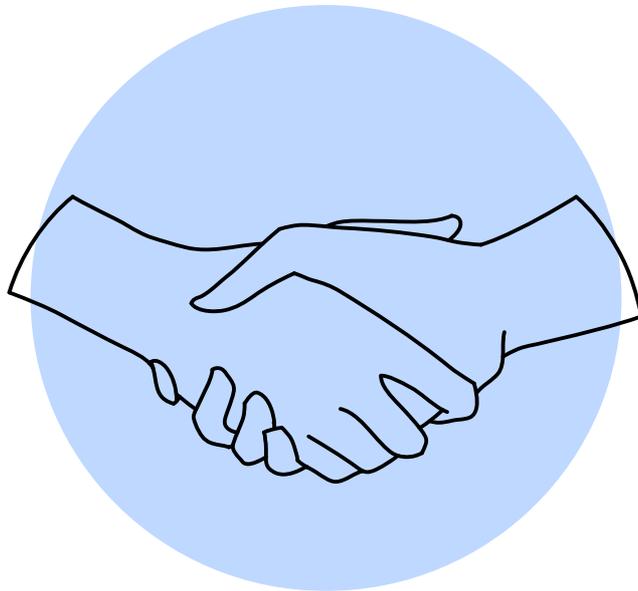
The present study utilized a multi-measure design, including a stimulus-response measure, self-report inventories, and cognitive measures to identify the most robust variables in relation to institutional violence and length of stay. A primary facet of this study was to assess the utility of the Rorschach as a predictor of misconduct and length of stay.

AGC and M- shared the strongest relationships with misconduct. Given the interpersonal nature of these variables (particularly M-), it is important to consider the effects of isolation since the pandemic. M- is a broad measure of poor human representations and reflects distorted perceptions of other people, including their behaviors, intents, and motives. High scores are correlated with poor interpersonal relationships and ineffective relationship. A lack of connection with others is known to affect an individual's ability to relate to and adequately understand others. It is also known to exacerbate symptoms in those with psychotic disorders. This likely correlates with the fact that high scores on M- are often seen in those with psychosis as well as depression. This correlative and predictive relationship of M- with inpatient violence brings to light a possible concern for the severely mentally ill who have experienced increasing isolation during the pandemic. These concerns may be observed as the pandemic wanes and they are reintegrated on units and with others. It is therefore imperative that institutions consider how connectedness in a post-Covid world is going to affect these individuals and how to mitigate the possible negative outcomes of connectedness in those who do not want to connect.

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ROBERTA PAGLIARULO

Roberta has a solid experience as a coach and mentor with top management and executives in multicultural contexts (she delivered more than 2.500 coaching hours). She owns the ICF Credential PCC and she has more than 10 years of experience as trainer and supervisor in Certification Coaching Course, in Italy and Asia. She recently designed her ICF certified programs for coaches in partnership with the fellow coaches Silvia King (Dubai) and Innavision (UK).



She is also guest speaker in international coaching and HR conferences (Edutech Asia 2018, IPCD 2018, SCAP Singapore 2019, ICF Italy 2021, Star Conference on Psychological Resilience, Canada, 2021).

In 2018 she received 100 Top Global Coaching Leaders Award, during the World Coaching Congress, where she participated as a speaker.

HOW ONTOLOGICAL COACHING CAN PROMOTE CONNECTEDNESS AND RESILIENCE IN A POST-COVID WORLD

It's been a tough year, both physically and mentally, for each of us and for our clients.

I remember when on March 2020 the World Health Organization announced the need to practice "physical distancing". They added in the same declaration that people should remain physically but not socially distant from others.

This sentence has been my focus during this year. As a coach I invested all my time and energy to support my clients to avoid social isolation and to promote resilience and well being. I am delighted to share in my speech some of the positive outcomes of my practical experience in hundreds of coaching sessions where I experienced the tools and theories that I have been using in order to help my clients (and myself) to connect with others and develop resilience.

In my speech I will bring some tools from ontological coaching and I will share with the audience, stimulating the participants through practical activities, to realize that language can generate different realities in our relationships, even when we are forced to practice social distance.

I will focus on the language acts and on effective conversations (facts, opinions, declarations, request, offers and promises, constructive complaints and constructive excuses) and how a masterful use of each of them can promote connectdness, boost the quality of our relationship and contribute to create meaningful interactions in a post Covid world

NASHWA TANTAWY

Nashwa Tantawy is a Professional Psychologist, Researcher, and Speaker; with 15 years of experience in psychotherapy, marketing, and technology fields. Nashwa is holding the position of Head of Research in Psychology at Oceain.ai Digital company. As a researcher in organizational psychology, she is currently in the progress to find ways to use Artificial Intelligence (AI) for psychological personality assessments. She has earned her M.A in Counseling Psychology and her B.Sc. with Honors in Computer Science and Business Administration from the American University in Cairo. In 2019, following her mission of spreading mental health awareness in the Arab World, Nashwa has launched Nafsology by Nashwa Tantawy virtual initiative introducing scientific mental health knowledge in Arabic targeting to increase awareness, with over 30,000 followers benefiting from the shared knowledge.



AI AND PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: THE FUTURE OF PERSONALITY ASSESSMENTS IN A POST-COVID WORLD

The impact of COVID-19 on organizational efficiency has been dramatic (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020). This has led to a shift to a remote or virtual work environment that poses the threat of diminishing work communication (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020). Organizations now have a greater responsibility in ensuring a more connected work culture (Green et al., 2020). Accordingly, the need to build technology-based tools to enable connectedness is becoming a must. This includes employees' psychological assessment for applied fields including personnel selection, placement, and development (Hertel et al., 2002). The importance of such assessments is supported by several studies showing that personality traits can be a valid and reliable way to predict eligibility for human resourcing applications (Judge et al., 2013). Several human-administrated methods are being used; including self-reports, peer assessment, and interviews (Ihsan & Furnham, 2018). However, many concerns are being raised on such methods; including the role of bias, impression management, and self-delusion (Ihsan & Furnham, 2018).

The study aims at comparing the AI model scores with a parallel self-reported questionnaire having satisfying reliability and validity scores on a pool of respondents. We also carry out a test-retest reliability assessment for the AI model on a sample of the respondents. The study aims at providing empirical evidence that the AI model can be considered a robust tool to be used for several applied fields in human resourcing. Moreover, further mapping can be derived from the model, offering quick and reliable results for organizational applications including in-depth personality insights, competencies, and organizational cultural fit.

AMANDA WHITE

Amanda is the Vice President for PSI in the Middle East, one of the world's largest groups of Occupational Psychologists. Her passion lies in the design of leadership assessment and development programs, cultural change, succession planning and talent management. Amanda holds an MBA from Georgetown & ESADE Universities, a Bachelors in Psychology & Sociology from the University of Kent UK, and is an Accredited International Company Director (AICD). Prior to coming to the region in 2008, Amanda established and ran a consulting business in the UK and wider Europe, providing services largely to the Investment Banking community, before its acquisition by New York Stock-Listed Company RR Donnelley & Sons (RRD) in 2004. Today, Amanda is a regular contributor on Dubai Eye Radio lending her human capital insights to current global affairs and a weekly contributor to Al Arabiya News.



KEY COMPETENCIES IN THE RESHAPED WORLD OF WORK

According to PSI, competencies that were most valued over the past decade are likely to be overtaken by a new set of skills, thanks to dramatic changes in the workplace due to the pandemic, digital transformation, and more. Using data from over 10,000 360-degree feedback assessments from its global clients across a range of roles, sizes, and industry sectors, PSI was able to determine the top seven competencies from the last decade. This session takes a deep dive into these 7 key competencies for the next decade and we explore the importance of connectedness, managing people and working as part of a team.

DR DASHA GRAJFONER

Dr Dasha Grajfoner is Assistant Professor in Psychology and Director of Coaching Lab at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh. With PhD in Psychology (University of Edinburgh) Dasha is a Registered Coaching Psychologist (BPS), Chartered Psychologist, Chartered Scientist, Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, Accredited Coaching Psychologist (ISCP) and a Past Chair of the Special Group in Coaching Psychology. Dasha has worked as a Practitioner Coaching Psychologist since 2007, and enthusiastic about building a strong connections between coaching psychology research, practice and teaching.



MICHAEL SAINT

COACHING COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS: HOW COACHING SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES ARE PERCEIVED BY PRACTICING COACHES AND COACHING PSYCHOLOGISTS



Introduction: Sustainability within coaching is priority for coaches, especially post COVID, which requires more flexible approach to practice. The coaching industry has developed at an exponential rate but has little coherence on standardisation of sustainable coaching competency frameworks. Activities, skills and competencies used by coaches and coaching psychologists are described inconsistently in a variety of professional practice frameworks. The aim of this presentation is to explore whether there are any differences between coaches and coaching psychologists in the way they rate their professional activities, skills and competencies applied within their own practices face to face and online.

Method: Selected competency frameworks representing most popular professional coaching and coaching psychology organisations were used to compose a questionnaire with 36 questions that were grouped into four categories: 1) Foundation/Practice, 2) Relationship creation/Evaluation, 3) Effective communications and 4) Outcome/results. The questionnaire was completed by 132 coaches and 104 coaching psychologists. **Results:** The results showed that in comparison to coaches, coaching psychologists perceived psychology based skills and competencies to be significantly more important in their practice. This may have significant implications for the new way of working online and practicing coaching virtually, where potentially different set of skills and competencies are needed.

Conclusions: Coaching practice requires a robust and rigorously standardised professional coaching framework. Highlighting the differences in how coaching skills and competencies are perceived by the two groups of professionals offers an insight into the training needs for coaching practitioners and the opportunities for sustainable coaching practices that can be delivered both face to face and virtually.

MONICA BECK

MSc (Psychology), LLM (Law)

Currently conducting a qualitative study for the MSc dissertation (due in early September). Based on year one results, on track to gain a distinction. Previous experience, twenty years working as a private practice and in-house commercial lawyer in the UK and freelance journalist (Romania) prior to that.



AUTISM PARENTING: INCREASING CONNECTEDNESS IN CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES

The high prevalence of autism in the UAE (Virolainen et al, 2020) and the high genetic heritability of the condition (Sandin et al, 2017) points to potentially significant number of undiagnosed parents meeting the DSM-5 ASD criteria. The lack of parenting support available to this population, a need exacerbated by the Covid pandemic and the resulting changes to social contact and communication, has been identified by the author as the target of an educational and practical intervention programme.

The results of a qualitative study into challenges and strengths of spectrum parenting will be presented with specific focus on social communication, sensory integration, executive function, and decision-making issues and processes on the psychological wellbeing and outcomes of the offspring. Specific challenges and opportunities related to the social changes brought about by the Covid pandemic will be identified and assessed. The findings will be discussed in the context of identifying the relevant population and the development of a proposed intervention through educational and clinical institutions such as UAE schools and ASD clinics.

DR. RANDA SOLIMAN

Dr. Randa Soliman is an assistant professor of Curricula and Language Instruction. She has been teaching English and training teachers for more than twenty years. She had chaired the TEFL Department at Ajman University in the United Arab Emirates. Chairing committees at the College of Education and being a member at committees at the University enabled her to get experience at academic accreditation, faculty recruitment, library resources, conferences and events organization, and assessment. She has taught at the graduate and the undergraduate levels. The focus of her research interest is creative-interactive teaching strategies, learner engagement, assessment for learning, textbook analysis, and teacher preparation. She has presented papers at international conferences. She published research at Scopus-indexed journals.



FOSTERING LEARNER ENGAGEMENT AND ESTABLISHING CONNECTEDNESS IN ONLINE LEARNING

Maintaining learner engagement and establishing connectedness in online learning during times when both teachers and students have major disruptions in their lives due to the pandemic is a real challenge to educators. Research emphasizes that students can suffer isolation and boredom in addition to other negative feelings when learning online. However, a collaborative constructive view of learning and teaching shows that interactive tasks and reflective practice offer opportunities for an enjoyable learning experience. Building an online learning community promotes learner engagement and autonomy. Learning occurs when there is a social presence, a cognitive presence, and a learning presence on the part of the learner in addition to the teaching presence.

Online education requires more than a software, an Internet connection and a computer or a mobile phone. It requires a human contact where learners feel synchronous presence. Related research has shown that presence correlates with increased student learning, and satisfaction with online courses. In a virtual learning environment, the need for social connection should be a goal that supersedes content-oriented goals. In this presentation, strategies for creating connectedness and social presence in online classes will be discussed. Promoting effective leadership from within and encouraging learner agency will be highlighted and reflected upon. This session addresses questions related to the means of providing opportunities for peer-engagement, reflective practice to promote learner connectedness and help make online classes feel more like classroom settings.

DR. MIOARA CRISTEA

Dr Mioara Cristea finished a PhD thesis in Social Psychology at the University Alexandru Ioan Cuza (Iasi, Romania) in February 2011. She worked as a Postdoctoral fellow in Applied Social Psychology within the Mobility and Behavior Psychology Lab at the French Institute of Science and Technology for Transport, Development and Networks (IFSTTAR, France) for three years. She is currently Programme Director for the MSc in Business Psychology within the Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences at Heriot Watt University (Edinburgh, UK). Her main research interests include social representations and identity as well as social norms, attitudes, and behavioural change. Her current research projects are focused on the role of academia in society and society's perception of academics.



DR. LOUISE DELICATO

Louise completed an MA (Hons) in Psychology from the University of St. Andrews (1998) and a PhD in visual perception from the University of Nottingham in 2002. Following this Louise became a post-doctoral researcher at Columbia University, New York, where she investigated how the brain processes depth perception, specifically depth from disparity (think 3D movies; 2002 - 2004). During her time at Columbia University, Louise became interested in understanding the neural mechanisms involved in processing visual information and returned to the UK as a post-doctoral researcher at Newcastle University (2004 - 2007); she used micro-iontophoresis to investigate the role of the cholinergic system in visual attention in primary visual cortex. Louise moved to the University of Sunderland in 2007 to become a Senior Lecturer in Psychology and was promoted to Principal Lecturer (Team Leader) in 2015. Her current research interests are focused on understanding how the brain processes what we see and how this might be an indicator of health and well-being. Louise's research has been funded by the NIHR Biomedical Research Unit at Newcastle University where she was Principal Investigator on a project designed to investigate the Sensitivity of people with Parkinson's to different intensities of Emotions (SPiEs). In 2018 Louise was appointed as an Assistant Professor at Heriot-Watt University where her research interests have broadened to consider the role of academia in society and society's perception of academics.



FARAH ABDULRAHMAN

Farah Abdulrahman is a BSc (Hons) Psychology student at Heriot-Watt University Dubai. During her time here, she focused on conducting research on the development of children and adolescents, competing coursework on areas of moral development, teenage risk taking, and the consequences of and protective factors against adverse childhood experiences. Moreover, she is currently the President of The Psychology Society, which aims to drive community level mental well-being and make psychological knowledge accessible and practical to the individual. She leads over 25 students across four teams: events, magazine, social media, and the GetPsyched podcast, which she founded in 2020. Her research interests concern the well-being of children and adolescents, with a focus on neurodiverse populations.



REECE DOCHERTY

Mr Reece Docherty is a BSc (Hons) Psychology student at Heriot-Watt University. He has extensive research experience as a HNC marketing student and is currently working as a Voluntary Research Assistant alongside a team of aspiring and experienced Heriot-Watt alumni. He will also take on the role of Student Ambassador starting September 2021 with the aim to maximise (prospective) student experiential gains and to improve student wellbeing. His main areas of interest include clinical psychology, cognitive development, and social psychology.



HOW ARE ACADEMICS THOUGHT OF BY SOCIETY? SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMICS AMONG DIFFERENT SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL GROUPS

We investigated how different social groups perceive academics using an established mixed methods approach (Cristea et al., 2020) to identify if and where there are misconceptions about the profession. We want to know whether society's perception of academics is keeping up with academia's evolution to ensure our teaching, research and scholarship is accessible, trusted, and engaged with by practitioners and the public.

Participants (n = 154) completed an online Free Association Task (Abric, 2003) where they provided five words or expressions that came to mind when presented with the stimulus word 'academic' or one of five priming vignettes where the implied identity or gender of the protagonist was manipulated (e.g., Dr. Jane Smith or Dr. Adebayo). Participants also provided additional justifications (Di Giacomo, 1981) on the connections between the stimulus or priming vignette and associations to prevent semantic confusion. We used Abric's (1963) Central Core Theory of Social Representations to identify the central, stable elements of the perception of academics and the peripheral, flexible elements that varied by professional group (Academic versus non-Academic) or prime (gender / ethnicity manipulation).

Preliminary prototypical analysis (Vergès, 1994) identified the elements defining the internal structure of the Social Representation of academics by two professional groups: academic and non-academic. Both groups shared the same central elements with descriptive (i.e., intelligent) and prescriptive functions (i.e., [an academic needs to do] research). Teaching is notably absent as a central element and instead is identified as a peripheral element by both groups. Analysis also demonstrates differences in peripheral elements and provides further evidence that academia is perceived as a male-dominated space where academics are disconnected, distant from the public and / or inaccessible (Buckley & Du Toit, 2010; Sever et al., 2021). That there are some shared stable elements between the two groups suggests that this 'disconnection' is not absolute.

We will also discuss how prime influenced the internal structure of Social Representations. Greater equality of opportunity within as well as greater impact beyond the Higher Education Institution (HEI) can be achieved by using the identified central and peripheral elements of Social Representations to tailor communication to be inclusive and directed to the wide range of stakeholders that academics and HEIs engage with.

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MEET THE TEAM



MEET THE TEAM

DR. ALIA AL SERKAL

Alia has over a decade of experience in applied psychology, working with a variety of organisations in aviation and telecoms. A firm believer in psychometric testing, she specialises in identifying and developing organisational talent. She has been on the IPCD committee since its inception.



DR. KIRIN HILLIAR

Kirin's industry experience has traversed across forensic, clinical and organizational spheres. She is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at HeriotWatt University Dubai, and also works part-time as a Psychologist in private practice in Dubai.



DR. ÇAKIL AGNEW

Çakil's research focuses on exploring safety culture in organizations and the impact of leadership on work performance in high-risk industries. She worked as a postdoctoral research fellow in the University of Aberdeen's Industrial Psychology Research Centre before joining Heriot-Watt University in 2014.



MEET THE TEAM

MADELEINE HARLING

Maddie recently finished her journey completing her MSc Business Psychology degree at HeriotWatt University Dubai Campus. She brings to the team her expertise in assessment, development and coaching, as well as her wideranging tech support in knowing how to make an online learning experience shine!



KRITI KOTHARI

Kriti is a recent psychology graduate from Heriot-Watt University Dubai. She has been an active member in the university's Psychology Society as the Editor-in-Chief of the society's magazine and the Head of Social Media. She has been a part of IPCD for the past two years contributing as a designer and more recently, she took up administrative tasks to help the conference become a smoother experience!



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