



UPCD CHANGE

BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS
22-23 FEBRUARY 2025

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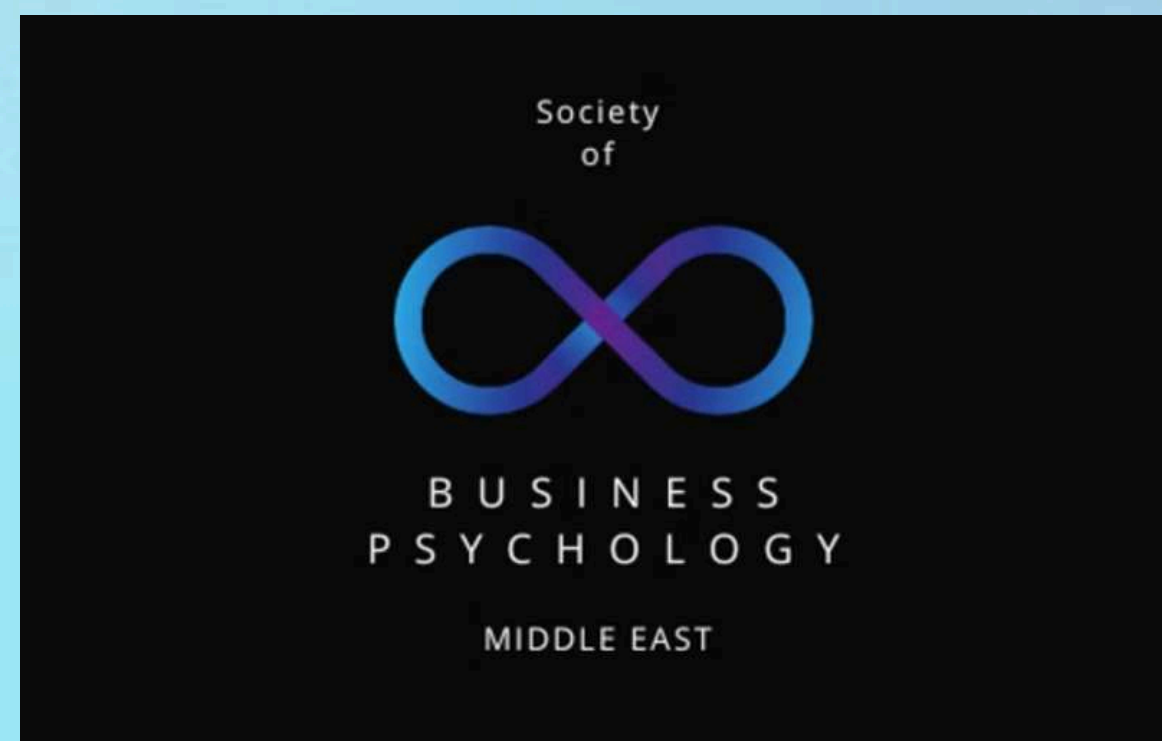
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FOREWORD

IPCD 2025 – with its conference theme of ‘Change’ – marked the 11th iteration of the International Psychology Conference Dubai. Indeed, IPCD saw a lot of change itself. This year, we shifted to February, allowing delegates and speakers alike to take advantage of the cooler temperatures. We also introduced a Poster section to the conference, allowing greater opportunities for participation, particularly amongst students. Finally, we introduced a new stream – Applied Cognitive and Social Psychology – further enhancing our linkages between science and practice. Consequently, we welcomed over 160 presenters across the two days, from over 21 countries. With CPD accreditation from both the Dubai Health Authority (DHA) and the CPD Standards Office (CPDSO), IPCD thanks our presenters for continuing to bring high-quality learning experiences to our delegates.

We are incredibly grateful to our Platinum Sponsor, Talogy, for their support towards IPCD not only this year, but in previous years. We look forward to continuing to build this relationship into the future. We also want to thank the Society of Business Psychology Middle East (SoBPME) for their coordination and leadership of a dedicated networking space at IPCD 2025.

A conference of this size and calibre is only possible with the support of a dedicated team working around-the-clock to ensure its success. I want to thank:

- The IPCD Organizing Committee members: Kashvi Gianani, Dr Zoë Fortune, Dr Gary Pheiffer, Dr Ishfaq Vaja, Dr Maja Živković, Dr Pik Ki Ho, Dr Melissa Pavetich, and Dr Hajar Yekani. This would not happen without your energies, efforts and enthusiasm.
- The IPCD 2025 marketing team, who worked together to create our marketing content in both English and Arabic; and Sophia Benmimoun, Marketing Manager for the School of Social Sciences (SOSS) at Heriot-Watt University Dubai (HWUD), for her assisting in spreading the word about all things IPCD-related.
- Our web designer, Ammar Ansari, for providing such a comprehensive one-stop shop of information at our conference website.
- Our Volunteer Coordinators (VC), Sarah Khan (VC Lead), Aamirah Rahman, Christina Fernandes, and Wafa Majeed, for coordinating all our volunteers to ensure the weekend went smoothly.
- Our 70+ psychology student volunteers, for making the experience as pleasant as it was for both delegates and presenters with your smiling faces and helpful guidance.
- Head of Psychology at HWUD, Professor Mercedes Sheen, and Head of SOSS & Edinburgh Business School (EBS) at HWUD, Professor Fiona Robson, for their unwavering support of IPCD.

And finally, thank you to all our delegates, for trusting us to provide you with world-class professional development. We know how valuable your time is, and we appreciate the time that you spent with us over the weekend of 22-23 February 2025. Keep tabs on our website, and follow us on our socials (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook and X) to stay informed of all our latest developments. If you would like to get more directly involved in the organizing of IPCD, please email us at IPCD@hw.ac.uk.

Dr Kirin Hilliar

IPCD Organizing Lead

Assistant Professor of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai

AGENDA

Saturday, 22nd February 2025

Clinical & Health Psychology Stream

8:00 – 9:00	Conference Registrations & Coffee
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome Address <i>Dr Kirin Hilliar, Lead of IPCD Organizing Committee and Assistant Professor of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai</i> <i>Professor Mercedes Sheen, Head of Department of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai</i>
9:15 – 10:15	Keynote Address Fostering empathy everywhere: enhancing interpersonal relationships across all contexts to enhance wellbeing and productivity <i>Mimi Nicklin</i>
10:15 – 11:00	Poster Session (with Morning Tea)
11:00 – 12:00	PANEL The evolution of maternal and infant mental health in the UAE: From practice to policy. <i>Dr Rose Gonzalez Logan, Dr Marie Thompson & Dr Charlotte Cousins</i>
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 13:50	A Virtual Psychoeducation Framework to Enhance Medication Adherence and Post-Discharge Care in Malaysian CHD Patients: Preliminary Findings. <i>Dr Nor Firdous Mohamed, Parames Ravichandran, Norfaezah Zakaria, Muhd Fadlin Muhammad Firdaus Chan, Dr Norhafizah Ab Manan, Dr Aroyewun Temitope Falashade, Dr Nor Ashikin Md Sari, Dr Anwar Suhaimi, Dr Amani Nur Amani Natasha Ahmad Tajuddin & Dr Bahbibí Rahmatullah</i>
13:55 – 14:15	Predicting Health Behaviour in the UAE: A Theory of Planned Behaviour Approach. <i>Dr Minu Mathews, Dr Ishfaq Vaja & Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani</i>
14:20 – 14:40	Exploring the Evolving Perspectives on Career Aspirations and Parenthood Amongst Females in the UAE. <i>Nokhez Usama, Dr Ishfaq Vaja, Dr Minu Mathews & Sarah Khan</i>
14:45 – 15:00	Joint Q&A
15:00 – 15:30	Poster Session (with Afternoon Tea)
15:45 – 17:00	WORKSHOP Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Substance Use Disorders (DBT-SUD): A Comprehensive Workshop. <i>Dr Ahmed Abdelkarim</i>
	End of Day 1

AGENDA

Sunday, 23rd February 2025

Clinical & Health Psychology Stream

8:30 – 9:00	Conference Registrations & Coffee
	WORKSHOP Accelerating Change: Solution-Focused Strategies for Single Session Therapy. <i>Shima Husen</i>
9:00 – 10:30	Poster Session
10:30 – 11:00	Morning Tea
11:00 – 11:45	Keynote Address Transforming Healthcare through Health Psychology and Behavioural Medicine: Integrating Mental and Physical Health for Optimal Outcomes <i>Dr Lisa Newson</i>
11:50 – 12:30	DBT Training and Implementation in The Arab World, 10 Years Experience <i>Dr Ahmed Abdelkarim</i>
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14:00	Poster Session
14:05 – 14:45	Strategies for Effective Teaching and Developing Soft Skills For Healthcare Professionals. <i>Dr Aref Alabed</i>
15:00 – 15:30	Poster Session (with Afternoon Tea)
15:30 – 15:45	Who Do You Talk To When You Face A Clinical Problem? Exploring the Clinical Supervision Landscape in the UAE. <i>Dr Chasity O'Connell</i>
15:50 – 16:05	Unlearning the Old, Embracing the New: Decolonizing Mental Health Practices. <i>Sharanya Venkataraman</i>
16:10 – 16:25	Addressing Intimacy in Couples Therapy in Culturally Sensitive Societies: Approaches and Considerations. <i>Nashwa Tantawy</i>
16:30 – 16:45	Are Marriages on a Decline? A Solution-Focused Lens to Marital Therapy. <i>Dr Sonakshi Ruhela</i>
16:50 – 17:00	Joint Q&A
17:10 – 17:30	Closing comments & winner of the inaugural IPCD Innovator Award

AGENDA

Saturday, 22nd February 2025

Business & Coaching Psychology Stream

8:00 – 9:00	Conference Registrations & Coffee
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome Address <i>Dr Kirin Hilliar, Lead of IPCD Organizing Committee and Assistant Professor of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai</i> <i>Professor Mercedes Sheen, Head of Department of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai</i>
9:15 – 10:15	Keynote Address Fostering empathy everywhere: enhancing interpersonal relationships across all contexts to enhance wellbeing and productivity <i>Mimi Nicklin</i>
10:15 – 11:00	Poster Session (with Morning Tea)
11:00 – 12:00	Hiring Future-Ready Early Talent: A Research Report. <i>Tania Al Abdala & Madeleine Anne York Harling</i>
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 13:45	Insights from peer coaching. <i>Benita Maben</i>
13.48 – 14:03	A patchy map of what coaching means in the MENA and Arab world. <i>Silvia King</i>
14:06 – 14:21	Designing and Validation of an Integrative Coaching Psychology Intervention Program. <i>Dr Amir Mohammad Pahlavnejad</i>
14:24 – 14:39	The development and testing of an integrated neuroscience coaching framework for transformational leadership development. <i>Liesl Keen</i>
14:42 – 14:57	Scaling Peer Support in a Country Lacking Mutual Aid: Implementing Recovery Coaching in Qatar. <i>Naetha Uren</i>
15:00 – 15:30	Poster Session (with Afternoon Tea)
15:30 – 15:45	Beyond quotas: Uncovering challenges and motivation factors in promoting inclusive leadership towards Emirati’s in the banking/finance sector. <i>Alia AlFardan & Dr Gary Pheiffer</i>



Business & Coaching Psychology Stream

15:48 – 16:03

Understanding the lived experience of female expatriate leaders in the UAE, in order to create a more inclusive workplace.
Kerry Gird & Dr Gary Pheiffer

16:06 – 16:21

Gender-Work Identity Conflict Among Female Managers in the United Arab Emirates: A Scoping Review of Psychological Mechanisms and Research Gaps.
Riffa Fathima Syed, Dr Gary Pheiffer & Dr Zoë Fortune

16:24 – 16:39

The Experience of Role Congruity among Female Managers in the UAE and its Impact on Perceived Psychological Safety in the Workplace.
Michelle Kirkinis Bellingan & Dr Gary Pheiffer

16:42 – 16:57

Exploring factors influencing students’ attitudes towards help-seeking within the context of Gender and Academic Stress.
Tahoor Fatima Shaik

End of Day 1

AGENDA

Sunday, 23rd February 2025

Business & Coaching Psychology Stream

8:30 – 9:00	Conference Registrations & Coffee
9:00 – 10:30	WORKSHOP The Importance of Building Psychological Safety in your Organisation. <i>Farhan Bhatti</i>
	WORKSHOP Mastering Change: Unleashing the Power of Adaptability. <i>Maria Nova</i>
	Poster Session
10:30 – 11:00	Morning Tea
11:00 – 11:45	Keynote Address Transforming Healthcare through Health Psychology and Behavioural Medicine: Integrating Mental and Physical Health for Optimal Outcomes <i>Dr Lisa Newson</i>
11:50 – 12:05	Team’s resilience and psychological safety: the role of leadership during change. <i>Agata Perepeczko</i>
12:08 – 12:23	Workplace well-being at the crossroads of cultures: Understanding managerial experiences in the UAE's diverse work environment. <i>Simon Welsh</i>
12:25 – 12:30	Joint Q&A
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14:00	Poster Session
14:05 – 14:20	Examining the predictors of green behaviours in the workplace - a higher education perspective as a change maker. <i>Dr Cakil Agnew, Dr Mioara Cristea & Oscar Thompson</i>
15:00 – 15:30	Poster Session (with Afternoon Tea)
15:30 – 15:35	Integrating Intra-Disciplinary Mixed-Methods to Advance Understanding of Workplace Wellbeing. <i>Dr Zoë Fortune & Dr Olga Zayts-Spence</i>
15:38 – 15:48	A Developing Research Agenda on Workplace Wellbeing in the UAE. <i>Nariman Elewa & Dr Gary Pheiffer</i>



Business & Coaching Psychology Stream

15:51 – 16:06

Competing Devotions: How expatriate women and men experience the duality of career and family in the UAE.
Tina Dias & Dr Zoë Fortune

16:09 – 16:24

What is matresence? How becoming a parent changes you and what companies need to consider.
Maddy Scott & Melissa Shapiro

16:27 – 16:42

Thriving in the Modern Workplace: Insights and Interventions for Burnout Prevention and Sustainable High Performance.
Matthew Bartlett-Bond & Nick Petrie

16:45 – 17:00

Managing Change: The role of social and supervisory support in enhancing wellbeing among expatriate workers.
Ayca Demiran, Dr Mioara Cristea & Dr Cakil Agnew

17:10 – 17:30

Closing comments & winner of the inaugural IPCD Innovator Award

AGENDA

Saturday, 22nd February 2025

Developmental & Educational Psychology Stream

8:00 – 9:00	Conference Registrations & Coffee
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome Address <i>Dr Kirin Hilliar, Lead of IPCD Organizing Committee and Assistant Professor of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai</i> <i>Professor Mercedes Sheen, Head of Department of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai</i>
9:15 – 10:15	Keynote Address Fostering empathy everywhere: enhancing interpersonal relationships across all contexts to enhance wellbeing and productivity <i>Mimi Nicklin</i>
10:15 – 11:00	Poster Session (with Morning Tea)
11:00 – 12:00	WORKSHOP Creative conversations with children: Using the arts when 'talking' isn't enough. <i>Dr Lamyia Tawfik</i>
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 13:50	The Power of Emotional Intelligence in Parent-Teen Relationships: A Key to Effective Parenting. <i>Dr Maya Al Hawary</i>
13:55 – 14:15	Navigating Change: Exploring the Role of Family Functioning and Positive Youth Development in Shaping Adolescents' Materialistic Values. <i>Dr Aisha Perveen</i>
14:20 – 14:40	The RUT Factor: Analysing changes in student readiness to undertake tasks with a moderating role of Generative AI via a structured intervention. <i>Amaan Iqbal Ibrahim</i>
14:45 – 15:00	Joint Q&A
15:00 – 15:30	Poster Session (with Afternoon Tea)
15:30 – 15:45	Mirror to Mind: Unveiling How Reflection Shapes Critical Thinking. <i>Sharmila Fathima, Dr Chia Ping Lee, Dr Ron Salden, Dr Terry Lansdown & Dr Deborah Hall</i>



Developmental & Educational Psychology Stream

15:50 – 16:05

The Impact of Education Trajectory, Epistemological Beliefs, and Cultural Beliefs on Critical Thinking Disposition for East Asian Learners.

Leila Lai & Dr Andrew Holliman

15:50 – 16:05

Adolescent's Wellbeing and Academic Achievement in relation to their Perceptions of Maternal Parenting Practices.

Dr Sajid Iqbal Alyana, Kiran Mushtaq & Dr Riaz Ahmad

16:30 – 16:45

Joint Q&A

End of Day 1

AGENDA

Sunday, 23rd February 2025

Developmental & Educational Psychology Stream

8:30 – 9:00	Conference Registrations & Coffee
9:00 – 10:30	WORKSHOP Beyond the Past: Parenting with Awareness and Compassion. <i>Sharanya Venkataraman, Zena Takieddine & Dr Sarah Bougary</i>
	Poster Session
10:30 – 11:00	Morning Tea
11:00 – 11:45	Keynote Address Transforming Healthcare through Health Psychology and Behavioural Medicine: Integrating Mental and Physical Health for Optimal Outcomes <i>Dr Lisa Newson</i>
11:50 – 12:05	Beyond Screen Time: The Impact and Complex Psychology of Digital Addiction and Social Media Usage as a form of student engagement in South African Higher Education. <i>Dr Nirashnee Padayachee & Fathima Badat</i>
12:08 – 12:23	Digital Detox as a Tool for Enhancing Focus and Learning: A Critical Examination in Modern Educational Settings. <i>Sinan Abdullah</i>
12:25 – 12:30	Joint Q&A
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14:00	Poster Session
14:05 – 14:20	Developing Strategic Readers: Enhancing Self-Efficacy and Fostering Positive Attitude toward Reading through Habits of Mind to Embrace Change. <i>Dr Asma Amin & Dr Mohammad F. Al-Qudah</i>
14:25 – 14:40	Exploring the Impact of a Growth Mindset Intervention on Academic Outcomes: Evidence from Argentinian High Schools. <i>Juan Soto & Dr Antje von Suchodoletz</i>
14:45 – 15:00	Joint Q&A
15:00 – 15:30	Poster Session (with Afternoon Tea)



AGENDA

Sunday, 23rd February 2025

Developmental & Educational Psychology Stream

15:30 – 15:50

Shifting attitudes: creating neurodiversity-affirming spaces and communities.
Anna Kaminski

15:55 – 16:15

Executive functioning, time perception, and prospective memory problems in adults with dyslexia.
Dr Charles Agyepong-Mensah

16:20 – 16:40

Assistive Technology Use in Special Needs Education: A Review of Current Evidence.
Dr Nida Khan, Dr Ansarullah Tantry & Dr Saher AlSabbah

16:45 – 17:00

Joint Q&A

17:10 – 17:30

Closing comments & winner of the inaugural IPCD Innovator Award

AGENDA

Saturday, 22nd February 2025

Applied Cognitive & Social Psychology Stream

8:00 – 9:00	Conference Registrations & Coffee
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome Address <i>Dr Kirin Hilliar, Lead of IPCD Organizing Committee and Assistant Professor of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai</i> <i>Professor Mercedes Sheen, Head of Department of Psychology, Heriot-Watt University Dubai</i>
9:15 – 10:15	Keynote Address Fostering empathy everywhere: enhancing interpersonal relationships across all contexts to enhance wellbeing and productivity <i>Mimi Nicklin</i>
10:15 – 11:00	Poster Session (with Morning Tea)
11:00 – 11:25	Moving beyond the superficial: Reimagining Equity and Wellbeing in Organisational DEI Strategies. <i>Irfaan Arif</i>
11:30 – 11:55	Cultural, social and individual barriers and resources as predictors of the cultural adaptation and acculturative stress of the Third Culture Kids (TCKs) in the United Arab Emirates. <i>Dr Magdalena Mosanya & Dr Anna Kwiatkowska</i>
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 15:00	WORKSHOP Mapping Change: Conducting Scoping Reviews to Synthesize Knowledge. <i>Dr Shanu Shukla</i>
15:00 – 15:30	Poster Session (with Afternoon Tea)
15:30 – 15:55	“Wait, don’t all autistic people...?” Examining differences in autism understanding and awareness in the UAE and the UK. <i>Leyli Afsari, Dr Mary Stewart, Dr Kirin Hilliar & Dr Mercedes Sheen</i>
16:00 – 16:25	Personality Traits and Psychological Needs: Understanding Attitudes Toward AI in a Rapidly Changing World. <i>Dr Rabia Aftab</i>
16:30 – 16:55	Beyond Diversity: Addressing Subtle Discrimination in Multicultural Environments. <i>Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani, Ria Viswanathan, Ankita Kristine D’silva, Irha Mateen, Zaida Jafar & Anthra Devi Cirimulla</i>
	End of Day 1

AGENDA

Sunday, 23rd February 2025

Applied Cognitive & Social Psychology Stream

8:30 – 9:00	Conference Registrations & Coffee
9:00 – 9:25	A behaviour change experiment: Can showing drivers they are poor multitaskers discourage them from texting while driving? <i>Vanessa Heywood</i>
9:30 – 9:55	Intellectual Humility Reduces Overestimation in a Matrix Reasoning Task. <i>Dr Mariana Veiga Chetto Coutinho & Baraka Saeed Binishaq</i>
10:00 – 10:25	The integration of sensory information for perception and action. <i>Dr Ivan Camponogara</i>
9:00 – 10:30	Poster Session
10:30 – 11:00	Morning Tea
11:00 – 11:45	Keynote Address Transforming Healthcare through Health Psychology and Behavioural Medicine: Integrating Mental and Physical Health for Optimal Outcomes <i>Dr Lisa Newson</i>
12:00 – 12:25	Neurocognitive Effects of Sleep Apnea in Adults with ADHD: A Comprehensive Review. <i>Dr Safina Naaz & Dr Amiya Bhaumik</i>
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14:00	Poster Session
14:05 – 14:30	Reimagining Mental Health Labels in a Changing World: A Cultural Perspective. <i>Seiara Imanova, Dr Lisa Bortolotti & Dr Matthew Broome</i>
14:35 – 15:00	Contemplative Spaces and Nature-Based Interventions in Mental Health: Botanic Gardens as Therapeutic Environments. <i>Dr Koncha Pinos</i>
15:00 – 15:30	Poster Session (with Afternoon Tea)
15:30 – 17:00	WORKSHOP Cognitive Screening and Assessment with the MoCA and MoCA XpressO. <i>Dr Jacquelyn Berry & Dr Jamie Berry</i>
17:10 – 17:30	Closing comments & winner of the inaugural IPCD Innovator Award

POSTERS

Clinical & Health Psychology

Transformation Through Technology: The Effectiveness of Digital Progressive Muscle Relaxation in Reducing Anxiety Among Underserved Middle Eastern University Students

Dr Khym Isaac De Barros, Sara Abukmeil, Elizabeth Sara Roby, Marya Badran, Neimat Elkarib, Sara Hachem, Maryam Al Falasi, Yara El Rifai, Dana Ammary, Fatma Al Malik, Ayah Aqtash, Nouran Azzam & Dr Eyman Hamad

A Journey of Healing: Clinical Insights into an Incest Survivor

Dr Yassine Bourouais

Perceptions of Mental Disorders Labels Amongst Students: Exploring Liberating and Stigmatizing Views in the UAE and UK

Seiara Imanova, Dr Lisa Bortolotti & Dr Matthew Broome

Narratives of Struggle and Resilience: An Insight into Addiction and Recovery in South Punjab

Dr Rizwana Amin & Khizra

Effect of a Mobile 3D Virtual Environment (PsycReality) on Social Anxiety

Bilal Awan, Carolina Ortega, Dr Pedro Fonseca Zuccolo & Dr Fani Eta Korn Malerbi

Exploring Ethical Boundaries and Risks: Mental Health Professionals' Perspectives on Psilocybin Therapy

Hasna Qaddar

Structural Changes in the Amygdala in Patients with Social Anxiety Disorder: A Systematic Review

Annika Cherian

Parenting Styles and Internet Gaming Disorder: Exploring Influences on Emirati Adolescents' Gaming Behaviors

Abdulla Almatrooshi

Are Unrealistic Beauty Standards Harmful to Health? Exploring the Relationship Between Beauty Standards and Emotional Regulation on Disordered Eating

Sanya Muhammad Din

An Empirical Review of Eating Disorders: Exploring Therapeutic Approaches, Mental Health Factors, Prevalence, and Early Risk Identification

Amal Bashayreh & Tala Ashraf Elabora

Group Belongingness and Mental Health in Universities in the UAE

Ruba Airaj Ahmed

Super Silent Stress: Giving Voice to The Prevalence of Anxiety Among Middle Eastern University Students

Dr Khym Isaac De Barros, Elizabeth Sara Roby, Marya Badran, Sara Hachem, Neimat Elkarib, Sara Abukmeil, Fatma Al Malik, Ayah Aqtash, Nouran Azzam & Dr Eyman Hamad

A Review of Health Psychology Interventions in the Management of Chronic Illnesses

Rayan Al Omari, Maram Al Mazloun & Nadia Alalialshbaikat

The Impact of Energy Drinks on Sleep Patterns in Adolescents and how Effective are Interventions

Raad Al Madani & Yousma Batool

POSTERS

Clinical & Health Psychology

The Impact of Adverse Environmental Factors on the Psychophysiological Indicators of Longevity

Gulsum Afandiyeva & Dr Natavan Karamova

Changing the Narrative: Exploring PMS, Resilience, and Psychological Distress in Young Egyptian Women

Khadiga Dorra, Sarah Osman, Jana Selim & Dr Maaly Younis

Embracing Change in Wellbeing Support for Medical Students: Navigating Barriers and Building Resilience

Dr Aisha Ali Hawsawi & Dr Elena Nixon

Narratives of Struggle and Resilience: An Insight into Addiction and Recovery in South Punjab

Dr Rizwana Amin & Khizra

POSTERS

Business & Coaching Psychology

Impact of People Pleasing Behavior on Wellbeing: Mediating Role of Anger

Aksah Motiwala

The Influence of Adult Attachment on Student Engagement: A Quantitative Analysis of the Role of Belonging in Higher Education

Dr Zoë Fortune, Gary Pheiffer & Kash Gianani

Workplace: My Second Home - Exploring the Effects of Extraversion, Person-Job Fit and Servant Leadership Style on Emotional Exhaustion and Job Satisfaction Among Employees

Negin Naghshineh

Navigating Change in Healthcare: Addressing Moral Distress and Enhancing Resilience

Assel Wanigasekara

Total Interpretive Structural Modeling of Predictors Driving Quiet Quitting Among Gen Z Employees

Eslam Yaser Babeker Mohamed, Manav Kalyan Dangar, Saim Hasan Syed & Ayesha Ijaz

From Student to Scholar: Exploring Career Developmental Challenges for Women in Psychology

Dr Khym Isaac De Barros, Dr Eyman Hamad, Ayah Aqtash, Sara Abukmeil, Yara El Rifai, Elizabeth Sara Roby, Sara Hachem, Fatma Al Malik, Marya Badran, Neimat Elkarib, Dana Ammary, Maryam Al Falasi & Nouran Azzam

POSTERS

Developmental & Educational Psychology

A Quantitative Study on the Effect of Secondary School Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education on Teacher Stress

Sneha Sriram & Dr Divya Dosaya

Empathy in the School: Exploring Suffering Among Teachers

Nissy Thomas

Parentifying Beyond Childhood: Do Gender and Parentification History Predict Future Behavior?

Maitha Thabet

Exploring Environmental and Psychological Causes of Youth Delinquency: A Thematic Analysis Approach

Ayesha Alsuwaidi

Unravelling the Path to Academic Success: The Interplay of Cognitive Intelligence, Emotional Intelligence, Motivation, and Satisfaction

Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani

The Challenges of University: A Qualitative Analysis of New Zealand University Student Experiences

Dr Tatiana Tairi

POSTERS

Applied Cognitive & Social Psychology

Exploring the Interplay Between Background Music and Art Perception: Emotional and Cognitive Impacts

Adam Makarem

Becoming a Muslim: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Women Who Converted to Islam

Fareeha Aafreen

Reviving Al-Balkhi's Insights: A Holistic Model for Psychological and Physical Well-being Amidst Contemporary Change

Sarah Haikal

The Emoji Effect: The Modulating Role of Digital Facial Cues on Emotion Perception in Text-Based Conversations

Suha Kazi & Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani

Effects of the Facial Feedback Hypothesis on Humor Perceptions

Noha Eldib, Khushpreet Kaur, Maitha Thabet & Fathima Hiba Rasheed

Decoding Bystander Intervention: A Quantitative Exploration of Pakistani Cultural Dynamics Through the Lens of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Nayab Fatima, Mahnoor Kiani, Laiba Arshad & Somal Kayani

Parenting Styles, Birth Order and Gender on Heritage Language Maintainence of Second-Generation South-Asian Immigrants Living in the UAE

Rasajna Manthapurwar & Dr Kirin Hilliar

Navigating Change: The Role of Large Language Model (LLM) Algorithms in Shaping Decision-Making and Cognitive Biases in an AI-Driven World

Haleema Khatoon & Dr Muhammad Luqman Khan

Understanding University Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviours Toward Sustainability

Arya Shah, Harishma Kumar, Maureene Jesse Lavarias & Sowmiya Venkatesh

Strong Masculinity Norms Reduce Prosocial Behavior in the Workplace

Amna Ramadhan Alahmadi, Dr Andrea Vial & Dr Colleen Cowgill

KEYNOTE

Fostering Empathy Everywhere: Enhancing Interpersonal Relationships Across All Contexts to Enhance Wellbeing and Productivity

Bestselling author, CEO, and empathy advocate Mimi Nicklin will delve into the complexities of bridging generational divides and leading multigenerational teams in the Gulf. Her A.L.U.R. methodology—Attention, Listen, Understand, Recognise—combines compelling research from the FBI with Neuro Linguistic Data to provide actionable strategies for enhancing engagement and cohesion in the workplace and elevating communication effectiveness. Leveraging research from the National Library of Medicine and BMC Health Services Research, this session covers three key learning objectives: 1) understanding generational dynamics, 2) technical skills for driving up engagement, and 3) the application of empathetic leadership principles. Mimi's approach is a blend of passion and pragmatism, aimed at transforming organizations in the Gulf, through elevated and improved stakeholder management and relationship enhancement.

Mimi Nicklin

Mimi Nicklin is the founder of Empathy Everywhere, one of the first platforms dedicated to organisational empathy. She is the bestselling author of *Softening The Edge* and *Empathy At Work* and hosts *The MiMi YouYou Show - Creating Empathy*, a podcast promoting global empathy through diverse perspectives.

Specialising in Organisational Empathy, Listening-Led Leadership, D&I, and Psychological Safety, she has trained over 16,500 leaders worldwide in social intelligence, communication, and multi-generational team management. Through keynote sessions, masterclasses, and long-term intervention programs, she has worked with major global organisations, including Coca-Cola, Unilever, Alibaba/Daraz, Stellantis, Emirates, DP World, Standard Chartered, KPMG, Pfizer, GlaxoSmithKline, the UN, and multiple governments. A well-known coach and speaker, she advocates for balancing humanism and capitalism through organisational empathy.

In 2023, she launched OpenRoom, a global event series tackling loneliness and fostering reconnections in cities worldwide. With an 18-year career in advertising, she has held executive roles such as Global VP, Healthcare at GlaxoSmithKline for Grey Group Singapore, and Chief Marketing Officer at Omnicom MEA. She also founded and later sold Freedm, a global ad agency that partnered with brands like Dubai Airports, Accor, The Ritz-Carlton, and SanDisk.



KEYNOTE

Transforming Healthcare through Health Psychology and Behavioural Medicine: Integrating Mental and Physical Health for Optimal Outcomes

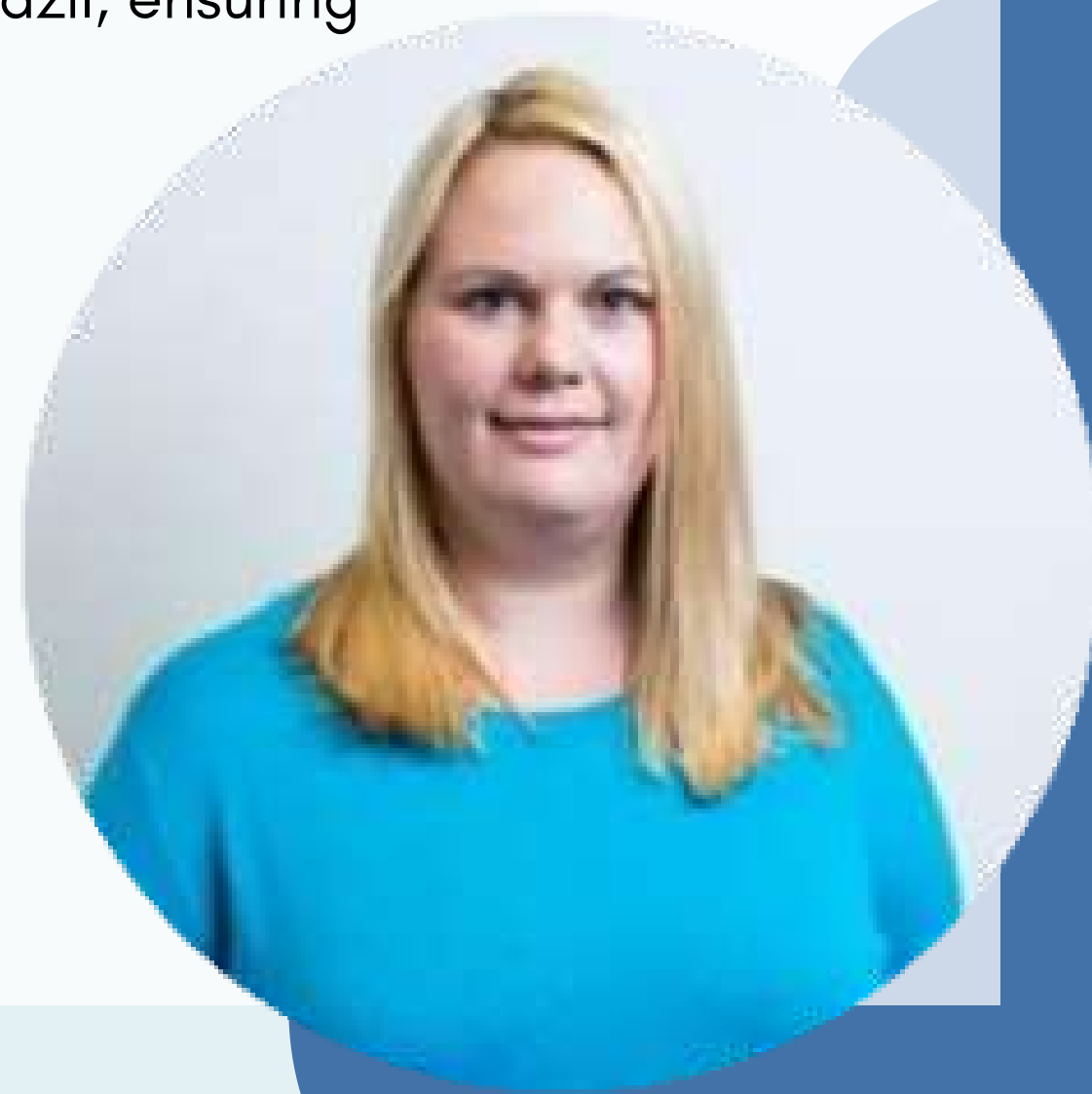
This presentation will explore the critical role of health psychology and behavioural medicine in revolutionising healthcare practices. The keynote will delve into the potential of integrating psychological principles to enhance physical health outcomes, particularly in managing chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity. We will examine how advancing health literacy in cardiac rehabilitation can improve patient engagement, adherence, and outcomes, with emphasis on psychological techniques that support clinical outcomes for individuals with cardiovascular disease who may also experience anxiety and depression. The discussion will extend to diabetes services, where embedding psychological care is vital for sustainable self-management and quality of life. Additionally, we'll address obesity from a psychological perspective, recognising it as a disease that requires robust psychological support to mitigate risks associated with bariatric surgery and ensure holistic patient preparation. This presentation will highlight the necessity of unified care approaches that integrate physical and mental health, advocating for health psychology as a key driver of comprehensive care transformation through behavioural medicine.

Dr Lisa Newson

Dr Lisa Newson, a Chartered Psychologist and HCPC Registered Practitioner Psychologist (Health) in the UK, is an innovator in applied health psychology with experience spanning academia and healthcare practice. Her career focuses on engaged scholarship, knowledge exchange, applied research, and real-world impact in healthcare and community settings. Her research informs policy, advances health psychology and behavioral medicine, and fosters collaboration across professions.

Recently, Dr Newson took on a part-time role as Associate Director of Research and Innovation at Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Trust, aiming to integrate evidence-based research into clinical practice, enhance research capacity, and address both mental and physical health needs. She also serves as Chair of the Organisational Committee for the International Society of Behavioral Medicine, facilitating global networking and capacity building across 27 countries.

Her expertise spans health prevention, public health, and long-term condition management. With prior experience in the NHS, public health commissioning, and academia-health collaborations, she bridges the gap between academic research and healthcare practice. Dr Newson collaborates on applied research projects in Australia, Singapore, Morocco, and Brazil, ensuring research benefits service users and drives real-world healthcare improvements.



SPONSORED

The Importance of Building Psychological Safety in Your Organisation

This session will take us through the evolution of leadership research from Talogy as it feeds into the benefits of and importance of building psychological safety in the workplace. This session will enable participants to complete and explore a resilience model and questionnaire and will take away an actionable toolkit.



Farhan Bhatti

Farhan is British Occupational Psychologist with extensive experience in Organisational Development. He has over 14 years of professional experience internationally and has been consulting with high calibre clients across the Middle East for 12+ years. Farhan has worked with government and private sector organisations and provided white paper research on employee performance in the Middle East for both expatriates and nationals. He is an experienced lecturer in business management and a licensed trainer.



Farhan is experienced in designing and implementing behavioural competency frameworks for organisations as well as designing, delivering and managing assessment and development centres. He has extensive experience working on leadership development and succession planning for organisations across the Middle East. In addition to his organisational development activities, Farhan has developed advanced diplomas in business management for educational institutions in the region. His work has been used and published by consultancies in the Middle East and released as whitepaper research for insights on workplace performance in the region.

This session will be an interactive presentation of the recent white paper connecting Gen Z desires from the workplace vs hiring managers current strategies and how we can continue to evolve and elevate early careers hiring strategy.



Tania Al Abdala

Tania has over 10 years of experience working with various psychometric tools across the Middle East. She has led large-scale projects in the GCC for private and semi-government organizations, focusing on selection, training, and development. Her responsibilities include advising management, preparing development plans, and conducting organizational studies to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

She has also been involved in team-building initiatives and training programs, including certification courses in people assessment. Tania is experienced in designing, managing, and delivering customized assessment centers for employees at all levels, supporting their development through coaching and individual development plans.



Madeleine Anne York Harling

Madeleine is an Organizational Psychologist Consultant and Talent Solutions professional with seven years of experience in psychology, including five in the Middle East. She enhances organizational effectiveness through evidence-based assessment and development initiatives, integrating best-practice organizational psychology.

She specializes in end-to-end learning solutions, MBTI, coaching, and emotional intelligence initiatives, delivering engaging programs for Mid-Level Management to C-Suite Executives. Her client portfolio includes Samsung, TDRA, HSBC, and Zurich Insurance.

Madeleine has extensive experience in identifying and selecting high-potential talent, managing client projects from concept to delivery. Trained in multiple psychometric instruments, she works across various organizational levels and industries.



This study investigates the interplay between background music and visual art perception, focusing on how music impacts the emotional and cognitive responses of seasoned art viewers compared to novice viewers. Existing research highlights the influence of auditory stimuli on visual experiences, with studies demonstrating that music can enhance emotional tone, memory recall, and engagement with art. However, there is limited understanding of how these effects differ based on the viewer's level of art experience.

The experiment employs a between-participants design, categorizing participants into seasoned viewers (attending over five art installations annually) and new viewers (attending three or fewer). Participants will view five digital artworks under conditions with or without instrumental background music. Emotional and cognitive responses will be measured using a Likert-scale questionnaire assessing emotional impact, focus, and music's perceived enhancement or distraction. Additional qualitative feedback will provide insights into the overall atmosphere and participant experience.

Data analysis will include independent samples t-tests to compare responses within groups, a two-way ANOVA to evaluate interactions between viewer experience and music presence, and correlation analyses to explore the relationship between music likability and aesthetic engagement.

Adam Makarem

Mr Adam Makarem is a fourth-year psychology student with a deep appreciation for the diverse ways psychology enhances the understanding of human behavior. While he is fascinated by many aspects of the field, his primary interest lies in Industrial Psychology. He is particularly intrigued by how psychological principles can be applied to improve workplace dynamics, enhance employee well-being, and optimize organizational performance.

Beyond his coursework, Adam actively seeks opportunities to expand his knowledge and explore new perspectives. Whether through analyzing research papers, engaging in discussions, or attending workshops, he enjoys critically examining complex ideas.

Looking ahead, he is considering a career in academia, finding the prospect of contributing to psychological research and mentoring future students highly rewarding. Whether analyzing data, presenting findings, or fostering curiosity in others, he aims to make a meaningful impact in both professional and academic settings.



Religious conversion is a transformative process that impacts an individual's identity, social connections, and psychological well-being. This study explores the experiences of unmarried women who converted to Islam, focusing on the personal, social, and spiritual changes they undergo. Despite Islam's rapid growth, there is limited understanding of the challenges and transitions that converts face.

Using semi-structured interviews with 10 unmarried women (mean age = 29.7 years) from diverse backgrounds, thematic analysis revealed key themes such as personal motivations for conversion, identity reformation, family dynamics, and limited support within Muslim communities. Participants described the change as both empowering and isolating, navigating tension between their spiritual identity and external pressures.

The findings highlight the need for psychological practitioners to address the mental health challenges associated with religious and cultural transitions. The study advocates for culturally sensitive and faith-informed practices, including support groups, outreach programs, and therapeutic interventions tailored to the needs of converts, to facilitate smoother transitions and promote resilience and belonging.

This research underscores the transformative nature of religious conversion and its implications for psychological practice, emphasizing the importance of understanding the experiences of converts to offer culturally and spiritually sensitive interventions.

Fareeha Aafreen

Ms Fareeha Aafreen is a psychology graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology with Counseling Skills and a Master of Science in Applied Psychology from Middlesex University Dubai. Throughout her academic journey, Fareeha developed a strong interest in the intersection of psychology and faith, leading her to pursue further training in Islamic psychology, including an online course from the International Open University.

She gained practical experience as a psychology intern at the Human Relations Institute and Clinics (HRIC) in Dubai. Her graduate thesis, "Becoming a Muslim: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Women Who Converted to Islam," focused on the psychological and social dynamics of religious conversion.

Passionate about bridging psychology and spirituality, Fareeha aspires to specialize as an Islamic psychologist, with interests in religious conversion, identity formation, and the integration of Islamic principles into therapeutic practices. She aims to pursue a Doctorate in this field and contribute to the development of culturally sensitive psychological support systems.



POSTER

Reviving Al-Balkhi's insights: A Holistic Model for Psychological and Physical Well-being Amidst Contemporary Change

The poster presents the pioneering work of 9th-century scholar Al-Balkhi, focusing on his book *Masalih al-Abdan wa al-Anfus* (Sustenance of the Body and Soul). Al-Balkhi's model emphasized the integration of mental and physical health long before modern psychology addressed these links. By exploring his categorization of mental health conditions and his holistic approach, the presentation will demonstrate how his insights align with modern psychological practices, making them particularly valuable for culturally adaptive mental health care today.

Al-Balkhi's work resonates with the theme "Change" by offering a cross-cultural perspective that enhances modern therapy. Revisiting his insights fosters a more comprehensive, adaptable approach to psychology in an era of rapid change.

The poster will highlight Al-Balkhi's mind-body connection model, explore his psychological framework, and show how his insights can enhance culturally adaptive therapy and guide integrative mental health care practices today.

Sarah Haikal

As a BPS Psychologist with a Master's degree in Psychology and a Diploma in Clinical Psychology, Mrs Sarah Haikal has focused on bridging classical Islamic thought with modern psychology to uncover, revitalize, and renovate early Islamic contributions to psychology. Inspired by figures like Al-Balkhi, whose holistic approach offers timeless insights, Sarah seeks to address contemporary psychological challenges. Their vision is to integrate classical Islamic psychology with current therapeutic practices, providing a holistic approach that resonates in today's fast-evolving world.

In addition to their academic background, Sarah actively engages in personal study and attends seminars that support these ideas, aiming to build a psychological framework rooted in Islamic traditions that promote both individual and societal well-being.

Sarah is honored to present at IPCD 2025, where they will share Al-Balkhi's unique and holistic insights and demonstrate their relevance to the conference theme "Change." The presentation will foster a meaningful dialogue that connects the wisdom of the past with the needs of the present while respecting cultural depth and embracing contemporary advancements.



POSTER

The Emoji Effect: The Modulating Role of Digital Facial Cues on Emotion Perception in Text-Based Conversations

Computer-mediated conversations often lack non-verbal cues, leading to descriptions of them as “robotic” in nature. To aid in emotion transference, emojis are increasingly used as affective supplements in text messages. Despite their widespread use, emojis are under-researched in terms of their socio-cognitive validity. While previous studies have focused on their impact on neutral texts, this study examines misinterpretation even in affectively charged discourse.

Using a generalized linear model, the study compares perceptual accuracy for happy and sad texts presented with or without matching facial emojis. It explores whether positive or negative stimuli are harder to interpret and tests three hypotheses: A. Perception accuracy will be higher with emojis. B. Neutrality attribution will be higher without emojis. C. Perception accuracy will be higher for happy texts across both conditions.

Involving 156 participants (67 women, 89 men, aged 18–28), the study found that perception accuracy was significantly higher with emojis, especially for sad texts. Happy texts generally received more accurate attributions than sad ones. Without emojis, sad texts were more likely to be perceived as neutral, despite being emotionally charged. These findings emphasize the importance of emojis in reducing ambiguity in textual communication and suggest that emojis can enhance digital literacy, mitigating miscommunication in both social and professional contexts.

Suha Kazi

Ms Suha Kazi is a recent graduate from Heriot Watt University, Dubai, with a BSc (Hons) in Psychology. She is interested in cognitive neuroscience and social development, particularly socio-cognitive processes, and aims to continue researching neurodiversity. During her undergraduate studies, Suha participated in various research projects and gained hands-on experience as a research and teaching assistant. She has worked on both quantitative and qualitative studies, analyzing complex data, and is currently assisting with research in health and educational psychology. Her independent study focuses on emotion attribution in textual conversations, specifically the role of facial emojis in emotion perception.



Suha’s exploration of emotion attribution in happy and sad texts, with and without emojis, aims to contribute to the discussion about emojis’ role in digital literacy. Outside of her research pursuits, Suha volunteers as a tutor for psychology students and runs weekly group meetings to offer a platform for mental health discussions. She is dedicated to making a positive impact through her research and future career.

Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani

Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani is an Assistant Professor of Psychology specializing in social psychology, cognition, and language. Her interdisciplinary research explores social issues, implicit attitudes, and reading processes across languages, using advanced techniques such as eye tracking. Dr Yekani’s work bridges social and experimental psychology, offering novel insights through collaborative and innovative approaches.



POSTER

Decoding Bystander Intervention: A Quantitative Exploration of Pakistani Cultural Dynamics Through the Lens of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

In an era marked by rapid transformations and global crises, understanding the psychological and cultural factors that drive individuals to act—or remain passive—during emergencies is more crucial than ever. This study examines bystander behavior through the lens of Geert Hofstede's cultural dimensions—power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long- vs. short-term orientation—to reveal how cultural values shape intervention tendencies. By aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for peace, justice, and strong institutions, this research sheds light on the forces that either encourage or inhibit prosocial action.

Historical humanitarian crises, including those in Germany, Afghanistan, China, and Russia, underscore the need to explore the cultural underpinnings of bystander intervention. This study employed a mixed-method approach, using descriptive surveys and correlational analysis to assess bystander behavior in a sample of 254 young adults (aged 18–25) in Pakistan. Participants completed the Cultural Values Scale (CVS) and Bystander Effect Scale (BIS), with statistical analyses conducted through Pearson correlation and descriptive statistics via SPSS. Findings indicated a weakened prevalence of intervention across cultural dimensions, with power distance (0.01) and masculinity (0.01) showing weak yet positive correlations with prosocial action. These results challenge the applicability of Hofstede's model in regional contexts, raising critical questions about the intersection of culture and prosocial behavior.

Beyond cultural influences, the study acknowledges the role of individual psychological factors—such as empathy and moral reasoning—in shaping intervention behaviors. By bridging the gap between cultural psychology and global humanitarian goals, this research advocates for fostering environments that empower individuals, regardless of cultural conditioning, to take meaningful action in times of crisis. In doing so, it contributes to the ongoing pursuit of peace, justice, and resilience amidst change.

POSTER

Decoding Bystander Intervention: A Quantitative Exploration of Pakistani Cultural Dynamics Through the Lens of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Nayab Fatima

Ms Nayab Fatima, also a Bachelor of Science graduate in psychology from Mohammad Ali Jinnah University, Pakistan, has contributed to the field through internships and presenting her final year research at Expo Centre. She has developed strong research writing skills and now works as an inclusive education teacher, supporting students with diverse learning needs.



Mahnoor Kiani

Ms Mahnoor Kiani is a Bachelor of Science graduate in psychology with hands-on experience from various internships and presenting her final year research at Expo Centre. With four years of research writing expertise, she currently works as a resource teacher, supporting student learning.



Laiba Arshad

Ms Laiba Arshad, a Bachelor of Science graduate in psychology, has gained research experience through multiple projects and presenting her final year research at Expo Centre. She currently works as a program officer in an NGO for children with physical disabilities.



Somal Kayani

Ms Somal Kayani, an MPhil Clinical Psychology graduate and Lecturer at Muhammad Ali Jinnah University, Pakistan, is a member of the American Psychological Association and a certified hypnotherapist and NLP practitioner. Her research interests include Social Psychology and Public Health.



The facial feedback hypothesis states that manipulating facial expressions can evoke specific emotions (Tomkins, 1981). This study aimed to investigate the impact of the facial feedback hypothesis on humor ratings by partially replicating the procedures employed by Strack et al. (1988). The sample consisted of 51 students from the American University of Sharjah, primarily female, with a mean age of 19.16 years. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: holding a pencil between their teeth to activate the smiling muscles, holding it between their lips to replicate a frown, or holding it with their non-dominant hand, which served as the control condition. Additionally, they were required to rate humorous videos and complete distractor tasks while maintaining the pencil in the designated position. Our findings did not align with the facial feedback hypothesis, as there were no differences in humor ratings across all three conditions. The study explores how humor perceptions are influenced by changes in facial expressions within a culturally diverse student sample in the UAE. Aligning with the IPCD 2025 theme of "Change," it highlights how cultural variations can influence individual judgments of our environment, providing useful insights to help navigate our increasingly globalized world.

Noha Eldib

Ms Noha Eldib is a senior undergraduate psychology student at the American University of Sharjah (AUS), actively involved in research and departmental responsibilities. She works as a research assistant studying the link between emotional regulation and mobile phone use and serves as an undergraduate department assistant. Noha also holds leadership roles, including Vice President of Psi Chi, and has consistently been recognized on the Dean's and Chancellor's Lists. Her diverse experiences enhance her culturally informed approach to psychological research.

Khushpreet Kaur

Ms Khushpreet Kaur is a psychology undergraduate at AUS, aspiring to become a clinical therapist. She has conducted independent research on fast-food advertising and obesity, as well as the facial feedback hypothesis and humor perception. Additionally, she has collaborated with faculty on research related to student mental health. Her goal is to further explore clinical psychology and support individuals facing mental health challenges.

Maitha Thabet

Ms Maitha Thabet is an undergraduate psychology student at AUS with interests in clinical and developmental psychology. She co-founded NetflixPartyAD during the 2020 quarantine to promote mental well-being through virtual interactions. Her research focuses on mental health stigma in the Middle East and parentification in marital relationships. She aims to publish her findings and contribute to the field through further studies.

Fathima Hiba Rasheed

Ms Fathima Hiba Rasheed is pursuing a psychology degree at AUS with a passion for child development and clinical psychology. Her internship at the Emirates Down Syndrome Association provided hands-on experience in assisting children with special needs through therapeutic and educational activities. She aspires to bridge theory and practice to support children's emotional and developmental well-being.

POSTER

Parenting Styles, Birth Order and Gender on Heritage Language Maintenance of Second-Generation South-Asian Immigrants Living in the UAE

This study investigates whether perceived parenting style, sibling status/birth order, age at immigration, and gender influence heritage language maintenance among second-generation immigrants living in the multicultural environment of the UAE. The study draws on concepts of bilingualism and family language policy.

A correlational survey design was used, with participants completing questionnaires that measured perceived parenting style, birth order, gender, and age at immigration. Data was analyzed using regression and chi-square tests to identify any significant effects on heritage language maintenance.

Findings show that age at immigration plays a significant role in maintaining heritage language, while perceived parenting style, birth order, and gender did not have a significant impact, which contrasts with previous research.

In an era where change is constant, aligning with the 2025 IPCD conference theme, this study highlights the importance of considering factors beyond family dynamics, such as individual attitudes and societal pressures, in understanding heritage language maintenance. This study contributes new insights by exploring heritage language maintenance within the UAE, emphasizing the role of age at immigration and highlighting potential gaps in existing research on gender and family dynamics.

Rasajna Manthapurwar

Ms Rasajna Manthapurwar earned a Bachelor of Science (Honors) in Psychology from Heriot-Watt University, Dubai. Her academic journey culminated in a high-achieving dissertation on heritage language maintenance among second-generation immigrants in the UAE's multicultural context.

She has actively shared her research, presenting her findings on the influence of perceived parenting styles, birth order, and gender at the International Virtual Conference on Language and Literature (IVICOLL) and the Psychology Student Research Conference in 2023. Her work was also published in IVICOLL, contributing to the discourse on language and cultural retention among immigrant populations. Professionally, Rasajna has gained experience in talent acquisition and project coordination.



Dr Kirin Hilliar

Dr Kirin Hilliar is a licensed Forensic Psychologist based in Dubai, UAE, and an Assistant Professor at Heriot-Watt University. Her career spans both academia and clinical practice. Certified by Dubai's Community Development Authority (CDA), she specializes in forensic psychology but has gained experience across forensic, clinical, and organizational/business psychology.



POSTER

Navigating Change: The Role of Large Language Model (LLM) Algorithms in Shaping Decision-Making and Cognitive Biases in an AI-Driven World

The rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) are reshaping decision-making, offering both opportunities and challenges for individuals and society. Large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT and Perplexity.ai are designed to enhance accuracy and efficiency, potentially mitigating human limitations. However, this study examines the unintended consequences of AI-driven decision-making, revealing that these models can introduce biases that lead to suboptimal outcomes, affecting both users and third parties. Using scenario-based tasks and incentive-based experiments, findings indicate that AI-generated advice can systematically skew decisions, underscoring the need for ethical and trustworthy AI in high-stakes scenarios. This research highlights the importance of psychological insights in evaluating and integrating AI responsibly, advocating for greater awareness of trust and ethical considerations in AI deployment.

Aligning with the IPCD 2025 theme of "Change," this study explores how AI-driven decision-making influences individual and societal behavior, emphasizing the need for adaptive responses in an evolving technological landscape.

Haleema Khatoon

Mrs Haleema Khatoon holds a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Riphah International University, Pakistan. Her major research areas include experimental psychology, cognitive sciences, and human-computer interaction. Her expertise spans various domains, including cognitive psychology, machine learning, data science, human-AI interaction, and artificial intelligence.



Dr Muhammad Luqman Khan

Dr Muhammad Luqman Khan is an Associate Professor and the Head of the Department of Psychology at Riphah International University, Faisalabad Campus, Pakistan. He earned his PhD in Clinical Psychology. With diverse experience as a clinical psychologist, researcher, and educator, his research interests include social psychology, educational psychology, and positive psychology.



POSTER

Understanding University Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviours Toward Sustainability

This study examines university students in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to understand their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding sustainability, with a focus on their awareness of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13, Climate Action, and their engagement in sustainable practices. A structured survey was administered to 55 students from four universities in Dubai International Academic City (DIAC). Results revealed a significant knowledge gap, with 72.8% of respondents reporting being "Somewhat Familiar" or "Not Familiar at All" with SDG 13. Social media emerged as the primary information source, followed by academic workshops and events. Although students expressed concern about climate change, particularly in relation to rising temperatures and water scarcity, only 32% reported regularly engaging in sustainable practices such as recycling and energy conservation. Participation in sustainability-related workshops and events was low, but 82% of students supported integrating sustainability topics into university curricula. The findings underscore the importance of embedding sustainability education in higher education to bridge the gap between awareness and action and foster an environmentally conscious culture.

Arya Shah

Ms Arya Shah is an undergraduate business student at Curtin Dubai, with a strong interest in communications. She is the Vice President of Events in the Curtin Dubai Student Council and President of the Curtin Dubai Theatre Club, gaining experience in event organization, teamwork, and leadership. Arya is also a Curtin Social Ambassador and an active participant in research initiatives, winning accolades at research competitions. She is eager to contribute to meaningful discussions on applying psychological insights to real-world scenarios.



Harishma Kumar

Ms Harishma Kumar is a psychology student at Curtin Dubai and President of Events for the Curtin Psychology Association. With extensive experience in event management, she has gained insights into group dynamics, interpersonal relationships, and psychological principles such as motivation and leadership. Harishma is passionate about connecting psychological theory with practice and is dedicated to promoting mental well-being, fostering discussions, and creating impactful experiences at this conference.



POSTER

Understanding University Students' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviours Toward Sustainability

Maureene Jesse Lavarias

Ms Maureene Jesse Lavarias is a psychology student at Curtin University Dubai and a Curtin Brand Ambassador. She has research experience in the industrial sector, focusing on product development and academic advancements, working with organizations such as 3EWorldwide and Mind Nation. Maureene is also an active volunteer with Heroes of Hope and Eduscan Group, raising awareness for mental health. She aspires to become a clinical psychologist and researcher, aiming to bridge the gap between theory and practice to enhance lives.



Sowmiya Venkatesh

Ms Sowmiya Venkatesh is pursuing a BBA in Hospitality and Tourism/Digital Marketing at Curtin University. She has held leadership roles as Vice President of Communications in the Student Council, Vice President of the Theatre Club, and President of the Culinary Club. Sowmiya has represented Curtin at the Global Sustainability Challenge in Singapore and earned numerous accolades, including the UAE Golden Visa and The Zafar Siddiqi Enterprise and Innovation Scholarship. Her achievements reflect her leadership, creativity, and understanding of human behavior.



This study explores how masculinity workplace norms impact prosocial behavior and well-being. Prior research suggests that workplaces dominated by masculine norms contribute to burnout and a diminished sense of belonging (Glick et al., 2018). In two pre-registered experiments, we examine whether such norms reduce prosocial behavior by fostering an instrumental mindset—encouraging individuals to view co-workers as means to personal gain rather than as individuals to support.

Study 1 ($n = 431$) investigated how workplace norms shape mindset and helping behavior. Participants read about a company with either strong or weak masculinity norms and then completed measures assessing self-interested vs. altruistic motivations and willingness to help co-workers. As hypothesized, strong masculinity norms were associated with lower helping intentions and a heightened instrumental mindset, including greater self-interest and objectification of co-workers. Instrumentality partially explained the link between masculinity norms and reduced prosocial behavior.

Study 2 ($n = 1,152$) replicated these findings and tested causal mechanisms by introducing an intervention to reduce instrumental mindsets. Participants again read about a company with strong or weak masculinity norms, and half were randomly assigned to a mindset-reduction condition. As in Study 1, strong masculinity norms reduced helping behavior. However, this effect was mitigated when instrumental mindsets were disrupted.

These findings highlight the power of workplace norms in shaping social interactions and well-being. By fostering instrumental mindsets, strong masculinity norms reduce prosociality, suggesting that reshaping workplace culture can enhance cooperation and mental health.

Amna Ramadhan Alahmadi

Ms Amna Ramadhan Alahmadi is a Research Assistant at the Social Roles and Beliefs Lab at New York University Abu Dhabi. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from NYU Abu Dhabi in 2024 and is deeply engaged in social psychology research, particularly the effects of gender across different contexts.



Dr Andrea Vial

Dr Andrea Vial is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at NYU Abu Dhabi and Director of the Social Roles and Beliefs Lab. She earned her PhD in Psychology from Yale University in 2018 and later conducted postdoctoral research at NYU. Her work focuses on gender employment segregation, drawing from social, organizational, and developmental psychology to examine how psychological processes shape career choices and opportunities.



Dr Colleen Cowgill

Dr Colleen Cowgill earned her PhD in Experimental Psychology from Ohio University, where she studied how being part of an underrepresented group affects self-presentation, ethical decision-making, and career aspirations. Her research explores the intersection of identity, belonging, and workplace inclusion. As a postdoctoral researcher at NYU Abu Dhabi, she examined challenges faced by women in leadership and how gender stereotypes shape workplace culture. She now applies her expertise in research methods and data analysis to help organizations address Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEIA) challenges.



This cross-sectional study examined the relationship between people-pleasing behavior, anger, and employee well-being among 192 Pakistani employees across various industries. Self-reported questionnaires assessed people-pleasing tendencies, anger levels, and overall well-being. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, reliability analyses, and multiple regression using the PROCESS macro, with people-pleasing as the predictor (X), anger as the mediator (M), and well-being as the outcome (Y). While a significant correlation was found between anger and well-being, mediation analysis indicated no mediating effect of anger.

This study aligns with the IPCD 2025 theme of "Change" by exploring the internal psychological transformations needed to navigate evolving social and workplace environments. In an era of increasing external demands, people-pleasing behaviors—often driven by a need for approval and conflict avoidance—can hinder authentic self-expression and resilience (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Biesanz et al., 2000). The findings highlight anger as a critical but often unexpressed emotion that contributes to emotional strain and diminished psychological health (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). By examining anger's role in well-being, this research offers valuable insights for psychological interventions that promote adaptive emotional regulation, assertive communication, and resilience against social pressures. The study underscores the necessity of transformative organizational cultures that encourage emotional openness (Linehan, 1993), reduce people-pleasing tendencies, and support mental well-being amidst change.

Aksah Motiwala

Aksah Motiwala is a Business Psychologist based in Dubai, holding a Master's in Business Psychology with Coaching from Heriot-Watt University. Her expertise lies in conflict management, stress reduction, productivity enhancement, and talent development across human resources, education, and leadership sectors.

As a Research Intern at Viwell in Dubai, she worked on integrating academic research with real-world practices, particularly in establishing workplace well-being standards in the Middle East. Her previous roles include Senior Executive Creative Writer at ABTACH, where she developed impactful content, and Associate Program Manager at the Pakistan Society for Training & Development, supporting employee engagement, research, and training initiatives.

Her leadership journey began early as CEO of Nixor Productions, where she honed skills in project management, coaching, and psychological assessment. Fluent in English and Urdu, with proficiency in Arabic and German, she is dedicated to continuous learning. Aksah is a member of the American Psychological Association (APA) and Psych Station and holds certifications from the British Psychological Society (BPS) and Psych Cares. Passionate about fostering positive workplace culture, she strives to apply psychology to drive meaningful organizational change.



POSTER

The Influence of Adult Attachment on Student Engagement: A Quantitative Analysis of the Role of Belonging in Higher Education

This study examines the influence of adult attachment styles on student engagement in a university setting, with belonging as a mediating factor. Drawing from research linking attachment styles to workplace engagement (Byrne et al., 2017; Ryan, 2014), it explores how attachment security and insecurity shape students' motivation, commitment, and participation. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) suggests early caregiver relationships influence interpersonal behaviors, potentially affecting academic engagement. Securely attached students may experience greater psychological safety and engagement, while those with attachment anxiety or avoidance may struggle with academic and social connections.

A quantitative survey measured attachment styles, belonging, and engagement among a culturally diverse university sample. Mediation analysis assessed belonging's role in the attachment-engagement link. Findings contribute to understanding psychological factors in student engagement and offer insights for creating supportive academic environments that enhance belonging and participation across attachment profiles.

Dr Zoë Fortune

Dr Zoë Fortune is an Assistant Professor in Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Dubai and a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society. She also holds a position as an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Hong Kong, where she leads a Mental Health Communication Research cluster. Currently, her research focuses on workplace mental health and well-being, graduate and student mental health, and workplace transitions.



Dr Gary Pheiffer

Dr Gary Pheiffer is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Dubai. He is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist (BPS), Practitioner Psychologist (HCPC), Chartered Member of the CIPD, and a Fellow of the HEA in the UK. Before transitioning to academia, he gained extensive experience in banking, manufacturing, and the metal industry, specializing in human resource management and change management. His research focuses on adult attachment in the workplace, employee well-being, workplace relationships, and organizational learning. Passionate about bridging research and practice, Dr Pheiffer actively develops evidence-based organizational and educational interventions to enhance workplace well-being, engagement, and professional development.



POSTER

The Influence of Adult Attachment on Student Engagement: A Quantitative Analysis of the Role of Belonging in Higher Education

Kash Gianani

Mx Kash Gianani completed their Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Heriot-Watt University in 2024. They are currently working as an Administrative Assistant for the Psychology Department. Their main research interests include nutrient intake and the impact of relationships, intimate attachment, and social psychology.



POSTER

Workplace: My Second Home - Exploring the Effects of Extraversion, Person-Job Fit and Servant Leadership Style on Emotional Exhaustion and Job Satisfaction Among Employees

This study explores key factors influencing workplace well-being by examining the relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction—two critical topics in organizational psychology. Specifically, the research investigates how extraversion, person-job fit, and servant leadership impact these variables. The study aims to provide insights into fostering healthier workplace environments by identifying the extent to which these factors contribute to employee well-being. The presentation will detail the research question, hypotheses, methodology, results, and findings, offering a comprehensive analysis of the study's implications for workplace improvement.

Negin Naghshineh

Ms Negin Naghshineh graduated in July 2024 with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology with Management (Honors) from Heriot-Watt University, Dubai campus. After graduation, Negin continued their association with the university as a Student Services Centre Administrative Assistant. In September 2025, Negin will begin pursuing a Master's in Business Psychology with Coaching at Heriot-Watt University.



In today's rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, moral distress has become a pressing challenge, exacerbated by the changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. This study examines how healthcare professionals, particularly those in high-stakes environments, are affected by institutional constraints that hinder ethically appropriate actions. As healthcare systems undergo significant transformations, addressing moral distress is crucial for safeguarding mental well-being and professional resilience.

Using an exploratory cross-sectional survey, this study assessed moral distress among physicians and nurses at a COVID-19 facility in the UAE, with 238 responses collected. Findings indicate that critical care professionals experience higher levels of moral distress, with an average MMD-HP score of 79.18 ($SD = 87.75$). Results also reveal a strong association between moral distress and employment choices, particularly regarding intentions to leave, highlighting long-term implications for healthcare systems.

This research underscores the need for resilience-focused interventions to support healthcare workers as they navigate evolving ethical challenges. By fostering moral resilience, healthcare systems can better adapt to ongoing changes while prioritizing workforce well-being. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and healthcare leaders, emphasizing the necessity of addressing systemic barriers to create a more resilient and adaptive healthcare environment.

Assel Wanigasekara

Assel Wanigasekara is an accomplished Organizational Psychologist and Clinical Data Optimization Expert with over a decade of experience in healthcare research, psychometrics, and organizational development. Known for enhancing clinical decision-making and employee well-being, Assel has led numerous projects focused on moral distress and secondary traumatic stress among healthcare professionals, promoting resilience and policy improvements.

With a Master's degree in Occupational Psychology from the University of Leicester, Assel's research on moral distress, published in the British Psychological Society's PsyPag Quarterly, has been instrumental in shaping initiatives within the healthcare sector. Currently, Assel collaborates with Sheikh Shakhbout Medical City to drive evidence-based improvements in healthcare operations and workforce wellness.



POSTER

From Student to Scholar: Exploring Career Developmental Challenges for Women in Psychology

Despite women comprising approximately 71% of new early career psychologists annually, significant barriers to their career advancement persist. Research has highlighted several challenges faced by women during their transition from student to professional. These include limited mentorship opportunities, especially from female mentors in senior roles, work-life balance difficulties, and institutional challenges in workplaces that lack diversity and inclusivity. Other factors such as limited networking opportunities, gendered expectations, and covert competition also contribute to these barriers.

This study investigates the career development journey of five professional women in psychology, spanning both practice and academia. It explores their academic achievements, mentorship experiences, and strategies they employed to navigate career challenges. Using qualitative narrative analysis, the research examines reflections written by the participants, identifying key themes of identity, organizational culture, and the barriers they encountered.

The study employs a qualitative narrative approach with convenience sampling, where five women from a psychology research team wrote 2-5 page reflections on their professional journeys. These reflections cover aspects such as career choice, mentorship experiences, and challenges faced in their careers. The responses are coded to identify themes like barriers, achievements, and mentorship dynamics.

Preliminary insights suggest that undergraduate women of color experience significant time management and mentorship challenges. Graduate women report career-related anxiety due to limited mentorship, while professional women face advancement barriers due to family obligations and gendered expectations. Women of color are underrepresented in leadership roles and are more likely to experience workplace discrimination. Many of the women who completed graduate studies demonstrate a strong commitment to mentoring younger women, seeking to bridge the mentorship gap they themselves encountered.

This research aims to help universities better support women students and create more inclusive environments in academia and professional settings. It also encourages psychology professionals to recognize and address the specific challenges faced by women in the field.

Dr Khym Isaac De Barros

Dr Khym Isaac De Barros holds a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology with a focus on Multicultural Counseling from Indiana University. With over 25 years of experience in psychological counseling, she has taught at various U.S. universities and the American University of Sharjah (AUS). Her research centers on mood disorders, interpersonal relationships, and multicultural counseling. Dr. Isaac De Barros is the founder of the Paget T. & Sylvia G. Isaac Research Institute and has presented her work at international conferences.



POSTER

From Student to Scholar: Exploring Career Developmental Challenges for Women in Psychology

Dr Eyman Hamad

Dr Eyman Hamad, MRCPsych, earned her MBBS from Shendi University in Sudan and is currently a psychiatry registrar pursuing her MD at the Sudan Medical Specialization Board. She is a full member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and is undergoing advanced training in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry with a focus on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Dr Eyman is involved in mental health outreach in Sudan, volunteering at the Step Clinic and conducting research on anxiety in the Middle East.



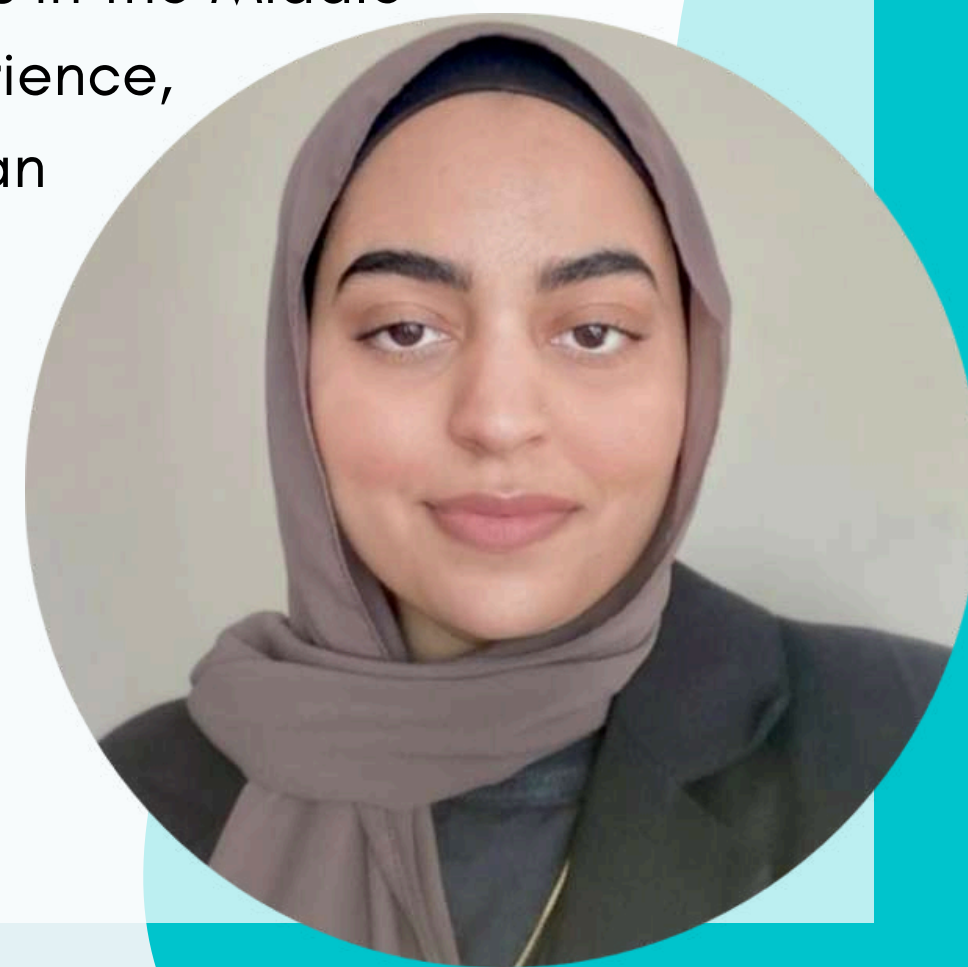
Ayah Aqtash

Ms Ayah Aqtash is a recent graduate with a bachelor's degree in psychology from AUS. She gained hands-on experience through internships, including clinical psychology placements, and worked as a research assistant on various projects. Ayah has presented her research at notable conferences such as the British Psychological Society's Division of Counselling Psychology Conference and the 31st Emirates Society for Mental Health Congress. Additionally, she is certified as a Registered Behaviour Technician (RBT), providing Applied Behaviour Analysis therapy to individuals with autism spectrum disorder. Her diverse experience in both clinical practice and research drives her dedication to advancing psychological knowledge and improving mental health outcomes in her community.



Sara Abukmeil

Ms Sara Abukmeil holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from AUS and is pursuing a master's in clinical psychology at the United Arab Emirates University. As a Research Assistant on Dr Khym Isaac De Barros' team, she has contributed to multiple papers, posters, and workshops at major conferences, focusing on mood disorders and interpersonal relationships in the Middle East. With a strong academic background and hands-on research experience, Sara is committed to both clinical practice and research. As a Palestinian affected by regional conflict, she is passionate about supporting individuals impacted by war while advancing psychological research in the Middle East.



POSTER

From Student to Scholar: Exploring Career Developmental Challenges for Women in Psychology

Yara El Rifai

Ms Yara El Rifai holds a BA in psychology from the AUS and has worked as a research assistant, focusing on mood disorders and interpersonal relationships across cultures. Her research has been presented at conferences, including the 2024 APA convention, the BPS Division of Counselling Psychology, and the ESMH. Yara has completed internships in a hospital setting and a developmental center, gaining experience in ABA therapy.

Elizabeth Sara Roby

Ms Elizabeth Sara Roby has a BA in Psychology from AUS. She works as a research assistant on a study focusing on anxiety awareness at university campuses and presented research at the 2024 APA convention. Elizabeth has interned at Al Amal Psychiatric Hospital and Al Ibtisama Special Needs School. She is currently pursuing a Master's in Clinical Mental Health at the University of Birmingham Dubai.



Sara Hachem

Ms Sara Hachem holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the American University of Sharjah (AUS) and has focused her career on educational support and research. She has worked as an undergraduate and graduate research assistant, as well as a Learning Support Assistant. Currently, Sara is an Inclusion Teacher at King's School in the UAE.



Fatma Al Malik

Ms Fatma Al Malik holds a B.Sc. in Biology with a Minor in Psychology from AUS. She is a Research Assistant at the Paget T. and Sylvia G. Isaac Institute, focusing on anxiety and intervention strategies among Middle Eastern university students. Fatma has presented at major conferences and recently completed a research internship at Mohammed Bin Rashid University of Medicine and Health Sciences.

POSTER

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Marya Badran

Ms Marya Badran earned her BA in Psychology in December 2024 from AUS. She has diverse work experience in Public Relations, HR, and research assistant positions at AUS which was profoundly impactful at AUS's Anxiety Awareness Day.



Neimat Elkarib

Ms Neimat Elkarib is a graduate of AUS with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in integrated marketing. She has presented at international conferences on the prevalence and treatment of anxiety. Additionally, she works as a public relations executive.



Dana Ammary

Ms Dana Ammary holds a BA in Psychology from AUS and is a certified ABAT. She has worked as a research assistant and currently serves as a Wellbeing Specialist and HR Executive, where she develops programs to support employee mental health.



Maryam Al Falasi

Ms Maryam Al Falasi is a recent psychology graduate working as a research assistant. She focuses on abnormal psychology and developmental psychology.



POSTER

From Student to Scholar: Exploring Career Developmental Challenges for Women in Psychology

Nouran Azzam

Ms Nouran Azzam is pursuing a BA in English Language and Literature at the American University of Sharjah, with a double minor in psychology and theater. Her research interests include anxiety, EMDR, trauma, and family systems. She is on track to earn her degree in 2025.



POSTER

Total Interpretive Structural Modeling of Predictors Driving Quiet Quitting Among Gen Z Employees

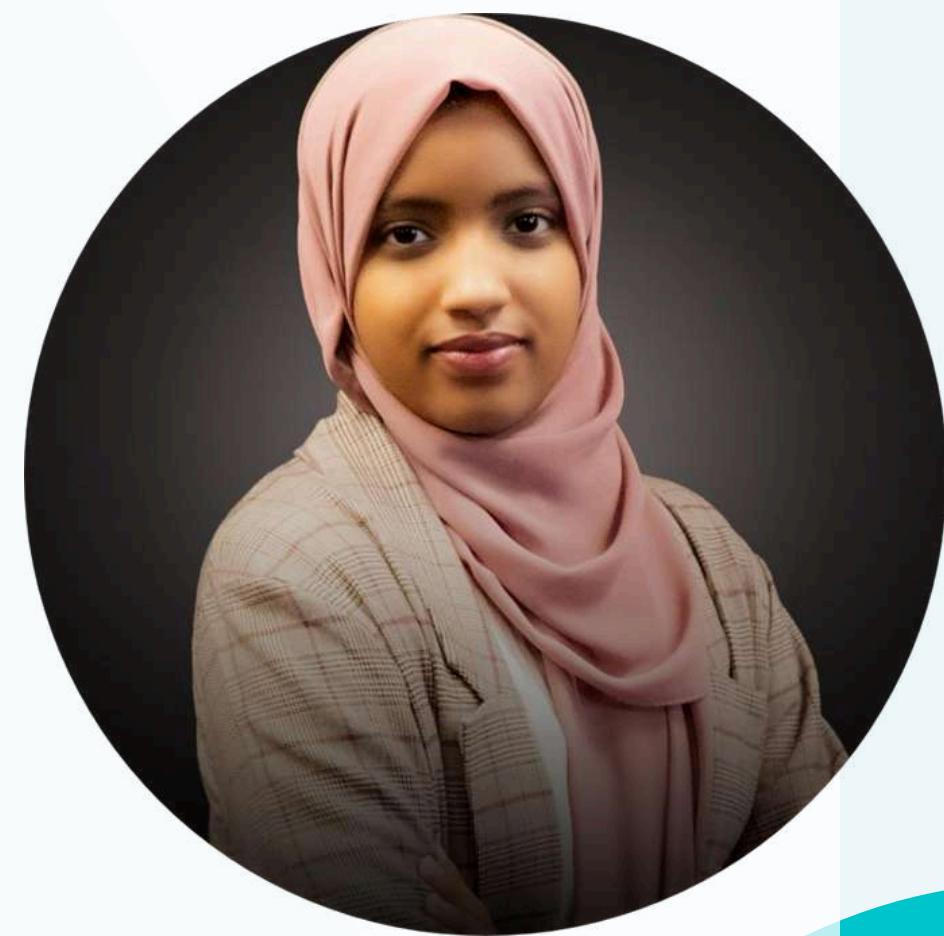
This study investigates the phenomenon of "quiet quitting," where employees limit their efforts to the bare minimum required by their roles, and examines its underlying causes and organizational implications. Focusing on Gen Z employees in the UAE, the research explores how factors such as workload, leadership dynamics, growth opportunities, and burnout contribute to the prevalence of quiet quitting. The Total Interpretive Structural Modelling (TISM) technique is used to analyze the antecedents and interrelationships of these factors, with data collected through interviews.

Preliminary findings suggest that leadership is a key driver of quiet quitting, directly influencing employees' efforts, while also shaping workload and contributing to burnout. Quiet quitting was found to be a driven variable, influenced by leadership, workload, burnout, and growth opportunities. Growth opportunities, in turn, are shaped by leadership and quiet quitting itself. These interrelationships highlight the complex dynamics within organizational settings.

The research offers critical implications for organizations, emphasizing the need for effective leadership practices and strategic workload management to mitigate burnout and its effects. Supporting leadership, providing growth opportunities, and prioritizing employee well-being are key strategies for enhancing employee retention and engagement. This study contributes to the literature on quiet quitting, particularly among Gen Z employees in the post-pandemic era, and introduces the TISM methodology as a novel approach to workplace analysis. Aligned with the IPCD 2025 theme of "Change," the findings underscore the importance of adaptive leadership practices and collaborative environments to support employees through ongoing workplace shifts.

Eslam Yaser Babeker Mohamed

Ms Eslam Yaser Babeker Mohamed is pursuing a Bachelor's in Psychology at Curtin University.



Manav Kalyan Dangar

Mr Manav Kalyan Dangar is associated with Curtin University.



POSTER

Total Interpretive Structural Modeling of Predictors Driving Quiet Quitting Among Gen Z Employees

Saim Hasan Syed

Mr Saim Hasan Syed is associated with Curtin University.



Ayesha Ijaz

Ms Ayesha Ijaz is associated with Curtin University.



POSTER

Transformation Through Technology: The Effectiveness of Digital Progressive Muscle Relaxation in Reducing Anxiety Among Underserved Middle Eastern University Students

This study examines the growing issue of anxiety among college students, exacerbated by understaffed university counseling centers, and explores the effectiveness of Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) as a digital intervention. By leveraging digital technology, the research aims to determine whether PMR, delivered through an audio recording, can effectively reduce anxiety in Middle Eastern university students. The study hypothesizes that students will report higher anxiety at the end of the semester than at the beginning and that listening to a PMR audio recording will result in lower anxiety levels.

A pre-post design was employed, with data collected digitally via Sona and Qualtrics. Anxiety levels were measured three times throughout the semester, and participants—487 Psychology 101 and 102 students—were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: PMR audio with a male voice, PMR audio with a female voice, or a control condition. Anxiety was assessed using seven common items drawn from three standardized anxiety scales (BAI, HAM-A, and DASS). After listening to the assigned PMR audio, participants were reassessed to evaluate its effectiveness.

Results analyzed using Jamovi revealed that participants initially reported moderate anxiety, with an average score of 23.3. After listening to the PMR audio, the average score decreased to 18.5, indicating low anxiety. A statistically significant difference was found ($t(221) = 11.4, p < .001$), with a mean reduction of 4.62 points. These findings support the hypothesis that digital PMR effectively reduces student anxiety.

The study highlights the potential of digital PMR as an accessible and scalable solution for university counseling centers struggling with high demand. By incorporating PMR into online mental health resources, universities can enhance student well-being while adapting to technological advancements. Future research aims to replicate this study using an in-person approach and explore alternative digital delivery methods to further expand accessibility and effectiveness.

Dr Khym Isaac De Barros

Dr Khym Isaac De Barros holds a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology with a focus on Multicultural Counseling from Indiana University. With over 25 years of experience in psychological counseling, she has taught at various U.S. universities and the American University of Sharjah. Her research centers on mood disorders, interpersonal relationships, and multicultural counseling. Dr Isaac De Barros is the founder of the Paget T. & Sylvia G. Isaac Research Institute and has presented her work at international conferences.



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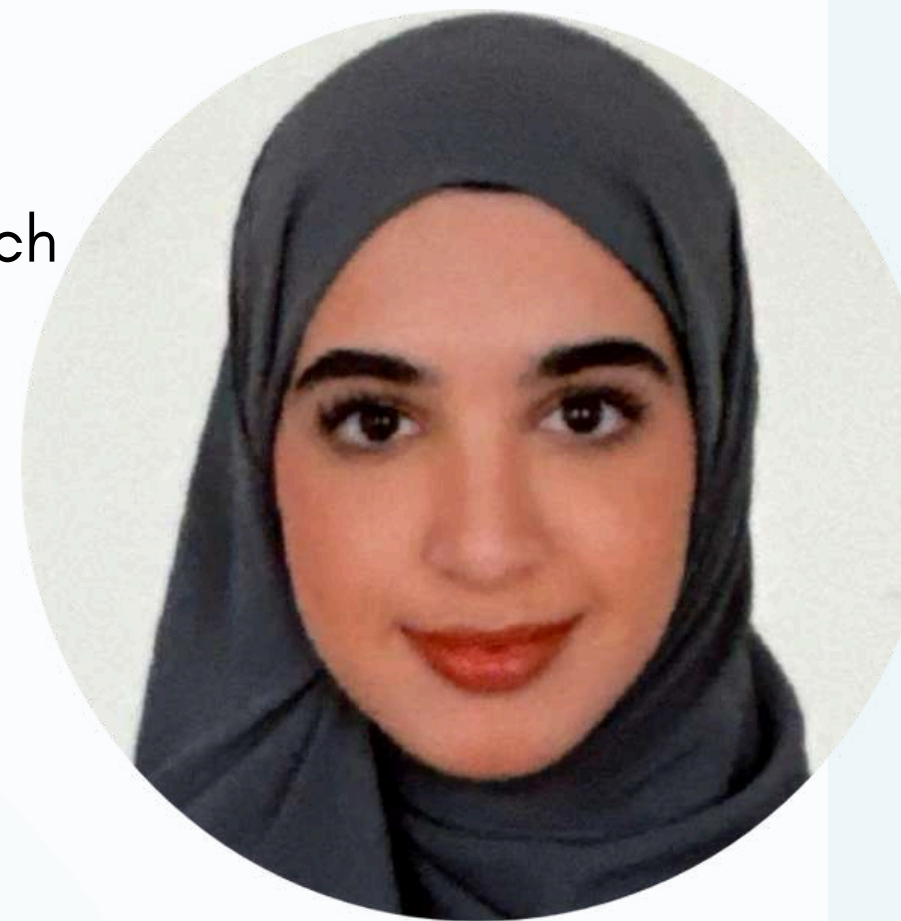
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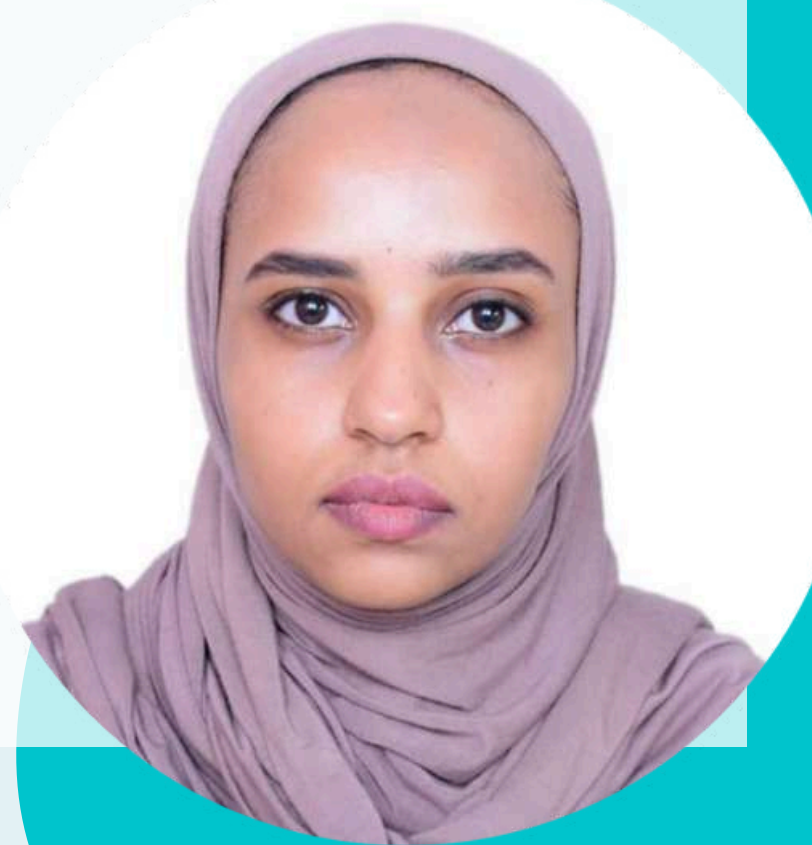
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POSTER

A Journey of Healing: Clinical Insights Into an Incest Survivor

The purpose of this presentation is to describe the therapy and change process of an adult female survivor of childhood incest. The effects of sexual abuse vary significantly among victims (Horton & Cruise, 2001). Incest trauma is particularly complex; the patient was highly dissociative and experienced significant psychiatric comorbidity, along with extensive social and religious judgment and criticism.

Some victims exhibit affective symptoms such as depression, anxiety, behavioral problems, and interpersonal difficulties (Jones et al., 1998). According to Shalev (2000), traumatic events experienced by victims can lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), with symptoms including insomnia, nightmares, substance abuse, anxiety, anger, depression, and fear (Matsakis, 1994). While PTSD is commonly experienced immediately after the assault, symptoms may decrease over time (Briere, 1997; Foa & Rothbaum, 1998). Additionally, incest trauma can lead to emotional dysregulation, with survivors experiencing intense emotions such as sadness, shame, agitation, restlessness, fleeting moments of cheerfulness, heavy-heartedness, and disappointment.

Incest presents stressors that exceed the adaptive capacities of most children, often resulting in long-lasting effects (Anderson, 2006). Research suggests that individuals who were sexually abused as children may experience both short- and long-term psychological effects, with the form and intensity of these effects varying among individuals (Simpson, 2010).

This presentation will explore the consequences of trauma within the local cultural context, where the victim may be rendered silent, rejected, and even blamed for the abuse. Patriarchal structures act as an additional stressor—virginity is a taboo, and the implications are severe if one loses it to a close relative. The therapy process involved the application of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy and cognitive guidance to address these psychological effects. Finally, this presentation will include a firsthand testimonial written by the patient herself—a personal account of her therapeutic journey and transformation.

Dr Yassine Bourouais

Dr Yassine Bourouais is a Clinical Psychologist with over a decade of experience treating psychological, emotional, and interpersonal challenges. He holds a PhD in Clinical Psychology from Sophia Antipolis University, France, and has served as an Assistant Professor and researcher at Grenoble-Alpes University. Trained and certified in EMDR therapy, he also holds diplomas in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Child and Adolescent Psychopathology. Currently, he works at Aspris Healthcare in Abu Dhabi and is an adjunct faculty member at UAEU. His research focuses on trauma and attachment relationships.



POSTER

Perceptions of Mental Disorders Labels Amongst Students: Exploring Liberating and Stigmatizing Views in the UAE and UK

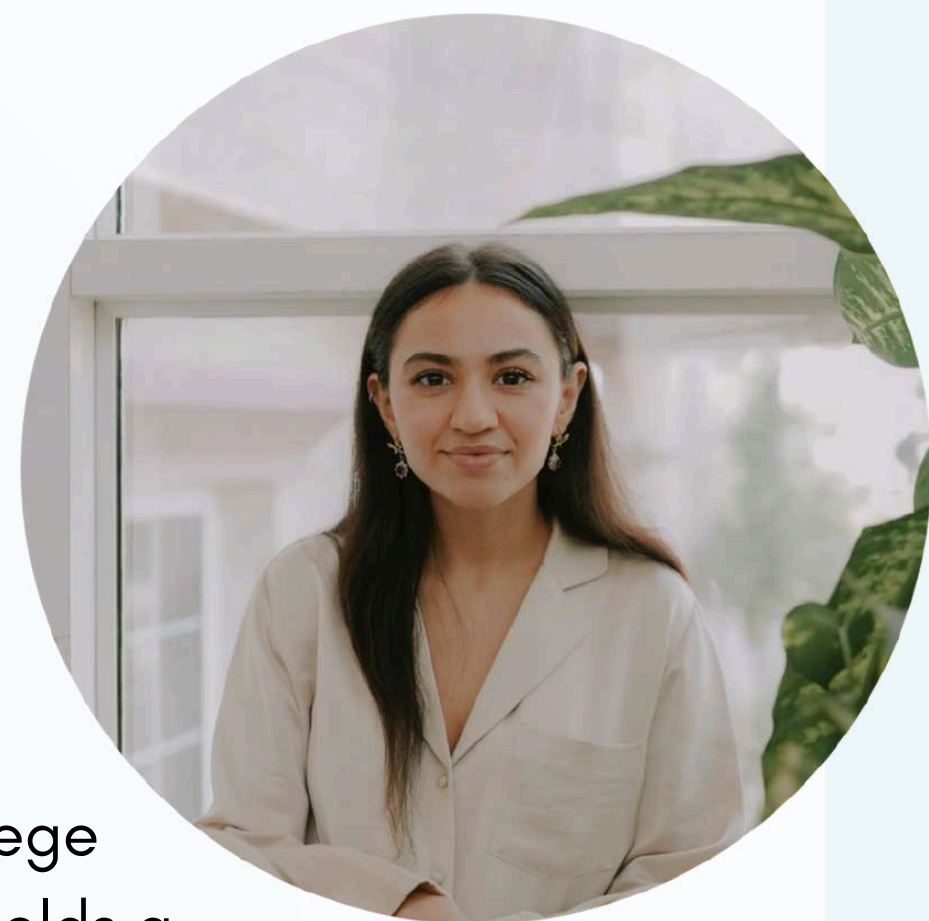
This PhD study examines the impact of mental disorder classifications (such as depression, schizophrenia, or bipolar disorder) on identity formation, stigma, liberation, and help-seeking behaviors among university students in the UAE and UK. With changing societal perceptions of mental health—fueled by greater awareness, advancements in diagnostic technology, and cultural considerations—the research addresses the theme of "Change."

The study will use qualitative interviews and surveys to explore how students' views on mental health disorders are shaped by both stigmatizing and liberating narratives. While diagnostic labels can validate personal struggles and promote access to care (Clark et al., 2017), they may also reinforce harmful stereotypes, discouraging help-seeking behavior (Szeto et al., 2012).

This research aims to provide insights into how mental health services can adapt to societal changes. It will highlight factors that make diagnostic labels stigmatizing or liberating and emphasize the role of causal beliefs in help-seeking behavior. The study calls for the use of culturally sensitive, stigma-reducing communication strategies when delivering diagnoses, aligning with the evolving societal landscape and professional practice. The findings are relevant for enhancing mental health treatment both regionally and globally, and align with ICD 2025's theme.

Seiara Imanova

Seiara is a PhD student at the University of Birmingham, focusing on the Philosophy of Psychiatry. Her research examines the perception of mental disorder labels among student populations, comparing Western and Middle Eastern perspectives. She is also the host and producer of *Behind the Stigma Podcast*, where she discusses Psychology, Neuroscience, and Mental Health with clinicians, researchers, and educators. Driven by a desire to bridge the gap between academia and the public, her podcast aims to raise awareness of important issues in these fields. The show has featured academic guests from prestigious institutions such as King's College London, Harvard, Columbia, Imperial College, and Johns Hopkins. Seiara holds a Mental Health First Aid certificate from Lighthouse Arabia, UAE.



Dr Lisa Bortolotti

Dr Lisa Bortolotti is a leading philosopher of cognitive science at the University of Birmingham UK, focusing on the philosophy of psychology and psychiatry. She is also the Editor-in-Chief of *Philosophical Psychology* Journal and the founder of The Philosophy Garden.



POSTER

Perceptions of Mental Disorders Labels Amongst Students: Exploring Liberating and Stigmatizing Views in the UAE and UK

Dr Matthew Broome

Dr Matthew Broome is a Professor of Psychiatry and Youth Mental Health at the University of Birmingham UK. He is also an academic psychiatrist and the Director of the Institute for Mental Health at the University. He is a leader in the field of early psychosis and in the philosophy and ethics of mental health.



Substance abuse is a global problem that significantly impacts individuals' lives. The consumption of both licit and illicit substances has increased worldwide. The current study aimed to explore the psychosocial factors behind the initiation and withdrawal of substance abuse, as well as strategies to prevent relapse after treatment and discharge from drug addiction treatment centers.

The present study was conducted on a sample of male patients with substance abuse ($n = 17$), aged between 22 to 45 years, admitted to the Drug Addiction Treatment and Rehabilitation Center at Nishtar Hospital, Multan. A qualitative approach was adopted for this study. In-depth interviews were conducted with the 17 substance abusers using purposive sampling techniques. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis through qualitative analysis software Qurikos.

The findings of the current study revealed that substances such as heroin, cannabis, ice (methamphetamine), Kinz injection (nalbuphine), and Xanax (alprazolam) are increasingly being abused. Various psychosocial push factors, such as peer pressure, stress, maladaptive coping strategies, the desire for recreation and enjoyment, vulnerable personality traits, and the easy availability of substances, contribute to the initiation of substance abuse.

On the other hand, psychosocial factors that contribute to withdrawal include stigmatization, health issues, financial problems, guilt, family and children, and a lack of social support. Self-control, avoiding peer groups associated with drug use, practicing drug refusal skills, engaging in religious practices, and making lifestyle modifications were identified as important strategies in preventing relapse after treatment.

Dr Rizwana Amin

Dr Rizwana Amin joined Effat University in the Fall of 2023. She completed her PhD in Professional Psychology, specializing in Clinical Psychology, from Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan, in 2012. In 2019, she earned the first PHEC Indigenous Post-Doctoral Fellowship for Social Sciences. Dr Amin has received training in evidence-based psychotherapies, including cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). With over 10 years of experience in teaching, research, and practice, she has contributed significantly to the field. Dr Amin is also a member of several national and international psychology societies.

Khizra

Ms Khizra completed her MPhil in Applied Psychology with a specialization in Clinical Psychology from Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan. Following her studies, she joined the health sector as a Clinical Psychologist. Currently, she works as a Clinical Psychologist at a renowned hospital in South Punjab, Pakistan. In addition, Ms Khizra has started her PhD in Clinical Psychology at Islamia University of Bahawalpur.

This study aimed to develop and test a virtual environment as a way to reduce social anxiety. A case series design was approved, with eight sessions carried out and a follow-up conducted one month after the intervention. Nine participants were divided into three groups: (a) Virtual Reality Group, (b) Behavioral Therapy Group, and (c) Waiting List Group.

The effects of the intervention were assessed through self-report anxiety questionnaires and psychological motivation (skin conductance responses). The psychological responses of participants in both groups indicated a decrease during the sessions, helping to reduce anxiety.

Participants in the first group demonstrated greater generalization to natural environments than those in the second group. Therefore, this study suggests that the virtual environment facilitates the generalization of protective behaviors to natural settings and may be useful in reducing social anxiety.

Bilal Awan

Bilal Awan is an award-winning technologist, innovator, author, and entrepreneur working in the psychology domain. He has introduced immersive technologies such as VR, AI, volumetric, photogrammetry, and other tools, integrating biofeedback and neurofeedback to enhance AI-based solutions for mental health professionals.

With over five years of experience in the psychology field, Bilal has focused on integrating technology into psychology. He has presented research-based mental health solutions at international platforms in over nine countries, addressing psychology students, professionals, technologists, and entrepreneurs.



Carolina Ortega

Ms Carolina Ortega graduated in Psychology with a specialization in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies from the University Hospital of the University of São Paulo (HU-USP) and holds a master's degree in Experimental Behavior Analysis from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP). Currently, she works at PsycReality, a startup focused on creating virtual environments for phobia treatment. Carolina coordinates scientific research on exposure therapy using virtual reality, with projects conducted in Brazil, Dubai, Scotland, and Malaysia, contributing significantly to the integration of technological innovation in therapeutic methods for phobias.

Dr Pedro Fonseca Zuccolo

Dr Pedro Fonseca Zuccolo earned his degree in Psychology from PUC-SP and has certifications in Neuropsychology and Clinical Behavioral Analysis. He completed his master's (2014) and doctorate (2018) at the Institute of Psychology, University of São Paulo (USP). With expertise in cognitive-behavioral therapy, clinical neuropsychology, and experimental psychology, he now works as a postdoctoral researcher at the Psychiatry Institute of HCFMUSP. Pedro also specializes in using digital technologies for delivering mental health interventions, contributing to advancements in mental health care.

Dr Fani Eta Korn Malerbi

Dr Fani Eta Korn Malerbi holds a degree in Psychology from PUC-SP, a master's in Experimental Psychology from the University of São Paulo, and a doctorate in the same field. A full professor at PUC-SP, Fani specializes in Health Psychology, focusing on diabetes, family dynamics, and childhood and adolescent psychology. She is actively involved in several research groups, including ANPEPP and CNPq-certified Health Psychology groups. Additionally, she has held leadership roles at PUC-SP, such as Head of the Department of Methods and Techniques and Vice-Coordinator of the Psychology Program. Fani also serves on the Advisory Board of the Juvenile Diabetes Association of São Paulo.

Psilocybin, a psychedelic compound, is gaining attention as a potential treatment for depression, yet its use presents significant ethical and practical challenges. This study explores the perceptions of mental health professionals regarding the ethical concerns and risks associated with psilocybin-assisted therapy. Using a phenomenological approach, it examines their lived experiences and professional insights, offering a qualitative perspective on the complexities of integrating psychedelics into mental health care.

The research focuses on key ethical dilemmas, including informed consent, cultural sensitivity, and the implications of altered states of consciousness in therapy. Additionally, it investigates potential risks such as psychological distress, dependency, and legal uncertainties. Semi-structured interviews with ten diverse mental health professionals will provide a comprehensive analysis of their perspectives.

Thematic analysis will be used to identify recurring themes, such as the necessity of informed consent, strategies for mitigating adverse psychological effects, and the challenges of navigating regulatory frameworks. The study also examines how professionals maintain therapeutic boundaries and ensure patient safety in this emerging field.

By addressing these concerns, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on the ethical and practical implementation of psilocybin-assisted therapy. Its findings aim to inform clinical guidelines and promote culturally sensitive, ethically responsible practices in psychedelic-assisted treatment for depression.

Hasna Qaddar

Mr Hasna Qaddar is a fourth-year psychology student at the American University in Dubai (AUD) who is driven by a deep passion for understanding human behavior and making meaningful contributions to mental health care in the MENA region.

His primary interests lie in transforming clinical practices and exploring innovative therapeutic approaches for various psychological disorders. He aims to bridge the gap between contemporary psychological research and its practical application, ensuring mental health care is tailored to the cultural and societal needs of local communities.

An avid researcher, Hasna enjoys investigating complex psychological questions, analyzing data, and uncovering new insights. He is particularly passionate about sharing his findings, engaging in discussions, and contributing to the broader discourse in psychology.

For Hasna, psychology is not just an academic pursuit but a means to drive meaningful change. He is committed to advancing accessible, effective, and culturally sensitive mental health care, with the goal of making a lasting impact on individuals and communities across the region.

Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is a prevalent mental health condition characterized by overwhelming fear and distress in social settings. The amygdala, a crucial component of emotion regulation, has been widely studied in the context of SAD, particularly in functional neuroimaging. However, research on its structural morphology remains limited.

This systematic review aimed to establish a consensus on morphological changes in the amygdala among adult SAD patients compared to controls, with the broader goal of identifying gaps in structural neuroimaging and diagnostics that require advancement.

A search of Web of Science and PubMed (January 2000–November 2023) identified eight relevant studies examining bilateral volume, grey matter volume, or grey matter density in the amygdala. The findings indicate lower grey matter density in the right amygdala of SAD patients, suggesting dysfunction in the automatic processing of fearful social stimuli, which contributes to SAD symptoms. However, no significant differences were found in amygdalar grey matter volume, and evidence regarding bilateral amygdalar volume differences was inconclusive.

While these findings are noteworthy, the reviewed studies exhibit methodological weaknesses, including co-morbid Axis-I disorders, inconsistent software for grey matter analysis, and unaccounted confounding factors. Future research should address these concerns to improve the reliability of structural neuroimaging studies in SAD.

Additionally, this review underscores the importance of integrating structural neuroimaging with functional connectivity research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how brain physiology both influences and is influenced by mental health struggles.

Annika Cherian

Born in Dubai, Ms Annika Cherian recently graduated from the University of St. Andrews with an M.A. (Hons) in Psychology and Comparative Literature. She is currently a postgraduate research assistant at the American University of Sharjah and hopes to continue her journey in psychology and neuroscience research. She also aspires to practice clinical psychology and support adults with perinatal mental health problems.



This study examines the relationship between parenting styles and Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD) among Emirati adolescents aged 14–18. Building on previous research on parental influence in gaming addiction, it focuses on four parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful. The primary goal is to assess how these styles affect IGD severity.

Participants will be recruited from a UAE high school, ensuring gender balance, with data collected through standardized tools. The Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ) will classify parenting styles, while the Internet Gaming Disorder Scale (IGDS) will measure IGD severity. Semi-structured interviews will explore adolescents' gaming habits and parental influences.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the study applies ANOVA to compare IGD levels across parenting styles and thematic analysis to identify patterns in interview responses. It is expected that adolescents from permissive or inconsistent parenting backgrounds will show higher IGD susceptibility. Ethical considerations, including parental consent and adolescent assent, will be addressed. This research aims to provide culturally relevant insights into IGD in the UAE, informing intervention and prevention strategies tailored to the region's sociocultural context.

Abdulla Almatrooshi

Mr Abdulla Almatrooshi is a fourth-year psychology student at AUD, currently completing his undergraduate studies. He is particularly interested in the development of clinical disorders and how they evolve in new generations. As an Emirati national, he is dedicated to contributing a regional perspective to psychological research and advancing mental health understanding in the UAE and beyond.

Eager to present his research for the first time, Abdulla aspires to highlight the importance of culturally relevant mental health studies. He believes in the power of research to drive meaningful change, particularly in improving mental health awareness and resources. By integrating academic knowledge with cultural insight, he aims to contribute to a future where mental health is better understood and addressed.



Disordered eating is prevalent among young adults and can lead to severe health complications, making it essential to examine its risk factors. While previous studies have independently assessed the influence of beauty standards and emotional regulation on disordered eating, research integrating these variables is limited. This study investigates the association between beauty standards, emotional regulation, and disordered eating. It was hypothesized that beauty standards would be a statistically significant positive predictor, while emotional regulation would be a statistically significant negative predictor of disordered eating.

Participants were recruited through convenience sampling online, aged 18–24, with 87.9% ($n = 109$) identifying as female and 12.1% ($n = 15$) as male. Before data collection, participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form detailing their rights, the option to withdraw, and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. They then completed the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire, Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Questionnaire–4, and Eating Disorders Examination Questionnaire – Short. Afterward, they were debriefed.

Multiple regression analysis was conducted on the final sample ($n = 124$) after screening, with beauty standards and emotional regulation as predictors and disordered eating as the outcome variable. Results indicated that beauty standards were a significant positive predictor of disordered eating, whereas emotional regulation was not a significant negative predictor. These findings can inform clinical and educational interventions, aiding teachers, psychologists, and dietitians in addressing eating abnormalities and promoting effective emotional regulation strategies.

These findings highlight the need to address evolving societal beauty norms and enhance emotional regulation strategies to mitigate the increasing prevalence of disordered eating, reflecting contemporary psychological challenges.

Sanya Muhammad Din

Sanya Muhammad is a First-Class Honors graduate in BSc Psychology with Counselling Skills from Middlesex University Dubai. Born and raised in Pakistan, she has developed a strong passion for psychology, which has driven her academic and professional journey. Her hands-on experience began in her second year of undergraduate studies, working with gifted children with varying abilities. This early exposure laid the foundation for her career, and she has since grown into a Behavioral Therapist with over two years of experience.

She currently interns at Open Minds Centre, where she shadows a Clinical Psychologist specializing in ADHD, ASD, and developmental challenges in children and adults. Through this role, she has gained practical insights into assessments, diagnostic techniques, and therapeutic approaches.

Committed to continuous learning, she actively participates in conferences, online courses, and CEU-accredited training, while also keeping up with the latest psychological research. Her undergraduate thesis, which addressed critical gaps in existing studies, earned distinction and further fueled her passion for contributing to the field.



This presentation analyzes the nature of eating disorders, discussing four major classifications: Bulimia Nervosa, Anorexia Nervosa, Binge Eating Disorder (BED), and Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID). It explores these disorders from psychological, biological, and sociocultural perspectives, highlighting the complex nature of their etiology. Drawing on frameworks such as the Biopsychosocial Model and the Health Belief Model, the research investigates the mental and physical damage these disorders cause to individuals.

Bulimia Nervosa involves a distorted body image and emotional instability, leading to recurrent binge eating followed by inappropriate compensatory behaviors like self-induced vomiting and fasting. It is often associated with comorbid mental illnesses, such as anxiety and depression. Anorexia Nervosa, the most prevalent disorder in this spectrum according to the DSM-5, involves drastic measures to lose weight, including starvation, and is characterized by a fear of gaining weight. It also presents extremely high mortality rates. Binge Eating Disorder (BED), known as psychological overeating, consists of excessive eating episodes coupled with feelings of guilt or distress, often related to emotional instability and external pressures to conform to idealized images. ARFID involves the avoidance or restriction of food intake.

The presentation also addresses research and treatment issues, such as the limited studies on long-term recovery outcomes, the lack of research on how social media fuels eating disorders, and the effects of assumptions about gender and ethnicity on normal and abnormal eating behaviors.

Amal Bashayreh

Ms Amal Bashayreh is a second-year Psychology major at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Dubai with a deep fascination for human behavior and the workings of the mind. Her academic journey is driven by a desire to understand and address mental health issues, and she aspires to create environments where individuals feel comfortable discussing mental health challenges without fear of stigma.

Amal is particularly interested in abnormal psychology, emotional regulation, and therapeutic interventions. She believes in fostering awareness and empathy to help break down barriers preventing individuals from prioritizing their mental well-being. In addition to her studies, she is actively involved in mental health awareness initiatives and enjoys engaging in meaningful conversations and projects related to emotional health.

Outside academics, Amal spends her time reading, writing, and volunteering, enriching her understanding of diverse human experiences. She aspires to specialize in clinical psychology, focusing on counseling and therapy. Her goal is to bridge cultural perceptions with professional mental health care, ensuring support is accessible and inclusive. Through continued learning and collaboration, Amal is committed to inspiring positive change and contributing to a more understanding and compassionate society.

Tala Ashraf Elabora

Ms Tala Ashraf Elabora is a second-year psychology student at RIT with a passion for understanding the complexities of human behavior and mental health. With a strong academic foundation and an eagerness to delve deeper into the field, she actively seeks opportunities to broaden her knowledge and contribute meaningfully to the psychology community. Motivated by a desire to make a positive impact, she is particularly interested in exploring innovative research, therapeutic techniques, and interdisciplinary approaches that bridge psychology with other domains.

Belongingness, a fundamental human need, is crucial for emotional well-being and personal fulfillment. In university students, it has been shown to influence symptoms of depression, anxiety, and overall mental health and academic experiences. This survey-based study explores the relationship between belongingness, emotional resilience, and mental health in university students from several higher education institutions in the UAE. The findings will be compared to similar data collected from student populations in Lebanon and the United States.

The study first examines how belongingness mitigates anxiety and depression, emphasizing the importance of perceived belongingness through networking activities like extracurriculars and sports, which foster a sense of security and purpose. It then explores how participation in extracurricular activities enhances group belongingness, increasing community connections.

Overall, the study will discuss the inverse relationship between perceived belongingness and the prevalence of depression and anxiety, highlighting the mediating role of emotional resilience. As students face societal and educational shifts, the need for connection and resilience is more vital than ever. This research offers insights for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals to promote belongingness, supporting students' academic, personal, and overall well-being.

Ruba Airaj Ahmed

Ms Ruba Airaj Ahmed is an undergraduate student in the Department of Psychology at AUS, with research interests in social psychology and mental health. Her current study explores the relationship between group belongingness, emotional resilience, and mental health among university students in the UAE. This is her first research project, supported by an undergraduate research grant, contributing to the growing knowledge on mental health in higher education.

Ruba is passionate about understanding the factors influencing mental health and is committed to promoting student well-being. She aims to use her research to address psychological challenges, develop evidence-based strategies, and foster resilience within diverse communities. By combining her academic knowledge and personal drive, Ruba aspires to make meaningful contributions to psychology and advocate for greater mental health awareness in educational and social systems.



POSTER

Super Silent Stress: Giving Voice to The Prevalence of Anxiety Among Middle Eastern University Students

Research indicates a rise in anxiety among college students, which worsened significantly following the transition to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. These elevated anxiety levels are evident globally, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Factors such as the shift to distance learning, financial issues, and the region's history of conflict contribute to heightened anxiety. With ongoing conflicts in Palestine and Sudan, it is hypothesized that students, particularly immigrant students, will report high anxiety and poor interpersonal relationships.

This study aims to assess the prevalence of anxiety among university students in the UAE, specifically focusing on the MENA region. The goal is to investigate anxiety levels in this population and explore the relationship between anxiety and interpersonal functioning. The study included two samples: Sample A (148 undergraduate students) and Sample B (327 students enrolled in introductory psychology courses). Anxiety levels were assessed using the HAM-A, interpersonal functioning was measured using Cluster D from the FIAT-Q, and attachment patterns were observed using the ECR-RS. The study was conducted online, and data was analyzed using Jamovi.

In Sample A, the FIAT-Q score averaged 75 ($SD = 10$), indicating relatively high intimacy anxiety. In Sample B, the HAM-A score averaged 17.5 ($SD = 9.86$), suggesting moderate anxiety. The mean attachment-related anxiety score from the ECR-RS questionnaire was 2.62 ($SD = 0.777$), and attachment-related avoidance averaged 2.48 ($SD = 0.898$). A weak, positive correlation was found between HAM-A scores and ECR-RS Avoidant Attachment scores ($r = .29, p = .001$).

The results highlight the importance of evaluating student anxiety, particularly in relation to the use of technology. However, a limitation of the study is its reliance on online administration, which may have affected the accuracy of the results.

Dr Khym Isaac De Barros

Dr Khym Isaac De Barros holds a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology with a focus on Multicultural Counseling from Indiana University. With over 25 years of experience in psychological counseling, she has taught at various U.S. universities and the American University of Sharjah. Her research centers on mood disorders, interpersonal relationships, and multicultural counseling. Dr Isaac De Barros is the founder of the Paget T. & Sylvia G. Isaac Research Institute and has presented her work at international conferences.



POSTER

Super Silent Stress: Giving Voice to The Prevalence of Anxiety Among Middle Eastern University Students

Elizabeth Sara Roby

Ms Elizabeth Sara Roby has a BA in Psychology from AUS. She works as a research assistant on a study focusing on anxiety awareness at university campuses and presented research at the 2024 APA convention. Elizabeth has interned at Al Amal Psychiatric Hospital and Al Ibtisama Special Needs School. She is currently pursuing a Master's in Clinical Mental Health at the University of Birmingham Dubai.



Marya Badran

Ms Marya Badran earned her BA in Psychology in December 2024 from AUS. She has diverse work experience in Public Relations, HR, and research assistant positions at AUS which was profoundly impactful at AUS's Anxiety Awareness Day.



Sara Hachem

Ms Sara Hachem holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the American University of Sharjah (AUS) and has focused her career on educational support and research. She has worked as an undergraduate and graduate research assistant, as well as a Learning Support Assistant. Currently, Sara is an Inclusion Teacher at King's School in the UAE.



Neimat Elkarib

Ms Neimat Elkarib is a graduate of AUS with a bachelor's degree in psychology and a minor in integrated marketing. She has presented at international conferences on the prevalence and treatment of anxiety. Additionally, she works as a public relations executive.



POSTER

Super Silent Stress: Giving Voice to The Prevalence of Anxiety Among Middle Eastern University Students

Sara Abukmeil

Ms Sara Abukmeil holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from AUS and is pursuing a master's in clinical psychology at UAEU. As a Research Assistant on Dr. Khym Isaac De Barros' team, she has contributed to multiple papers, posters, and workshops at major conferences, focusing on mood disorders and interpersonal relationships in the Middle East. With a strong academic background and hands-on research experience, Sara is committed to both clinical practice and research. As a Palestinian affected by regional conflict, she is passionate about supporting individuals impacted by war while advancing psychological research in the Middle East.



Fatma Al Malik

Ms Fatma Al Malik holds a B.Sc. in Biology with a Minor in Psychology from AUS. She is a Research Assistant at the Paget T. and Sylvia G. Isaac Institute, focusing on anxiety and intervention strategies among Middle Eastern university students. Fatma has presented at major conferences and recently completed a research internship at Mohammed Bin Rashid University of Medicine and Health Sciences.

Ayah Aqtash

Ms Ayah Aqtash is a recent graduate with a bachelor's degree in psychology from AUS. She gained hands-on experience through internships, including clinical psychology placements, and worked as a research assistant on various projects. Ayah has presented her research at notable conferences such as the British Psychological Society's Division of Counselling Psychology Conference and the 31st Emirates Society for Mental Health Congress. Additionally, she is certified as a Registered Behaviour Technician (RBT), providing Applied Behaviour Analysis therapy to individuals with autism spectrum disorder. Her diverse experience in both clinical practice and research drives her dedication to advancing psychological knowledge and improving mental health outcomes in her community.



Nouran Azzam

Ms Nouran Azzam is pursuing a BA in English Language and Literature at the American University of Sharjah, with a double minor in psychology and theater. Her research interests include anxiety, EMDR, trauma, and family systems. She is on track to earn her degree in 2025.



POSTER

Super Silent Stress: Giving Voice to The Prevalence of Anxiety Among Middle Eastern University Students

Dr Eyman Hamad

Dr Eyman Hamad, MRCPsych, earned her MBBS from Shendi University in Sudan and is currently a psychiatry registrar pursuing her MD at the Sudan Medical Specialization Board. She is a full member of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and is undergoing advanced training in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry with a focus on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Dr Eyman is involved in mental health outreach in Sudan, volunteering at the Step Clinic and conducting research on anxiety in the Middle East.



POSTER

A Review of Health Psychology Interventions in the Management of Chronic Illnesses

This presentation explores the essential role of health psychology in managing chronic illnesses through the biopsychosocial model, emphasizing the interaction of biological, psychological, and social factors in disease management. It reviews literature on key psychological interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), resilience training, and mindfulness-based approaches, showcasing their effectiveness in conditions like obesity, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, and heart disease. Research highlights how psychological strategies can improve treatment adherence, reduce emotional distress, and enhance patients' quality of life.

The presentation focuses on key theoretical frameworks and evidence-based practices, discussing their integration into patient-centered care. It also explores the unmet needs in healthcare, including the need for culturally tailored interventions, stronger patient relationships, and significant lifestyle changes. By adopting a holistic approach, it underscores the transformative potential of psychological support in not only improving mental and physical health but also in reshaping how chronic illnesses are managed. In line with the IPCD 2025 conference theme, "Change," this work illustrates the dynamic synergy between psychology and healthcare, offering a vision of hope and adaptability in an evolving world.

Rayan Al Omari

Mr Rayan Rafat Al Omari is pursuing a Psychology degree at RIT Dubai. His passion for healthcare and psychology is rooted in personal experiences, particularly the loss of his grandfather to bone cancer when he was ten and his younger brother's accident in 2020, which left him paraplegic. These events inspired Rayan to dedicate his life to helping others, especially through neuroscience and improving the lives of those facing similar challenges.

Throughout high school, Rayan excelled academically and held leadership roles, including serving as a Student Council Representative. He was awarded the Best School Student Thematic Poster Award at the Dubai International Pharmaceuticals & Technologies Conference for his work on osteoporosis treatments. Beyond academics, he has been actively involved in social and environmental initiatives, such as supporting underprivileged families and participating in community clean-up campaigns.

Rayan's aspiration is to become the best psychologist in the region, using his knowledge and empathy to make a meaningful difference. Aligned with IPCD 2025's theme, "Change," he aims to contribute innovative, patient-centered solutions that enhance mental and physical well-being in a constantly changing world.



Nadia Alalialshbaikat

Ms Nadia Alalialshbaikat is currently pursuing a psychology degree at RIT Dubai. Coming from a multicultural background, with a Jordanian father and a Romanian mother, Nadia developed an interest in psychology at the age of 15, following her uncle's stroke. His resilience and determination to regain movement despite his condition deeply fascinated her.

Though she explored other career paths, Nadia's passion for psychology remained strong. Over the past two years, she has gained valuable experience working with young children (ages 0-4) at a nursery, particularly those affected by autism, intellectual disabilities, and muteness. This hands-on experience taught her how to adapt different methods to ensure the children's comfort, giving her a fresh perspective on psychology.

Her research presentation on incorporating health psychology in managing chronic diseases further sparked an interest in understanding the psychosomatic connections between the mind and body.



Maram Al Mazloun

Ms Maram Al Mazloun is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Psychology at RIT Dubai. In addition to her studies, she is an active member of the Women's Volleyball team, where she practices her core principles of helping others and teamwork.

Maram graduated from Al Mawakeb School, Al Garhoud, where she first ventured into research and leadership. As the founder and head of Al Mawakeb Research Center, she led 70 students from the UAE and KSA in publishing a research book titled *Arts & Music: The Puppeteers of Life*. This project explored how arts and music influence mental health, culture, history, and science, deepening her understanding of the emotional and social impact of human experiences.

Her interest in psychology began in her teens, driven by a curiosity about human behavior and relationships. Maram aspires to become a relationship therapist, hoping to expand her knowledge of relationship dynamics while helping individuals and couples build healthier, more fulfilling relationships.



POSTER

The Impact of Energy Drinks on Sleep Patterns in Adolescents and How Effective are Interventions

This study examines the relationship between adolescents' sleep quality and their consumption of energy drinks (EDs), highlighting the importance of change in addressing the issue. During stressful academic periods, teenagers often turn to stimulants, such as EDs containing excessive caffeine, to boost their energy levels due to their easy accessibility. However, overconsumption can lead to negative health outcomes, including obesity, hypertension, and mental disorders.

Using the Health Belief Model, the study explores how examining health risks and benefits can help reduce ED consumption. It also focuses on shaping attitudes through social cues, self-efficacy, and peer influence. Despite the frequent use of EDs, many adolescents underestimate the associated health risks, demonstrating a lack of awareness. ED consumption is further reinforced by aggressive marketing strategies and peer behavior, contributing to social acceptability.

To reduce dependency on EDs, the study suggests promoting balanced nutrition and physical activity, as well as offering healthier alternatives. Other recommendations include clearer labeling and efforts to counter misleading marketing strategies through policy changes. Although the study's findings may be limited due to the self-reported and non-representative sample, it emphasizes the significant role health psychology can play in influencing public health policies and reducing ED consumption among vulnerable adolescents.

Raad Al Madani

Mr Raad Al Madani is a junior at RIT Dubai, majoring in Global Business Management (GBM) with minors in Marketing and Psychology. Raad is passionate about innovation and has developed a versatile skill set in business analysis, marketing research, and strategic teamwork. Raad is driven by creativity, determination, and a commitment to making a positive impact on society by delivering effective solutions for a better future.

Through global programs like X-Culture and L'Oréal Brandstorm, Raad has gained hands-on experience by tackling real-world business challenges and collaborating with peers worldwide. These experiences have enhanced Raad's business knowledge and critical analysis skills, while also deepening Raad's understanding of global business practices. Raad is currently focusing on business analysis and strengthening Raad's expertise through additional training and certifications.

Raad is dedicated to continuous learning and professional development, aiming for a career in business analysis. Raad seeks to apply Raad's growing knowledge and skills to solve problems and make a meaningful impact in the business world.



Yousma Batool

As a passionate and dedicated junior psychology student, Ms Yousma Batool has always been deeply interested in the connection between the mind, health, behavior, and well-being. Through Yousma's role as a peer tutor and mentor for psychology at university, she has built a strong foundation in psychological disorders and concepts while refining communication and leadership skills.

Yousma's academic journey has been further enriched by hands-on experience as a volunteer at an autism facility, where Yousma developed an interest in health after witnessing firsthand how diet affects behavior and health in children and adolescents. This experience has inspired Yousma to pursue a current project investigating how diet influences social behaviors in individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

In addition to the psychology major, Yousma is also pursuing a minor in business management, which has broadened her perspective on human behavior in organizational settings and strengthened analytical and strategic thinking. This interdisciplinary approach has allowed Yousma to explore how psychological principles can drive organizational success. Committed to continuous learning and professional growth, she aims to contribute to a better future by applying innovative psychological insights to address real-world challenges.



Azerbaijan is known for its high longevity rates, largely due to its favorable climate. However, recent economic and political crises, ongoing conflict, a significant number of refugees and displaced persons, increasing age-related diseases, and environmental factors have impacted the country's longevity index. Research was conducted in Sumgayit, an industrial city heavily polluted by chemicals released into the air and sea. This city's health indicators are notably low, and it is the only city in Azerbaijan with a children's cemetery, where many children born with anomalies have died at an early age.

Many elderly participants in the study were forced migrants and refugees. The research assessed psychological anxiety (situational, individual, general anxiety, and depression), cognitive indicators (vision, hearing, short-term memory, and attention), and vegetative indicators (arterial pressure, heart rate, lung capacity, and ECG). The comparative analysis revealed elevated arterial pressure and heart rate variability above normal levels. High blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease and arrhythmias, was a significant finding. Normal lung air capacity is 500 liters per minute, but participants in Sumgayit had a reduced capacity of 349 liters per minute.

Although situational and individual anxiety levels were average, there was a high level of general arousal. Depression remained within normal limits. Cognitive testing showed visual and auditory memory within normative ranges, but short-term memory and attention were below standard. No cognitive disorders or dementia were found. The findings suggest a high level of adaptation to new conditions, possibly due to harmful habits, reliance on low-calorie, nutrient-rich diets, and family support. Elevated anxiety levels were linked to factors such as displacement, loss of loved ones during wartime, and a sedentary lifestyle influenced by urban living conditions.

Gulsum Afandiyeva

Ms Gulsum Afendiyeva is currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Psychology at Western Caspian University. Her research primarily focuses on the impact of stress and environmental factors on students' health, as well as the study of cognitive processes and their effects on emotional stress. She collaborates with the "WCU Science Group," led by Associate Professor Natavan Karamova, a distinguished expert at the university.

Through their collaborative work, Gulsum has published articles at the 10th International Scientific Conference in Madrid, Spain, and the 12th International Scientific Conference in Manchester, UK. She has also participated in various international conferences in Azerbaijan, delivering speeches to raise awareness about psychological issues. Her research aims to address significant scientific and social challenges.

Gulsum's professional career began as a psychologist in a preparatory course for university exams, where she studied the causes of exam-related stress. She is currently involved in conducting psychological assessments within corporate environments and implementing strategies to enhance workplace psychological well-being. Her ongoing research focuses on understanding how stress and environmental factors affect students' health and aims to contribute new insights into physiological and psychosocial development in this field.



Dr Natavan Karamova

Dr Natavan Karamov graduated from the Faculty of Pediatrics at Azerbaijan Medical University and earned her PhD from the Institute of Physiology at the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences. Throughout her career, her primary focus has been to advance scientific knowledge, particularly in the field of human health. Her research explores the effects of stress and environmental factors on the human body, with special emphasis on the relationship between emotional stress and cognitive processes, as well as the psycho-physiological mechanisms of aging. She has published extensively in these areas and contributed numerous studies.

Since 2018, Dr Natavan has led the "WCU Science Group" at Western Caspian University, where she conducts research on the link between emotional stress and cognitive processes, as well as the psychophysiological traits of adolescents and students. Her studies also investigate the impact of various factors on individual development and health. The findings from her research have been published in both local and international journals, presented at scientific conferences, and shared with the public. Currently, her research is focused on longevity studies, the psychophysiology of aging, and the factors that influence longevity.



Although menstruation is a natural biological process, it remains stigmatized and understudied in the MENA region, particularly in Egypt. Over 86% of young Egyptian women experience severe premenstrual syndrome (PMS) symptoms, often accompanied by anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal (Arafa et al., 2018). Due to stigma, many avoid seeking medical or psychological help, impacting their academic and mental well-being (Hassan et al., 2022; Eldeeb et al., 2021; Ghandour et al., 2024; Qutishat et al., 2024). Despite these challenges, most women continue to persevere, concealing the toll PMS takes on their physical and mental health. However, the relationship between PMS, psychological distress, and resilience remains largely unexplored. This study investigates how resilience correlates with PMS and psychological distress in young Egyptian women.

The study included 113 Egyptian female participants aged 18–25, with 61 meeting the inclusion criteria (mean age = 19.4, $SD = 1.4$). Data were collected through an online survey using the Premenstrual Syndrome Scale, Kessler Psychological Distress Scale, and Nicholson McBride Resilience Questionnaire. Participants were categorized into low, medium, and high resilience groups, and correlation analyses were conducted. Results revealed that 68% reported severe PMS symptoms, yet 82% never consulted a doctor, and 47.5% avoided medication. While 31.2% had higher resilience levels, 68.8% reported lower resilience. Among highly resilient participants, psychological distress was strongly correlated with behavioral PMS symptoms ($r = .999, p < 0.01$). In contrast, among less resilient participants, psychological distress significantly correlated with both psychological ($r = .82, p < 0.01$) and behavioral symptoms ($r = .77, p < 0.01$).

These findings highlight the urgent need to address menstruation-related stigma and encourage help-seeking behaviors. The study challenges negative societal narratives, emphasizing women's resilience while acknowledging the toll PMS takes on their mental health. By shedding light on the connection between resilience, psychological distress, and PMS, this research advocates for reframing menstruation as a source of empowerment rather than shame (Hassan et al., 2022; Ghandour et al., 2024). It aims to inspire changes in societal attitudes and healthcare practices, fostering a supportive environment where women feel encouraged to seek professional help and prioritize their well-being.

POSTER

Changing the Narrative: Exploring PMS, Resilience, and Psychological Distress in Young Egyptian Women

Khadiga Dorra

Ms Khadiga is an undergraduate psychology student at the American University in Cairo (AUC), minoring in business administration and behavioral neuroscience. She discovered her passion for research during a sophomore-year course on research methods, which led her to focus on addressing gaps in women's mental and physical health research, particularly in Egypt and the MENA region.

As a member of The Photovoice Transformative Lab, founded by Dr Maaly Younis, Khadiga has gained hands-on experience in psychological research, using academic inquiry to amplify underrepresented voices. She is also part of the marketing committee for AUC's Psychology Association, where she promotes psychological initiatives within the university. Additionally, she is a member of Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology. These diverse experiences have strengthened her commitment to advancing women's health and making meaningful contributions to psychology.



Sarah Osman

Ms Sarah Osman is an undergraduate psychology student at AUC, minoring in behavioral neuroscience and educational studies. Her academic interests focus on child, developmental, and couple and family psychology, with aspirations to pursue a master's degree in these fields. She is particularly passionate about research that addresses the unique psychological needs of Egypt and the Middle East.

Throughout her education, Sarah has demonstrated strong leadership skills, serving as a class representative for four years. At AUC, she continues her advocacy as an active member of the Psychology Association, where she has contributed to the Psi Chi Committee and is currently part of the Campaigning Committee.

Sarah is a member of Psi Chi, the International Honor Society in Psychology, and works as a research assistant under Dr Maaly Younis, focusing on female mental health narratives in Egypt. Her commitment to academic research is reflected in her co-authorship of the recently published book chapter "*Psychology in Egypt*" in the *Handbook of International Psychology*.



POSTER

Changing the Narrative: Exploring PMS, Resilience, and Psychological Distress in Young Egyptian Women

Jana Selim

Jana Selim is an undergraduate psychology student at AUC, minoring in behavioral neuroscience. She is passionate about research, particularly on issues affecting women in the MENA region. Her work focuses on contributing to academic discourse and advocating for women's equality in education, health awareness, and income equity. Jana believes that fostering a deeper understanding of equality is essential for empowering women and driving positive change across the region.



Dr Maaly Younis

Dr Maaly Younis is an adjunct assistant professor of psychology at AUC, Egypt. She earned her master's and doctoral degrees in Educational Psychology from the University of Northern Colorado, USA, and was twice awarded the Dean's Citation of Excellence medallion for both degrees.

Dr Younis has received multiple research awards at regional and international conferences, including the Cross-Cultural Psychology Conference and the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association (RMPA). A dedicated social justice activist, she integrates art-based approaches and participatory-centered methods into her research to empower participants. Her work focuses on educational and developmental psychology, with publications in transformative learning, photovoice pedagogy, and cross-cultural psychology.

A strong mental health advocate, Dr Younis is particularly invested in supporting emerging adults through the challenges of transitioning to adulthood. She is an active member of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP), where she has held leadership roles and contributed to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. She is also co-editing an STP e-book on social justice in undergraduate psychology courses and is involved in professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association, the International Association for Transformative Learning, and Psi Chi.



POSTER

Embracing Change in Wellbeing Support for Medical Students: Navigating Barriers and Building Resilience

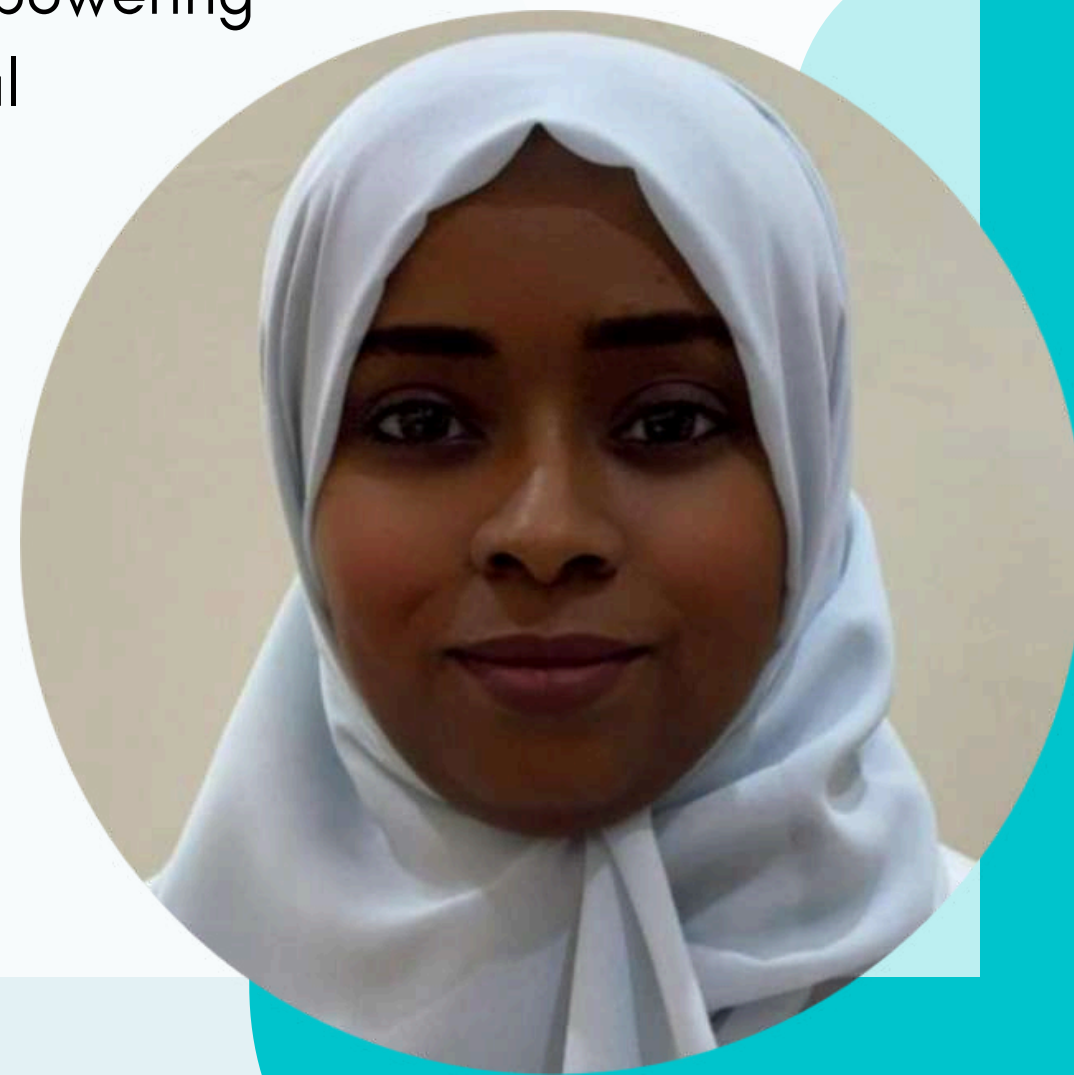
People across all walks of life face challenges related to change, but university students, particularly those in high-stress fields like medicine, experience unique pressures that significantly impact their mental health and well-being. As medical students navigate rigorous academic and clinical demands, effective support systems are crucial for their resilience and success. This study explores the barriers medical students encounter in accessing well-being services and examines how institutions can adapt these resources to meet students' evolving needs, highlighting the critical role of psychology in facilitating change.

Through semi-structured interviews and focus groups, medical students' perspectives on institutional well-being resources were gathered. A hybrid thematic analysis identified key themes related to help-seeking behaviors, institutional barriers, and recommendations for more accessible and adaptive support systems. Findings revealed that students frequently face obstacles such as unclear information, confidentiality concerns, stigma, and long wait times, all of which hinder access to essential mental health services. Participants emphasized the need for institutions to proactively evolve their support systems by improving communication, implementing proactive outreach, and fostering a culture that destigmatizes mental health care.

In the ever-changing landscape of medical education, responsive and adaptable support systems are essential to address students' dynamic needs. This study underscores the importance of embedding change as a core principle in well-being services, emphasizing psychology's role in designing flexible and inclusive systems. By normalizing help-seeking and prioritizing mental health, institutions can create an environment that supports medical students in managing their unique challenges and fosters long-term resilience.

Dr Aisha Ali Hawsawi

Dr Aisha is an Assistant Professor, Director of the Psychology Program, and Chair of the Health, Behavioral, and Sciences Department at Dar Alhekma University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. A Clinical Psychologist and University of Nottingham graduate, she specializes in personality assessment, psychological measurement, and psychotherapy. Committed to advancing mental health, she integrates clinical expertise with academic research and public engagement. Actively participating in mental health events, she promotes awareness and resilience, empowering individuals with evidence-based strategies to navigate psychological challenges and foster personal growth.



POSTER

Embracing Change in Wellbeing Support for Medical Students: Navigating Barriers and Building Resilience

Dr Elena Nixon

Dr Elena Nixon is an Assistant Professor in Applied Neuropsychology and Director of Postgraduate Research in Mental Health and Clinical Neurosciences. She specializes in cognitive neuroscience and the study of executive function, focusing on mood and neurodevelopmental disorders like Tourette's. Her research investigates cognitive and behavioral interventions to improve mental well-being, using methods such as EEG and fMRI. She teaches and supervises BMedSci, MSc, and PhD students, contributing to modules on behavioral and cognitive neuroscience.

POSTER

A Quantitative Study on the Effect of Secondary School Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education on Teacher Stress

Inclusive education is widely promoted in India, yet its implementation raises concerns about teacher attitudes and the stress associated with inclusive classrooms. Understanding how teachers respond to inclusive education, the pressures they face, and the impact on their stress levels is essential for addressing these challenges.

This study examines the relationship between secondary school teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and their stress levels while controlling for demographic factors such as gender, experience with students with special education needs (SEN), and training in inclusive education. A quantitative study was conducted among 167 secondary school teachers in Bangalore, India, recruited through purposive sampling.

Findings indicate that negative attitudes toward inclusive education are associated with higher teacher stress. Although gender, inclusive education training, and limited experience with SEN students influenced stress levels, these effects were not statistically significant. However, when controlling for demographic factors, teachers' negative attitudes remained a strong predictor of stress. The impact of attitudes on stress became more pronounced when these factors were considered.

While positive attitudes alone do not directly reduce teacher stress, comprehensive training and hands-on experience with SEN students play a crucial role in alleviating stress. These findings highlight the need for targeted professional development and systemic reforms to support teachers in implementing inclusive education effectively.

Sneha Sriram

Ms Sneha Sriram is an aspiring Educational Psychologist with a strong interest in Inclusive Education. She holds a BSc in Psychology with Counseling Skills from Middlesex University, Dubai, and has extensive knowledge of psychological theories, assessments, and research methods.

She presented her dissertation on *Musical Training and Music Engagement: The Relationships with Working Memory and Stress* at the Sixth International Conference on Emerging Research Paradigms in Business and Social Sciences (ERPSS 2022). A registered behavioral technician, she has experience in behavioral therapy and teletherapy and has worked with the inclusion department at an educational institution in the UAE. These experiences have fueled her passion for educational psychology, inspiring her to contribute to and implement inclusive education practices globally.



POSTER

A Quantitative Study on the Effect of Secondary School Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education on Teacher Stress

Dr Divya Dosaya

Dr Divya Dosaya works as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at CHRIST University. She completed her Ph.D. from BITS Pilani in 2021. Her research interests include Technology Integration in Education, Secondary Education and Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Abilities, Teacher Professionalism, Training and Development, and Public Health. As an educator, Dr Divya regularly teaches students at the UG and PG levels, offering courses such as Educational Policy and Program Evaluation, Forensic Psychology, and Quantitative Research.



POSTER

Empathy in the School: Exploring Suffering Among Teachers

This study examined the impact of empathy on emotional suffering and job satisfaction among teachers, involving 30 educators from Merryland International School in Abu Dhabi. The findings revealed that higher empathy levels were associated with increased emotional fatigue, particularly in emotionally demanding roles. Gender and experience played a role, with female teachers and those with less experience experiencing greater emotional strain.

While empathy enhances teacher-student and peer relationships, it can also contribute to burnout, underscoring the need for support systems and training programs to help teachers manage emotional challenges effectively. Aligning with the IPCD 2025 theme of "Change," this research highlights the necessity of systemic improvements to support teacher well-being. It identifies empathy-related emotional strain as a significant challenge, particularly in high-empathy roles, and advocates for sustainable practices, inclusive support systems, and innovative strategies to create a healthier teaching environment for educators and students alike.

Nissy Thomas

An experienced educator at Merryland International School in Abu Dhabi, Ms Nissy Thomas is dedicated to understanding and addressing the emotional and psychological needs of teachers. Combining a passion for education with research, Nissy explores critical topics such as empathy and emotional well-being in the teaching profession.

Her recent study, *Empathy in the School: Exploring Suffering Among Teachers*, examines the relationship between empathy, emotional strain, and job satisfaction, shedding light on the challenges educators face in emotionally demanding roles. With a strong commitment to fostering a supportive and resilient teaching environment, Nissy advocates for sustainable practices that balance empathic engagement with teacher well-being, contributing to healthier and more effective educational communities.



POSTER

Parentifying Beyond Childhood: Do Gender and Parentification History Predict Future Behavior?

This research proposal explores parentification in married South Asian adults, examining how childhood parentification patterns may influence spousal dynamics based on gender. The term parentification was first introduced by Minuchin et al. (1967) and refers to a child assuming parental responsibilities. There are two main types: emotional parentification, where a child manages familial emotions (e.g., mediating conflicts), and instrumental parentification, where they take on practical household tasks (Masiran et al., 2023).

This study aims to determine whether individuals continue parentifying their spouses in adulthood based on their childhood experiences and gender. Given that gender norms strongly influence South Asian societies (Fikree & Pasha, 2004), the research will focus on married individuals aged 25 to 35 who have been married for one to five years. The expected findings suggest that women who were emotionally parentified as children are likely to continue this pattern, while men who were instrumentally parentified will also maintain their roles. However, women who experienced instrumental parentification and men who experienced emotional parentification are less likely to continue these behaviors in adulthood, as they do not align with traditional gender norms.

Understanding parentification and its societal implications is crucial, as it can lead to unhealthy attachments, difficulty setting boundaries, and feelings of guilt. Raising awareness of these negative effects can help individuals recognize and break the cycle of parentification, promoting healthier relationships in adulthood (Masiran et al., 2023).

Maitha Thabet

Ms Maitha Thabet is an undergraduate psychology student at the American University of Sharjah with interests in clinical and developmental psychology. She co-founded NetflixPartyAD during the 2020 quarantine to promote mental well-being through virtual interactions. Her research focuses on mental health stigma in the Middle East and parentification in marital relationships. She aims to publish her findings and contribute to the field through further studies.

Youth delinquency remains a major global challenge, with economic, social, and cultural implications. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) highlights rising trends in youth crime, emphasizing the need for effective interventions. This study aims to explore the causes of youth delinquency among students in the Naseej Program and assess the program's effectiveness in reducing negative behaviors within Dubai's cultural context.

Using a qualitative research design, data will be collected through semi-structured interviews with students and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and influences on behavior. The study is expected to provide practical insights to enhance the Naseej Program's strategies while contributing to broader knowledge on behavioral interventions. Findings will help inform future program development and policies aimed at mitigating delinquency.

Ms Ayesha Alsuwaidi

Ms Ayesha Alsuwaidi is a Psychology student at the American University in Dubai with a passion for science and research. As an Emirati woman, she aims to make a positive impact in the MENA region, focusing on the root causes of youth delinquency. She collaborates with Dubai Police on the Naseej Program, gaining firsthand insights into the environmental and psychological factors influencing delinquent behavior.

Her research has deepened her commitment to developing effective interventions for at-risk youth. After her undergraduate studies, she plans to pursue postgraduate research in forensic psychology, combining her interests in mental health and criminal behavior. Her long-term goal is to work with Dubai Police, using psychological insights to address crime and enhance community well-being. She hopes her dedication to research and evidence-based solutions will inspire more women in the MENA region to enter science and contribute to societal progress.



This study examines the relationship between cognitive intelligence, emotional intelligence, and academic achievement, focusing on the mediating roles of academic motivation and satisfaction. Conducted among 467 high school students in Shiraz, Iran, the study utilized structural equation modeling (SEM) for data analysis, with academic achievement measured by students' average grades.

The SEM model explained 18% of the variance in academic achievement, revealing that academic satisfaction had the strongest positive impact (0.32). Emotional intelligence significantly predicted satisfaction (0.54), while cognitive intelligence had a minimal effect (0.07), suggesting a limited role in psychological outcomes. Emotional intelligence positively influenced intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and reduced amotivation, while cognitive intelligence had a negative impact on motivation.

Notably, emotional intelligence initially showed a negative direct effect on academic achievement, but this shifted to a positive influence when mediated by motivation and satisfaction. These findings highlight the importance of fostering supportive academic environments to enhance emotional intelligence's role in achievement. The study also points to challenges in the educational system, where emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in enhancing motivation, satisfaction, and academic success.

The results emphasize the complex interplay between intelligence, motivation, and satisfaction, providing valuable insights into creating environments that support diverse student needs for optimal academic performance.

Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani

Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani is an Assistant Professor of Psychology specializing in social psychology, cognition, and language. Her interdisciplinary research explores social issues, implicit attitudes, and reading processes across languages, using advanced techniques such as eye tracking. Dr Yekani's work bridges social and experimental psychology, offering novel insights through collaborative and innovative approaches.



University life can be a highly stressful experience, with new relationships, financial pressures, and academic expectations often leading to increased psychological distress that affects students' health and learning. While many quantitative studies have explored stress triggers, symptoms, and coping mechanisms, fewer studies have focused on students' subjective experiences. This qualitative study examined the challenges faced by undergraduate students at a large New Zealand university.

A total of 1,420 open-ended responses were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. Data were initially mapped to the University Stress Scale (USS), and further inductive coding was used to identify additional stressors not captured by the scale.

The results revealed eight main categories of stress: Academic, Equity, Health, Relationship, Parenting, Practical, University Environment, and Personal. Academic challenges were the most common source of stress, followed by social and financial pressures. The "Personal" category, identified through inductive analysis, reflected issues related to self-esteem, self-efficacy, and emotional self-regulation.

The findings suggest that students face a wide variety of challenges, many of which intersect and compound each other. While the USS captures several key stressors, it does not fully encompass the nuances of students' experiences, highlighting the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative data in developing effective student support programs.

Dr Tatiana Tairi

Associate Professor Tatiana Tairi has extensive experience in socially responsive research projects in the field of youth mental health, driven by her passion for applied research and commitment to improving youth mental health and promoting well-being. She also has extensive clinical practice, having worked in the UK National Health Service and in private practice with adolescents and adults presenting problems of varying clinical severity. Prior to her appointment at AUS in 2022, she worked for ten years at Massey University in New Zealand, teaching fully in postgraduate programs, in line with her professional practice experience and background.



WORKSHOP

Cognitive Screening and Assessment with the MoCA and MoCA XpressO

There are three to five million known cases of dementia in Egypt, a number that continues to grow rapidly. However, with the right screening tools, pre-dementia cognitive impairment can be detected early, and appropriate interventions can delay onset. One significant issue is that most Arab countries lack culturally and linguistically adapted screening tools, and many western-made tools have not been validated or normed for Arabic-speaking populations. Egypt, with 110 million citizens, is the most populous Arab country. A review of 384 neuropsychological studies in the Arab world, 45% of which were from Egypt, found that nearly half lacked cognitive tests adhering to international psychological measurement standards, and only 17% of Egyptian studies included validation, norming, or both. This lack of appropriate screening measures often leads to misdiagnoses.

This workshop will focus on conducting cognitive assessments for clients suspected of cognitive impairment using the MoCA and MoCA XpressO tests. The Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA), which is used worldwide, has been translated into Arabic. MoCA XpressO, a culturally-neutral cognitive assessment, is self-administered on a mobile device. The workshop will also cover the efforts to translate MoCA XpressO into Arabic and the current study plan to validate it among Egyptian Arabic speakers. Participants will gain an understanding of the challenges of screening for cognitive impairment in Arabic-speaking populations and learn about new cognitive screening tools being adapted and validated for use in the Arab world.

Current practices for screening cognitive impairment in the MENA region are in dire need of change. Clinicians often use western-developed tools that are not properly culturally adapted, translated into local dialects, or standardized and validated for Arabic-speaking populations. This leads to high risks of measurement inconsistency and misdiagnosis, and clinicians lack the proper tools and guidelines to screen for cognitive impairment in a science-based manner. This workshop aims to address these needs by presenting the cultural adaptation of accessible, easily administered cognitive measures, with the goal of driving much-needed change in the region.

Dr Jacquelyn Berry.

Dr Jacquelyn Berry is a cognitive scientist and former Fulbright U.S. Scholar, recognized for pioneering experimental psychology techniques in Egypt. She studies learning, cognition, and human-computer interaction, and made history as the first person of color to earn a doctorate in cognitive psychology from the University at Albany. Dr Berry's academic journey includes degrees from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and she completed postdoctoral research on learning and expertise. She joined The American University in Cairo (AUC) as a Fulbright Scholar in 2019-20, where she studied bilingualism using video games.



Dr Berry is also an author; her motivational book *Find Your Carrot* became a bestseller and was translated into Arabic. She returned to AUC as a faculty member, where she opened Egypt's first experimental psychology lab and began research on bilingual cognition and aging. She is involved in AI for Afrika and has spoken before the U.N. about technology and language. Currently, Dr Berry conducts research on astronaut health and decision-making during Space walks. She also developed the GameChanger Research app, which enables psychological research via mobile devices in English and Arabic. Outside of work, Dr Berry enjoys spending time with her family.

Dr Jamie Berry.

Dr Jamie Berry, BSc(Hons), MClinNeuro, DPsych(ClinNeuro), MAPS, FCCN, is Senior Clinical Neuropsychologist and Director at Advanced Neurotreatment Services (ANTS), Sydney, Australia, and Clinical Associate Professor at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Jamie's expertise lies in neuropsychological assessment, cognitive screening, neuropsychological treatment, and teaching/training. He has a particular clinical interest in acquired brain injury and mental illness. He conducts assessments for clinical, Workcover, MAA, DVA, Department of Human Services, Ageing, Disability and Home Care, and medico-legal purposes.



Dr Nasreddine

Dr Nasreddine is a Lebanese-Canadian physician who graduated with a Medical Degree from the Université de Sherbrooke, Québec, and completed a fellowship in Cognitive Neurology/Neurobehaviour at UCLA. In 1992, during his residency, he identified the need for a more comprehensive cognitive screening tool for clinicians, which led to the development of his first cognitive screening test. After his fellowship in 1996, he adapted and created a quicker version tailored to high-volume first-line specialty clinics. In 2005, the MoCA test was validated for clinical use. Widely used worldwide, the MoCA test is quick, easy to administer, and has been translated into many languages. It is recommended by the Alzheimer Society for objectively assessing cognitive complaints in clinical settings.

WORKSHOP

Mapping Change: Conducting Scoping Reviews to Synthesize Knowledge

This interactive workshop on conducting scoping reviews is designed to equip researchers, practitioners, and students with the essential skill of systematically synthesizing knowledge. A scoping review is a structured, iterative process that maps out, assesses, and identifies gaps in an emerging or established body of knowledge on a given topic. By conducting a scoping review, participants can gather comprehensive insights into evolving questions and trends in their fields.

The workshop will guide attendees through the practical steps of conducting a scoping review, including defining a research question, identifying relevant literature, and synthesizing findings. We will differentiate scoping reviews from other types of knowledge synthesis (e.g., systematic reviews and meta-analyses) and discuss their suitability for broad, interdisciplinary questions in psychology. Participants will learn how to formulate research questions, structure inclusion and exclusion criteria, and develop an effective search strategy.

Hands-on activities will allow participants to engage directly with the review process, covering key steps such as screening, data extraction, and mapping themes. The iterative nature of scoping reviews will also be explored, teaching participants how to refine their approaches as they uncover new information. By the end of the workshop, attendees will have a step-by-step framework for conducting scoping reviews, with practical examples relevant to psychology. Strategies for presenting and disseminating findings to maximize impact will also be discussed, aligning with the conference's theme of psychology's role in comprehending change. The session will provide networking opportunities and feedback for participants' research ideas. Whether new to scoping reviews or seeking to refine their knowledge, participants will leave with the skills needed to enhance their research toolkit and contribute to a more cohesive body of knowledge in psychology.

Dr Shanu Shukla

Dr Shanu Shukla is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellow at Masaryk University's Faculty of Social Studies in Brno, Czech Republic. Specializing in media psychology and cyberstudies, her research focuses on how digital media shapes behavior, identity, and societal interactions. With a strong background in social and intercultural research, Dr Shukla has conducted studies across numerous countries.

Skilled in a variety of research methodologies, she employs both qualitative and quantitative analysis, including controlled and virtual experiments, surveys, and mixed-methods approaches. Her research has been published in leading journals and conference proceedings. Dr Shukla is also actively involved in academic service, serving on an international committee for the Society for Research on Adolescence and as a copy editor for the International Society for Behavioral Development Bulletin. She has received recognition as a Fulbright Scholar and the Society for Research in Adolescence COVID-19 Fellowship recipient. With over 12 years of experience, Dr Shukla is dedicated to mentoring scholars and advancing interdisciplinary research in the digital society.



WORKSHOP

Mastering Change: Unleashing the Power of Adaptability

Adapting to change is a critical challenge for individuals and organizations, particularly in the GCC region, where adaptability is seen as essential for personal and professional well-being. However, many struggle with the skills and mindset needed to embrace change. A recent AQ Institute survey of over 200 GCC participants highlighted that while adaptability can drive success, stress, anxiety, and fixed mindsets often hinder effective responses. Notably, 93.8% of respondents identified fear of the unknown as a major barrier, emphasizing the need for actionable solutions to enhance adaptability.

Adaptive Intelligence (AQ) provides a practical framework to help individuals and teams develop resilience and effectively navigate change. This workshop will introduce the ACE framework—Ability, Character, and Environment—as a key method for measuring and strengthening adaptability at both personal and organizational levels. Participants will explore the AQ assessment tool, which identifies areas for development and guides targeted growth strategies to enhance adaptability.

The findings from the GCC study underscore the importance of adaptability in managing professional and personal well-being, achieving goals, and maintaining a healthy mental state in an ever-changing environment. This workshop will offer practical insights into Adaptive Intelligence by covering key topics such as understanding AQ, applying the ACE framework, assessing adaptability, and examining business use cases and local insights from the GCC.

Participants will gain valuable strategies to foster a resilient mindset, tools to measure and develop adaptability, and insights into GCC-specific challenges and solutions. Through interactive discussions, exercises, and case studies, attendees will leave with a clear understanding of how to integrate AQ methodologies into their personal and professional lives, transforming adaptability into a core strength.

Maria Nova

Ms Maria Nova is a Change Ambassador, Certified AQ Coach, Tech Mentor, and Author of the *PRO CHANGE* program. With nearly 20 years of experience as a business executive, she has witnessed the transformative power of technology, AI-driven solutions, and human adaptability across SMEs, enterprises, governments, and NGOs in EMEA. While technology has the potential to elevate industries and societies, Maria recognizes the gap between technological advancements and the ability of individuals and organizations to adapt.

Her passion lies in bridging this gap by fostering Adaptability Quotient (AQ) at individual, team, and organizational levels. By enhancing adaptability, she empowers businesses and professionals to embrace change, improve well-being, and achieve sustainable success and exceptional performance. Maria believes the future is not just about technology but about the intersection of tech and human connection.



WORKSHOP

Accelerating Change: Solution-Focused Strategies for Single Session Therapy

In today's fast-paced world, mental health professionals face increasing demand with limited time and resources. This workshop introduces Solution-Focused Single Session Therapy (SF-SST)—a powerful, time-efficient approach that leverages Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) within a single-session framework. By helping clients identify and amplify their strengths, SF-SST facilitates immediate forward momentum and maximizes each therapeutic encounter's potential.

Rooted in Single Session Therapy (SST) principles, this approach empowers clients to utilize their own resources while ensuring additional support remains available if needed. Though SST dates back to early psychotherapy, including Freud's work, its relevance has surged due to growing mental health needs, long waitlists, and resource limitations. SFBT, an evidence-based and pragmatic approach, is particularly suited for SST as it focuses on solutions rather than problems, driving meaningful change within a single session.

This interactive workshop will provide participants with a structured introduction to SF-SST, dispelling myths about its application and effectiveness. Attendees will explore the theoretical foundations of SST and SFBT, review empirical evidence, and engage in hands-on activities, including real-life case discussions, roleplay exercises, and practical implementation strategies.

By the end of the session, participants will gain a fresh perspective on brief, solution-focused interventions, enhancing their ability to deliver impactful therapy within a single session. SF-SST offers clinicians a way to accelerate change, foster resilience, and support self-directed growth in clients while addressing the urgent demands of modern mental health services.

Shima Husen

Ms Shima Husen holds an MSc in Organizational Behaviour from Concordia University, Canada, and an MSc and BSc (Hons) in Psychology from the University of Bolton. She is currently a psychology lecturer, teaching courses such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Political Psychology, Personal and Family Counseling, and Leadership. Her teaching emphasizes making psychological principles accessible and practical for students and professionals.

With extensive training in Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), Shima previously worked as a coach and trainer, designing and delivering customized training programs for academic, corporate, and community settings. Her expertise has led to opportunities as a plenary speaker, workshop facilitator, and conference presenter.

Her research and professional interests include SFBT, Single Session Therapy (SST), Coaching, Social Psychology, and Positive Psychology.



WORKSHOP

Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Substance Use Disorders (DBT-SUD): A Comprehensive Workshop

Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Substance Use Disorders (DBT-SUD) is an evidence-based treatment approach designed to address the complex needs of individuals struggling with substance use disorders. This intensive, skills-based therapy integrates core DBT principles with strategies tailored to the unique challenges of addiction.

This workshop will provide a deep dive into the theoretical underpinnings of DBT-SUD, including the rationale for using DBT to treat substance use disorder (SUD) patients, as well as its similarities and differences with other evidence-based approaches. Participants will explore practical strategies for implementing DBT-SUD in clinical practice, such as case conceptualization, skill training, and crisis intervention.

Additionally, the workshop will offer opportunities for participants to practice key DBT-SUD skills through role-plays and group discussions, allowing for hands-on experience in applying these techniques. A comprehensive understanding of the efficacy of DBT-SUD in treating substance use disorders will also be provided, supported by empirical evidence.

By the end of this workshop, participants will be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively apply DBT-SUD in their clinical work, improving outcomes for individuals struggling with addiction.

Dr Ahmed Abdelkarim

Dr Ahmed Abdelkarim is the founder and leader of the Egyptian Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Program, the first DBT initiative in the Arab region. He holds a Master's and Doctorate in Psychiatry from Alexandria University, Egypt, along with a fellowship at the University of Washington, USA, and training from the Lenihan Institute for Psychotherapy (2014-2016).

His expertise lies in dual diagnosis, borderline personality disorder, emotional dysregulation, substance use disorders, and suicide risk management. He has published over 20 research papers in psychiatry and mental health and has received notable accolades, including the Professor Yahya Al-Rakhawi Award (2015) and the Okasha Award for Best Young Researcher (2018).

Since 2015, Dr Abdelkarim has been actively involved in DBT training and suicide risk management across Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Jordan. He has played a key role in building DBT teams in various governmental and private institutions, universities, and NGOs. Known for integrating evidence-based therapeutic approaches with culturally sensitive practices, he delivers training in both Arabic and English.



WORKSHOP

Beyond the Past: Parenting with Awareness and Compassion

This workshop explores how intergenerational trauma, personal experiences, and cultural norms shape parenting practices and highlights the importance of a trauma-informed framework for mental health professionals working with caregivers. By integrating insights from Polyvagal Theory (Porges, 2004) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) (Linehan, 2015), participants will examine how neurobiological responses to trauma influence parenting behaviors and child development.

Key topics include neuroception—the ability to detect safety and threat—and its role in relational dynamics. Clinicians will engage in experiential exercises on self-regulation and co-regulation, learning how caregiver emotional states impact child well-being. The session will also provide practical DBT-based interventions, mindfulness strategies, and emotion regulation techniques that help parents model adaptive coping for their children.

An in-depth discussion on parenting styles (Baumrind, 1991) will emphasize authoritative approaches, balancing warmth with structure. Through role-play scenarios and reflective activities, professionals will practice applying these strategies in therapeutic settings, helping caregivers shift from reactive parenting to intentional, compassionate approaches.

By addressing intergenerational trauma and incorporating evidence-based strategies, this workshop equips mental health professionals with a comprehensive framework to support families in fostering resilience and building secure, nurturing relationships with their children.

Sharanya Venkataraman

Ms Sharanya is a Licensed Psychologist based in Dubai, with over seven years of experience providing culturally sensitive, evidence-based care. Holding Master's degrees in Developmental Psychopathology from the UK and Clinical Psychology from the US, she specializes in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), working with adolescents and adults on issues like depression, anxiety, personality disorders, trauma, and substance use.

She collaborates closely with families and caregivers, leading parent and family groups and conducting neurodevelopmental and psychoeducational assessments to guide treatment. Additionally, Sharanya is active in mental health advocacy, serving on the Middle East North Africa Trauma Association (MENATA) conference scientific committee and leading workshops on stress management, intergenerational trauma, and emotional intelligence. Her work empowers individuals and families to build meaningful, values-driven lives.



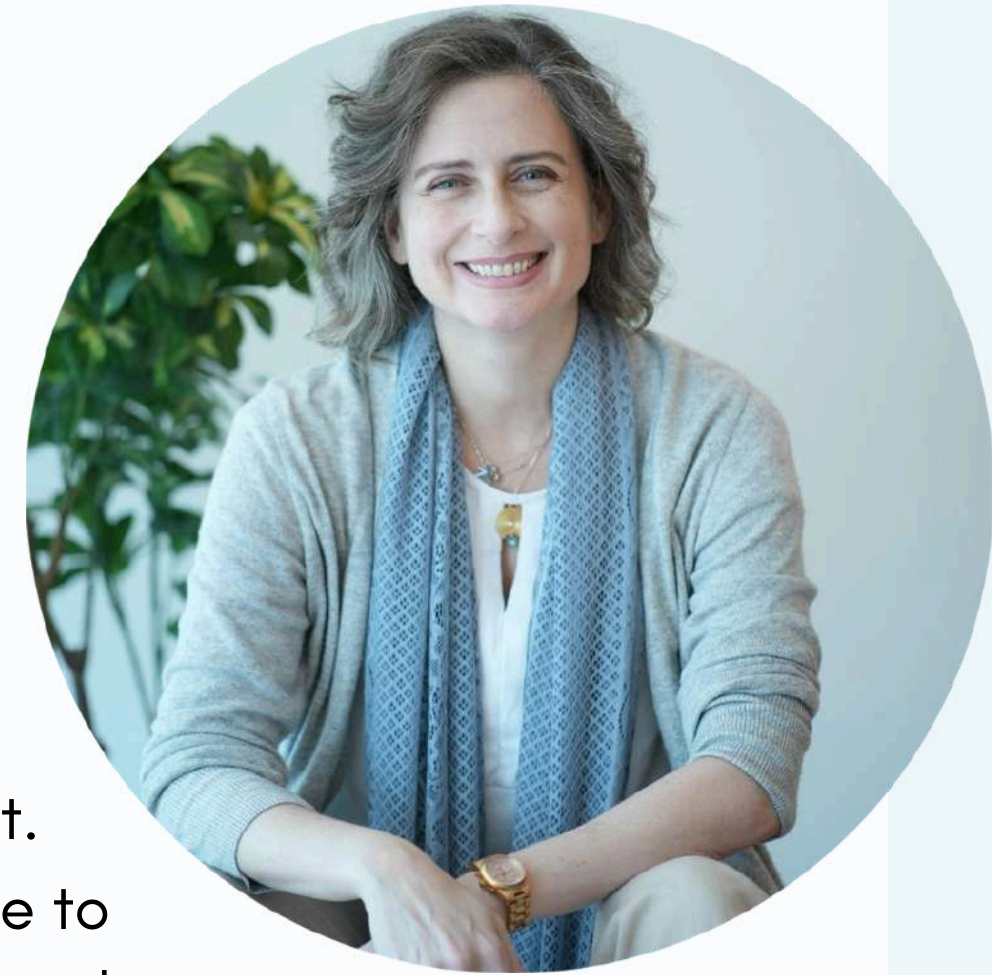
WORKSHOP

Beyond the Past: Parenting with Awareness and Compassion

Zena Takieddine

Ms Zena Takieddine is the co-founder of Body Mind You Holistic Wellness, a center focused on natural healthcare and holistic well-being. She holds a BA in history and Islamic art from the American University of Beirut and an MA from SOAS University of London. Zena's path to holistic wellness began with yoga, leading her to train at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Ashram. She later pursued Somatic Experiencing (SE), becoming the first certified SE practitioner in Lebanon, and completed advanced training in trauma recovery, prenatal and perinatal dynamics, and body-based therapies like Neuro-Affective Touch and Bodydynamic International Foundations.

Zena has also worked with refugee communities in Lebanon, teaching yoga and supporting trauma healing in underprivileged populations. Her collaborative efforts with NGOs have focused on promoting social impact. At Body Mind You, she integrates somatic practices with lifestyle medicine to offer a unique approach to wellness. Her expertise includes trauma-informed care and emotional regulation. Zena is a member of Somatic Experiencing International and the European Association for Somatic Experiencing, working to empower individuals to transform pain into resilience and cultivate a balanced, fulfilling life.



Dr Sarah Bougary

Dr Sarah A. Bougary, MD, is an experienced Adult, Child, and Adolescent Psychiatrist with over ten years in mental health care. She is the Founder and CEO of Monarch Health Centers in Dubai, where she also serves as Medical Director. Dr Bougary is certified in Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and holds licenses with the Saudi Commission for Health Specialties and the Dubai Health Care Authorities.

After earning her medical degree in Saudi Arabia, she transitioned from surgery to psychiatry, completing a psychiatric residency and a fellowship in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in the United States. During her training, she participated in programs focused on trauma care and minority leadership in psychiatry.

Dr Bougary specializes in working with children, particularly those with autism, ADHD, and trauma-related issues. She has been involved in key initiatives like the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Committee in Saudi Arabia and the Child Safeguarding and Protection Committee at Al Jalila Children's Hospital in Dubai. In 2024, Dr Bougary co-founded MENATA to improve trauma care standards across the region. Through her leadership, she is dedicated to advancing trauma-informed practices and providing high-quality mental health care.



WORKSHOP

Creative Conversations With Children: Using the Arts When “Talking” Isn't Enough

The workshop explores the incorporation of creative activities when working with children to foster deeper understanding, expression, and reflection. By introducing art, storytelling, role-playing, and other creative modalities, practitioners can go beyond traditional verbal exchanges with their young clients and create safe and engaging sessions. The activities can help children understand concepts, non-verbally articulate emotions, and form a basis for meaningful discussions.

Dr Lamya Tawfik

Dr Lamya Tawfik, founder of iChoose, is a certified Kids Life Coach, Creative Therapist (Arts Facilitator), and performing artist (storyteller and actress). She holds a PhD in Childhood Studies (Children's Media and Culture) from the Institute of Postgraduate Childhood Studies at Ain Shams University in Cairo. She also holds a BA and MA in Journalism and Mass Communication from the American University in Cairo. Her journey as a performing artist began in 2009, and since then, she has performed in English, Arabic, and Italian with several theater groups in Dubai. As a storyteller, she has participated in numerous children's events, storytelling festivals, and book fairs.



WORKSHOP

Restoring Creative Thinking in Children: Practical, Evidence-Based Methods to Build Competency of Today's Most In-Demand—but Depleting—Life Skill

This workshop focuses on restoring and fostering creative thinking in children—an essential skill for navigating today's fast-paced world. However, research shows this ability is increasingly at risk of depletion due to limited opportunities for open-ended exploration in structured school settings and the overwhelming influence of technology and social media (Trevallion & Cusanelli, 2021; Niloy et al., 2023). A 2020 study by the Reboot Foundation revealed that only 20% of parents regularly encourage their children to express alternative perspectives, and only a third engage in discussions about open-ended issues. These opportunities are vital for nurturing critical and creative thinking.

In a world where information is easily accessible, children need the ability to analyze and interpret content, not just memorize facts. Despite years of formal education, 75% of graduates still lack critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which employers find essential (Bellaera et al., 2021). This workshop will address this gap by examining the psychological basis of creative thinking, identifying clues in children's behavior that indicate creativity, and exploring how school curricula have evolved to incorporate creative thinking.

Practical, evidence-based activities to encourage creative thought will be demonstrated during the session, with delegates invited to participate. Additionally, free resources to support these activities will be shared. The goal is to foster creativity from the earliest stages of development, recognizing that creative thinking need not be explicitly taught but can be activated through consistent exposure to opportunities.

Amal Kasmani

Mrs Amal Kasmani is an educational counselor and special educator with extensive experience in the Middle East, specializing in child psychology and neurodiversity. After over two decades in Oman and the UAE, she relocated to New Zealand and founded *Little Lives With Amal*, a community initiative that has gained over 6,000 followers globally. Through this platform, she shares strategies for parenting and teaching, offering resources on phonics, literacy, numeracy, creative thinking, childhood trauma, behavior patterns, and overall well-being. She is also researching cross-cultural differences in parenting between Omani and Māori communities.

Amal holds a degree in Psychology from Heriot-Watt University and is involved in neurodiversity research at Arden University. She is a certified mental health first aider and has completed training for Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) certification. Additionally, she is a member of the Australia and New Zealand Mental Health Association and volunteers with the New Zealand Cancer Society.





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PANEL

The Evolution of Maternal and Infant Mental Health in the UAE: From Practice to Policy

Until relatively recently, the number of practitioners in the UAE trained in maternal and infant mental health interventions, and specifically focusing their practice in this area, was limited. Over the past few years, with the emergence of government-level policies recognizing the importance of maternal and infant mental health, services and support have expanded and evolved.

This panel discussion will examine the current provisions and developments in the UAE. Additionally, it will explore the panelists' experiences in the field of maternal and infant mental health, along with their observations on what is required at both policy and practice levels to meet the needs of the growing population and uphold best practices in the field.

Dr Rose Gonzalez Logan

Dr Rose Logan is a highly experienced clinical psychologist with over 15 years of clinical practice, primarily in the GCC. Trained in multiple therapeutic modalities, including *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy*, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Schema Therapy, and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), she adopts a compassionate, culturally aware, and person-centered approach to therapy.

Originally from the UK, she spent most of her life in Scotland, where a love for nature and travel fostered a deep curiosity about people and cultures. Becoming a mother further shaped her clinical focus, igniting a passion for pregnancy, postpartum, and infant mental health. Her practice includes support for pre- and post-natal mood disorders, traumatic birth, fertility and IVF challenges, infant loss, bonding concerns, and specific phobias.

In addition to one-on-one therapy for clients aged 16 and above, she facilitates group programs such as Mellow Bumps, an evidence-based initiative supporting women during pregnancy. She also provides supervision for psychologists and collaborates across disciplines, offering consultation and training opportunities.



Dr Marie Thompson

Dr Marie is a UK-trained Clinical Psychologist with extensive experience in treating a range of mental health concerns, including anxiety, depression, relationship challenges, and pre- and postnatal emotional difficulties. She holds a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology and has been practicing in Dubai for several years, offering culturally sensitive support to both expatriate and local communities.

With a special interest in trauma and PTSD, Dr Marie is dedicated to helping individuals process painful memories and move forward. Throughout her career, she has worked with diverse populations across the UK, Australia, the Netherlands, and Dubai. In addition to clinical practice, she has maintained strong academic involvement, leading a university department, conducting research, and publishing work in books and journals, as well as presenting at international conferences.



Dr Charlotte Cousins

Dr Charlotte Cousins is a UK-trained Consultant Clinical Psychologist at Maudsley Health. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Applied Psychology and Sociology (2012) and a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (2018), both from the University of Surrey. She remains a licensed practitioner psychologist with the HCPC in the UK and is also licensed to practice in Abu Dhabi through the Department of Health (DOH).

Before joining Maudsley Health, Dr Cousins served as the Lead Psychologist for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Dubai, overseeing both CAMHS and perinatal mental health services. In the UK, she worked as a Senior Psychologist within specialist perinatal mental health teams and a mother and baby inpatient unit at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. She also gained experience at Beacon House, a specialist attachment and trauma service. Since qualifying in 2018, Dr. Cousins has specialized in supporting individuals, couples, and families navigating family life, with a focus on perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships. She also works with children, adolescents, and families experiencing attachment difficulties, separation anxiety, school avoidance, low mood, depression, and trauma.

Her therapeutic approach integrates trauma, attachment, and systemic perspectives. She is trained in multiple evidence-based models, including Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Compassion-Focused Therapy (CFT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR).



Coronary heart disease (CHD) accounted for 19.4% of deaths in Malaysia in 2019, with rising mortality rates. Despite the critical role of medication adherence in CHD management, only 60% of Malaysian patients follow prescribed regimens. Limited healthcare resources hinder traditional face-to-face interventions, highlighting the need for virtual care. This study develops and evaluates a virtual psychoeducation framework to enhance medication adherence and self-care among post-discharge CHD patients in Malaysia using a convergent mixed-methods approach. Semi-structured interviews with 14 healthcare professionals (≥ 5 years of CHD treatment experience) were thematically analyzed, while a cross-sectional survey of 230 CHD patients assessed e-health literacy, medication adherence, and quality of life (QOL) using validated scales. The qualitative analysis identified key themes, including barriers to virtual care, digital infrastructure, platform preferences, acceptance and readiness, and virtual data management. Quantitative results revealed significant associations between e-health literacy, medication adherence, and QOL, with regression analysis confirming their influence on patient outcomes. Integrating these findings, the study highlights digital challenges and patient readiness concerns while demonstrating that higher e-health literacy and adherence significantly improve QOL. Addressing these barriers, the proposed virtual psychoeducation framework offers a scalable solution to enhance post-discharge care, improve patient outcomes, and reduce healthcare costs in Malaysia.

Dr Nor Firdous Mohamed

Nor Firdous Mohamed is a Senior Lecturer at Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, a Registered Clinical Psychologist in Malaysia, and a Visiting Consultant Clinical Psychologist working with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). She specializes in mixed-method research design, focusing on Health Psychology and Clinical Psychology. She contributes to community-based mental health services and serves as an educator, supervisor for clinical psychology training, and researcher.



Parames Ravichandran

Ms Parames Ravichandran is associated with the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.



Norfaezah Zakaria

Ms Norfaezah Zakaria is associated with the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.



Muhd Fadlin Muhammad Firdaus Chan

Mr Muhd Fadlin Muhammad Firdaus Chan is associated with the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.



Dr Norhafizah Ab Manan

Dr Norhafizah Ab Manan is associated with the University of Cyberjaya, Malaysia.

Dr Aroyewun Temitope Falashade

Dr Aroyewun Temitope Falashade is associated with the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.



Dr Nor Ashikin Md Sari

Dr Nor Ashikin Md Sari is associated with the UM Specialist Centre, Malaysia.



Dr Anwar Suhaimi

Dr Anwar Suhaimi is an Associate Professor at Universiti Malaya.



Dr Amani Nur Amani Natasha Ahmad Tajuddin

Dr Amani Nur Amani Natasha Ahmad Tajuddin is an Associate Professor at Universiti Malaya.



PRESENTATION

A Virtual Psychoeducation Framework to Enhance Medication Adherence and Post-Discharge Care in Malaysian CHD Patients: Preliminary Findings

Dr Bahbibi Rahmatullah

Dr Bahbibi Rahmatullah is an Associate Professor at the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris.



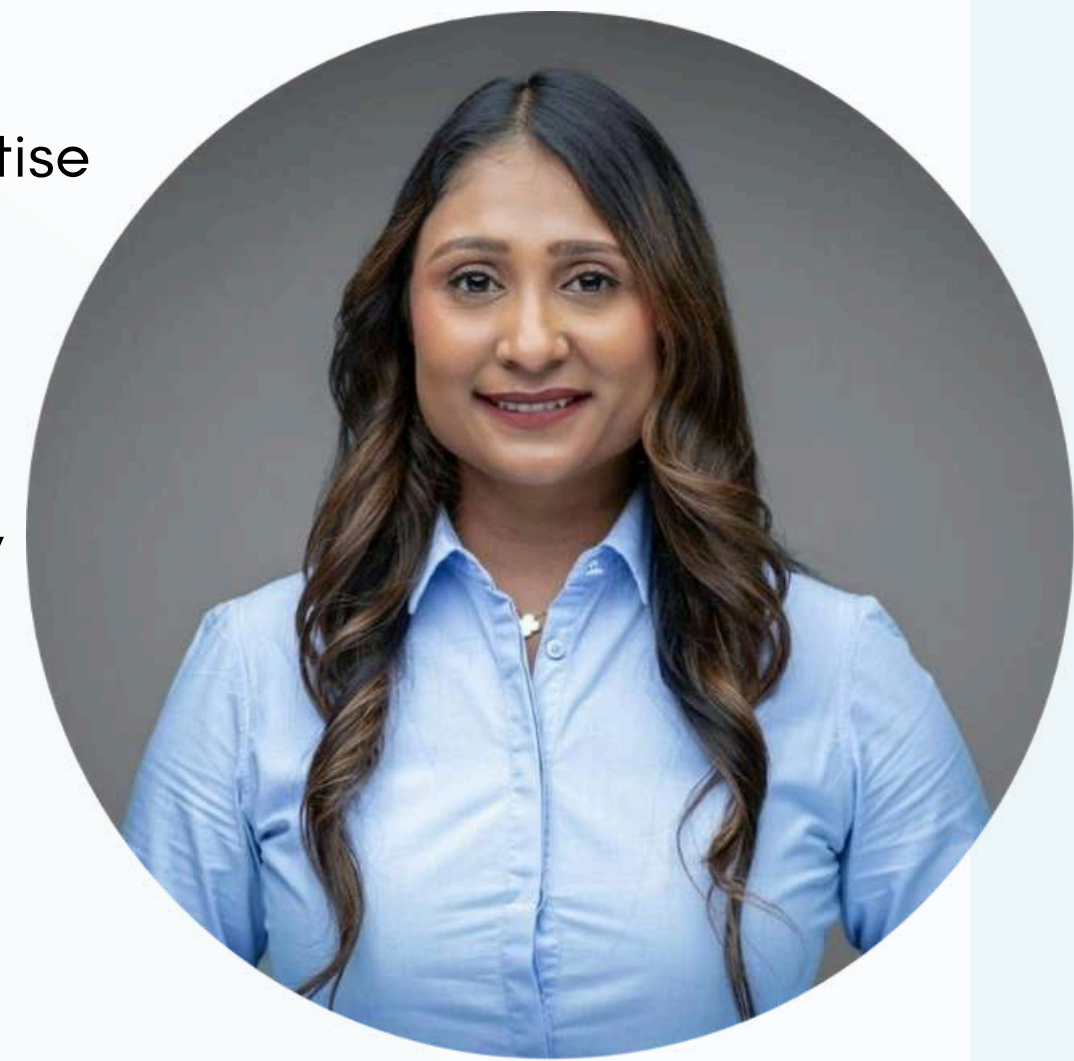
Physical inactivity and poor nutrition are major global health concerns, contributing to chronic diseases and health disparities. In the UAE, these issues are exacerbated by sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy dietary habits linked to rapid socio-economic development. Reliance on vehicles, sedentary work environments, and high-calorie, low-nutrient diets have led to rising obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease rates.

This study applies the Theory of Planned Behavior to examine how implicit attitudes, social norms, self-efficacy, and knowledge influence health-related behaviors. A two-stage design involving 150 university students in the UAE combines self-report questionnaires with an Implicit Association Test to assess predictors of health-promoting behaviors.

Findings are expected to highlight the significant role of attitudes, social norms, self-efficacy, and knowledge in shaping health intentions and behaviors. These insights will inform culturally tailored interventions, policies, and educational initiatives to promote sustainable health behaviors and improve public health outcomes in the UAE.

Dr Minu Mathews

Dr Minu Mathews is an Associate Professor of Psychology with expertise in Health Psychology. Her research explores the impact of stress on health, work, and well-being, as well as the psychosocial determinants of health behavior and cross-cultural factors influencing burnout. Passionate about interdisciplinary collaboration, Dr Mathews is dedicated to advancing health promotion and illness treatment initiatives in the UAE.



Dr Ishfaq Vaja

Dr Ishfaq Vaja is an Assistant Professor of Psychology specializing in Health Psychology and Public Health, with a focus on health prevention and the management of long-term conditions. His research addresses critical public health challenges, contributing to strategies for disease prevention and health promotion. Committed to education, Dr Vaja actively supervises undergraduate and postgraduate research projects, inspiring future health psychologists and public health practitioners.



Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani

Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani is an Assistant Professor of Psychology specializing in social psychology, cognition, and language. Her interdisciplinary research explores social issues, implicit attitudes, and reading processes across languages, using advanced techniques such as eye tracking. Dr Yekani's work bridges social and experimental psychology, offering novel insights through collaborative and innovative approaches.



PRESENTATION

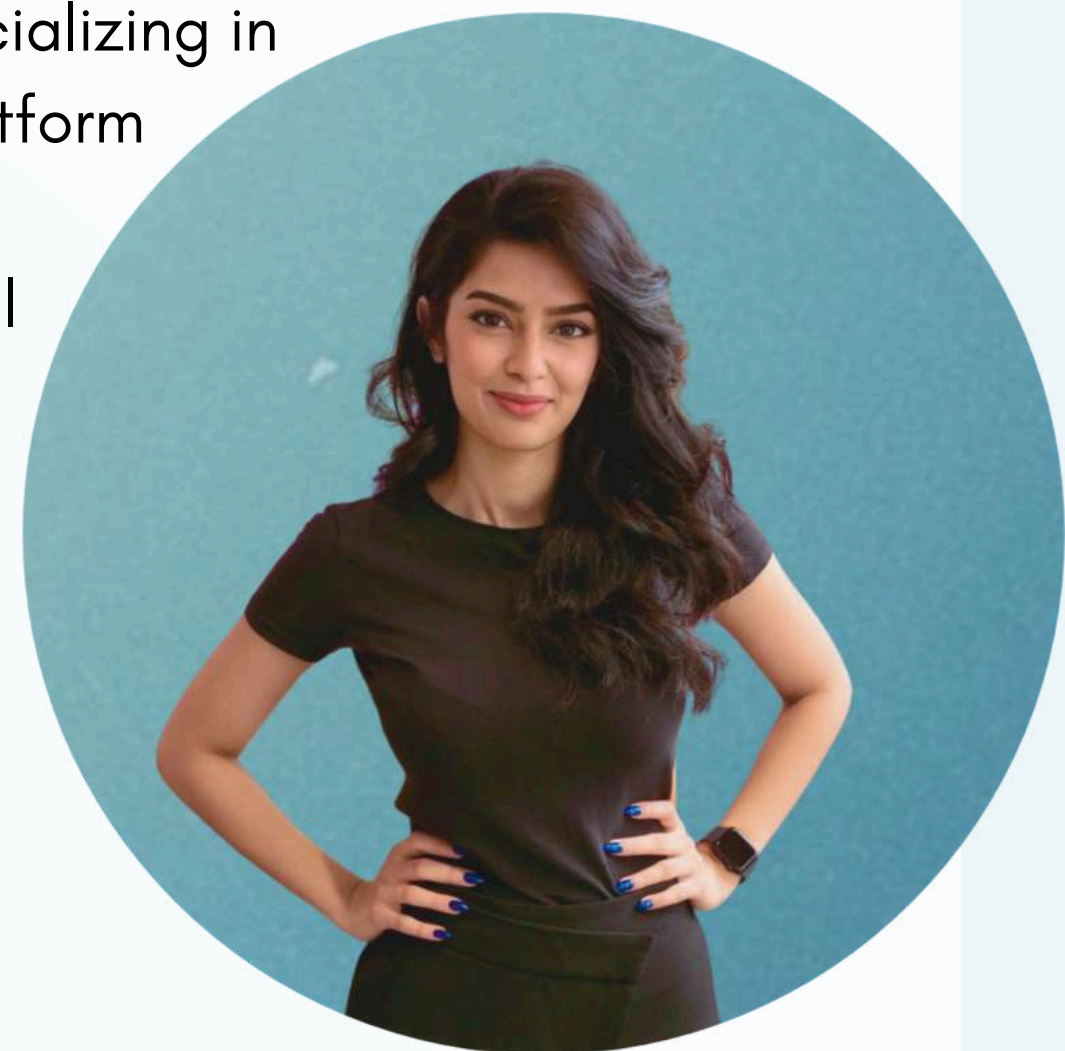
Exploring the Evolving Perspectives on Career Aspirations and Parenthood Amongst Females in the UAE

This study explores how cultural norms and social attitudes shape career aspirations among women in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), extending research beyond university students. Although women make up 70% of university graduates in the UAE, their workforce participation is only 28%, significantly below the global average of 42%. Cultural factors, such as traditional parenting norms and societal expectations around childbearing, influence career ambitions, especially as women balance professional and family roles. The research employs an independent measures survey design to examine the relationships between cultural orientation, attitudes toward motherhood, and parental employment. Using validated scales, the study hypothesizes that traditional parenting norms and collectivist values may limit career aspirations, while individualistic values and working parental role models may encourage higher ambitions. This research aims to address a critical data gap and provide timely insights for policymakers looking to align well-being policies with contemporary behaviors and attitudes. The findings are expected to inform policy and program development, creating environments that support women in achieving their career goals amidst evolving societal expectations in the UAE.

Nokhez Usama

Ms Nokhez Usama, a Dubai-based behavioral neuropsychologist specializing in psychopathology and brain trauma, is the founder of Mind/Me, a platform dedicated to corporate wellness and mental health support. Her expertise drives her commitment to applying cognitive and behavioral strategies to enhance mental health, with a particular focus on adolescents and young adults, both in clinical settings and through policy reform.

Beyond her role as a founder, Nokhez remains deeply engaged in clinical practice, research, and policy development, striving to advance mental wellness and create a lasting, meaningful impact in the field.



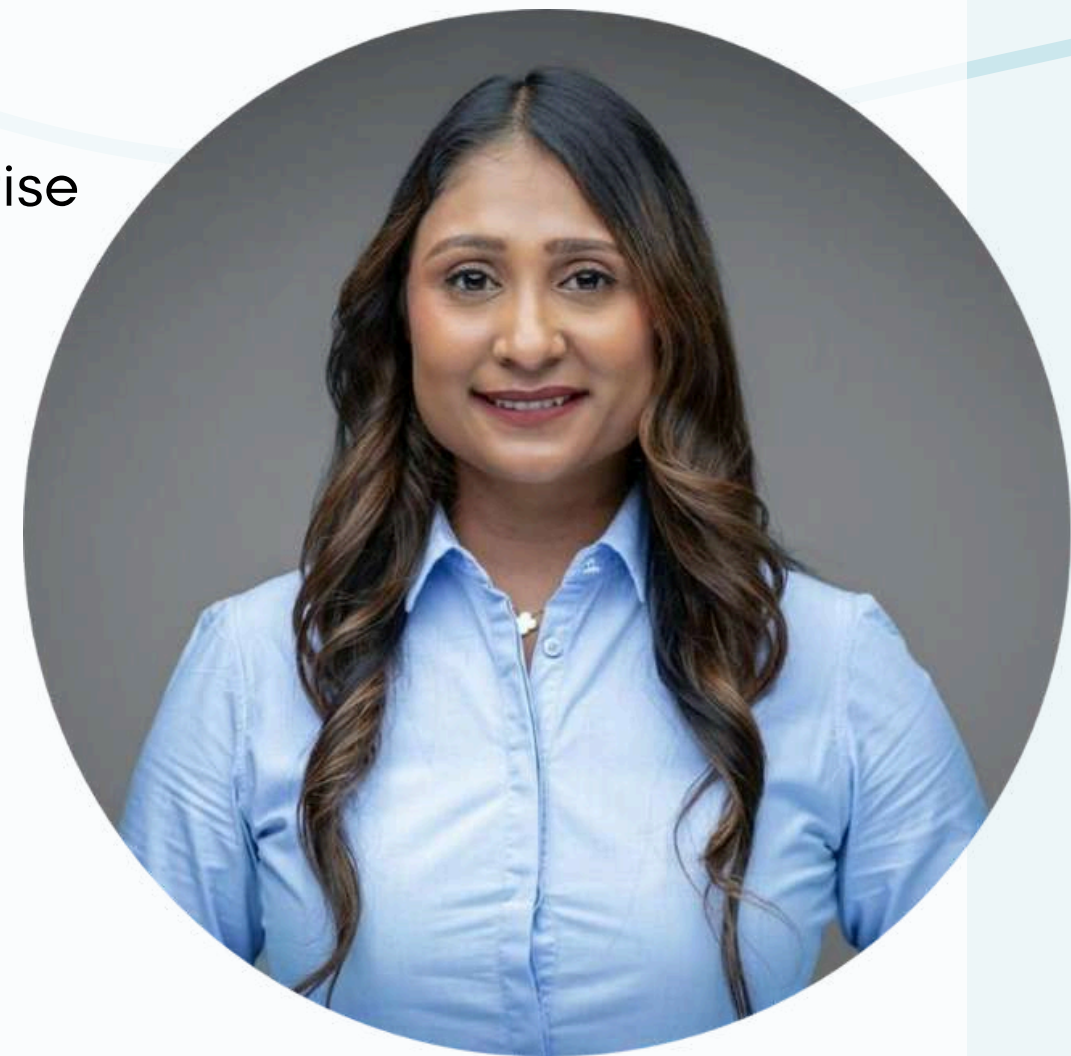
Dr Ishfaq Vaja

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Sarah Khan

Ms Sarah graduated from Heriot-Watt University Dubai in 2024, receiving the prestigious Watt Club Medal for achieving the highest distinction in her BSc (Hons) Psychology degree across all campuses. She currently serves as a volunteer research assistant at the university, contributing to health psychology research.

With a strong research background in forensic psychology, she is passionate about advancing mental health research with a focus on culturally sensitive approaches. Her research interests centre on understanding how cultural contexts shape mental health perceptions, access to care, and treatment outcomes. She aims to pursue postgraduate studies to further her expertise in clinical psychology, working towards evidence-based solutions that incorporate cultural diversity in mental health treatment and policy.



DBT, an effective treatment for complex mental health conditions, has been recently implemented in the Arab world. However, challenges such as cultural barriers, language differences, and resource limitations hinder its widespread adoption. Opportunities lie in growing mental health awareness, DBT's adaptability, international collaboration, and technological advancements. Addressing cultural factors and providing comprehensive training are crucial for integrating DBT into the region's mental health landscape. Further research is needed to evaluate culturally adapted DBT interventions and develop sustainable training programs. This presentation will focus on presenting data and insights from 10 years of experience in training and implementing DBT across multiple systems in the Arab world.

Dr Ahmed Abdelkarim

Dr Ahmed Abdelkarim is the founder and leader of the Egyptian Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Program, the first DBT initiative in the Arab region. He holds a Master's and Doctorate in Psychiatry from Alexandria University, Egypt, along with a fellowship at the University of Washington, USA, and training from the Lenihan Institute for Psychotherapy (2014-2016).

His expertise lies in dual diagnosis, borderline personality disorder, emotional dysregulation, substance use disorders, and suicide risk management. He has published over 20 research papers in psychiatry and mental health and has received notable accolades, including the Professor Yahya Al-Rakhawi Award (2015) and the Okasha Award for Best Young Researcher (2018).

Since 2015, Dr Abdelkarim has been actively involved in DBT training and suicide risk management across Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, and Jordan. He has played a key role in building DBT teams in various governmental and private institutions, universities, and NGOs. Known for integrating evidence-based therapeutic approaches with culturally sensitive practices, he delivers training in both Arabic and English.



In today's dynamic healthcare landscape, possessing strong soft skills is essential for professionals to deliver high-quality patient care and collaborate effectively within multidisciplinary teams. This presentation highlights the critical role of soft skills—such as communication, empathy, teamwork, and adaptability—in improving patient outcomes and fostering positive work environments. Despite their importance, these skills are often underemphasized in traditional healthcare education.

The session will explore the significant impact of soft skills on patient-centered care, employee satisfaction, and overall healthcare quality. It will focus on key soft skills that healthcare professionals must develop to succeed in both clinical and non-clinical settings. The session will also present best practices for integrating soft skills training into healthcare curricula, utilizing innovative approaches such as experiential learning, simulations, and role-playing exercises. Moreover, it will emphasize fostering a culture of continuous improvement within organizations, encouraging the development of soft skills through regular training, mentorship, and feedback mechanisms.

Attendees will gain insights into the importance of soft skills in healthcare and practical strategies for implementation, ultimately leading to improved professional practices and enhanced patient care outcomes.

Dr Aref Alabed

Dr Aref Alabed is the General Manager for the Continuing Professional Development Standards Organisation (CPDSO) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, where he promotes educational excellence and professional growth. He is also the Founder and CEO of the International Medical Training Academy (IMTA) in London, combining his medical expertise with executive training. With extensive leadership experience in managing medical facilities, Dr Aref is a qualified dentist and holds an MBA from Northampton University in the UK, reflecting his commitment to continuous learning.

His leadership philosophy focuses on implementing effective policies and procedures that align with institutional goals while advancing the mission and vision of the organization. An accredited speaker by the CPDSO in England, Dr Aref is recognized for his contributions to professional training in the healthcare sector.



Clinical supervision and consultation are essential components of ethical and effective therapeutic practice. While research on their numerous benefits is well-established, there remains a gap in understanding the current practices of supervision and consultation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). As a major hub for people from all over the world, the UAE has seen unprecedented expansion, particularly in the mental health sector. However, research has yet to catch up, especially in areas such as in-country education, training, and supervision of mental health professionals. The UAE's diverse community of therapists presents an opportunity for rich and varied therapeutic practices that can meet the cultural and linguistic needs of the population. Yet, this diversity also creates an extensive need for training, supervision, and consultation. This presentation explores clinical supervision, consultation, and training in the UAE throughout the professional lifespan, examining the nature of supervision-seeking behaviors (how, what, when, and why clinicians seek supervision), barriers to supervision, and potential cross-cultural challenges. Additionally, the presentation aims to provide an engaging and reflective session that empowers attendees in how they access and approach supervision.

Dr Chasity O'Connell

Dr. O'Connell is a licensed psychologist in both the USA and the UAE, holding a doctorate in psychology, a master's in counseling, and a master's in psychological science. She is a professor of practice in the Psychology Department at the American University of Sharjah (AUS), where she teaches and conducts research on psychological well-being, resilience, and the impact of social media. Dr. O'Connell also serves as the clinical director at Thrive Wellbeing Centre in Dubai, providing clinical supervision, consultation, and therapy.

Committed to community outreach, she has delivered workshops on topics such as perfectionism, resilience, stress management, and women's mental health in the UAE. Her expertise in psychological therapy combines a Humanistic and insight-oriented approach with evidence-based therapies like CBT, ACT, and DBT. Dr. O'Connell is dedicated to supporting individuals and organizations in enhancing mental health and well-being.



Decolonizing therapy and mental health is a critical movement aimed at dismantling the lingering effects of colonialism embedded in psychological practices. Traditional therapeutic models, often grounded in Eurocentric frameworks, can fail to address the lived experiences of individuals from diverse cultural contexts (Fernando, 2014). This movement invites mental health professionals to reimagine therapy as a space for collective healing, social justice, and cultural humility. Central to this process is the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems, which emphasize the interconnectedness of mind, body, spirit, and community (Duran, 2006).

Decolonizing therapy also recognizes the role of systemic oppression in perpetuating mental health disparities, urging therapists to critically examine how power imbalances, racism, and historical trauma affect clients' experiences (Adams, 2017). The movement challenges the traditional notion of therapists as neutral experts, advocating for a collaborative approach that empowers clients as equal participants in their healing journey (Gone, 2013). Therapists are encouraged to engage in continuous self-reflection and cultural competence development.

Additionally, decolonizing therapy calls for the adaptation of therapeutic practices to align with local cultural and spiritual values. For example, integrating Islamic teachings into therapy in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has proven beneficial (Rassool, 2016). Embracing cultural practices like storytelling and rituals further enhances the therapeutic process.

Ultimately, decolonizing mental health is about transformation—not just inclusion—of practices, systems, and worldviews. By committing to this process, mental health professionals create opportunities for meaningful change, honoring the diversity of human experience and using therapy as a vehicle for collective liberation and societal healing.

Sharanya Venkataraman

Ms Sharanya is a Licensed Psychologist based in Dubai, with over seven years of experience providing culturally sensitive, evidence-based care. Holding Master's degrees in Developmental Psychopathology from the UK and Clinical Psychology from the US, she specializes in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), working with adolescents and adults on issues like depression, anxiety, personality disorders, trauma, and substance use.

She collaborates closely with families and caregivers, leading parent and family groups and conducting neurodevelopmental and psychoeducational assessments to guide treatment. Additionally, Sharanya is active in mental health advocacy, serving on the Middle East North Africa Trauma Association (MENATA) conference scientific committee and leading workshops on stress management, intergenerational trauma, and emotional intelligence. Her work empowers individuals and families to build meaningful, values-driven lives.



This presentation explores the complexities of intimacy in couples therapy, particularly within culturally diverse contexts such as the Middle East. Intimacy, encompassing both emotional and sexual aspects, is fundamental to relationship dynamics and strongly linked to well-being, marital satisfaction, and mental health (Kardan-Souraki et al., 2015). However, cultural norms, societal expectations, gender roles, and religious beliefs significantly influence how intimacy is perceived and expressed, posing unique challenges for therapists working in multicultural settings.

Despite growing awareness and shifting perceptions in the Middle East, most existing therapeutic models addressing intimacy are based on research that predominantly samples Western couples, limiting their applicability to Eastern cultures (Kamali et al., 2020). While models such as Imago Relationship Therapy (IRT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), and the Gottman Method have demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing marital intimacy (Ghahari et al., 2023; Davoodvandi et al., 2018), they often lack cultural sensitivity, necessitating adaptation to diverse cultural frameworks.

Therapists face challenges in tailoring standard interventions to fit cultural nuances, requiring a shift in perception and a flexible approach to therapy modalities. This presentation will examine these challenges, discuss culturally informed approaches to intimacy in couples therapy, and provide practical, evidence-based strategies for therapists to navigate intimacy issues with cultural awareness and effectiveness. Through research insights and clinical examples, this session aims to enhance therapeutic practices in culturally diverse settings.

Nashwa Tantawy

Ms Nashwa Tantawy is a psychologist, couples therapist, researcher, and speaker, serving as the Managing Director of Nafsology Psychology Center in Dubai, UAE. She provides psychotherapy, workshops, and speeches in Egypt and the UAE, specializing in personality and mood disorders, as well as couples therapy.

Her research focuses on violence against women, personality disorders, AI integration in personality assessments, and trauma treatment in couples therapy. She has presented at conferences such as MEPA and IPCD. A member of the American Psychological Association (APA) and Treasurer of the MEPA UAE Country Chapter, Nashwa is dedicated to mental health awareness in the Arab world. In 2019, she launched the virtual initiative *Nafsology by Nashwa Tantawy*, followed by founding Nafsology Psychology Center in 2022, committed to providing culturally sensitive mental health services in a safe and supportive environment.



Marriage, traditionally associated with social and emotional stability, has undergone significant transformations in recent decades, with declining marriage rates and increasing relational dissatisfaction worldwide. This presentation explores the sociocultural, psychological, and economic factors contributing to these shifts and examines alternative therapeutic approaches to address marital challenges.

Rather than focusing solely on conflict resolution, this research adopts a Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) approach—a strengths-based, goal-oriented method that emphasizes positive communication, resource-building, and future-directed strategies. Through empirical analysis and case studies, the presentation evaluates the efficacy of SFBT in fostering relationship resilience. Additionally, it considers how cultural variations shape marital expectations and how solution-focused interventions can be tailored to diverse populations.

By shifting the discourse from pathology to solutions, this research offers a pragmatic framework for clinicians, counselors, and researchers, contributing to a more sustainable and adaptable approach to marital therapy.

Dr Sonakshi Ruhela

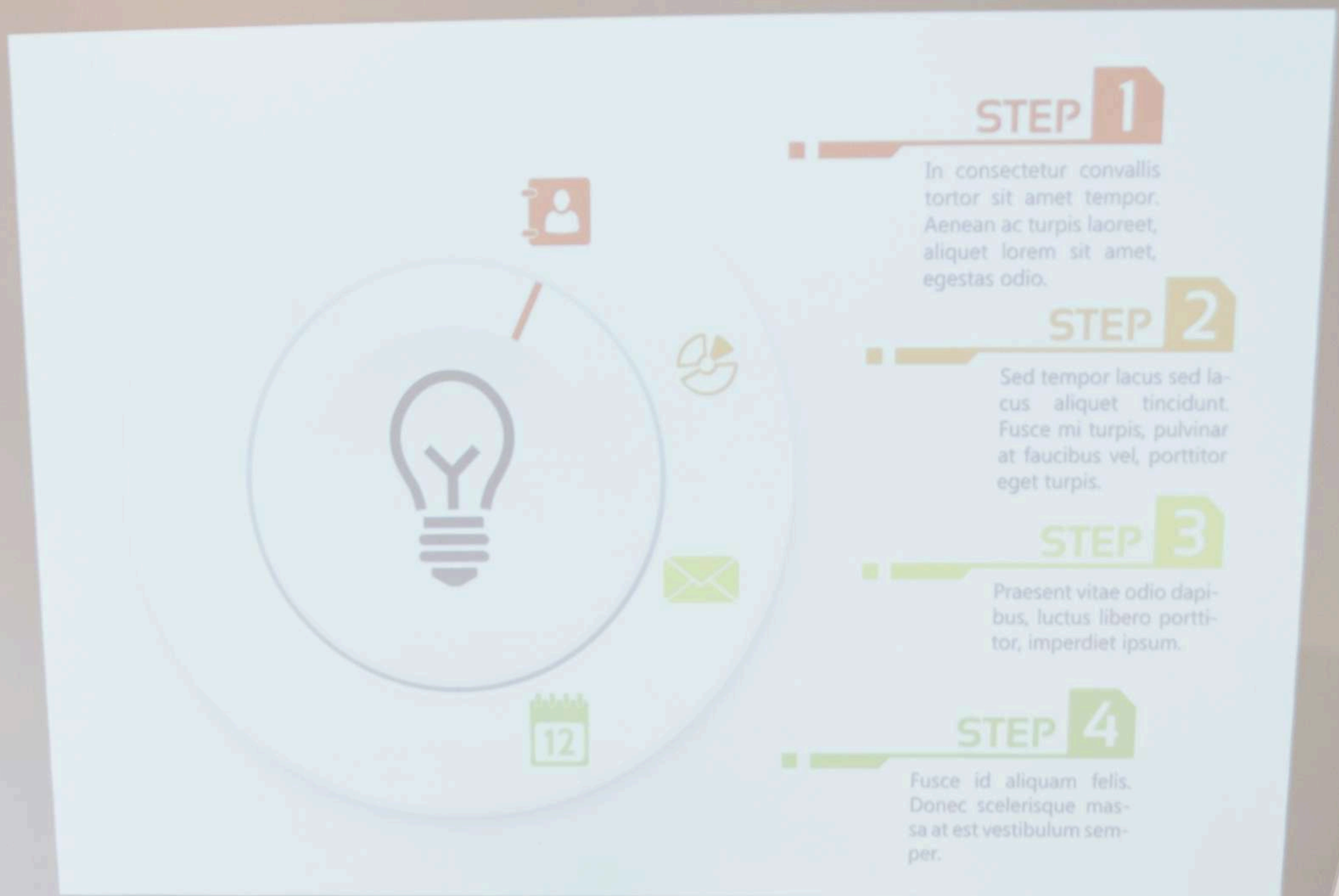
Dr Sonakshi Ruhela is a distinguished psychologist, educator, and researcher with over 15 years of experience in teaching, training, and mentorship. She holds a PhD in Psychology, a Harvard Certification in Higher Education, and is a Senior Fellow (SFHEA) of the UK Higher Education Academy.

Currently an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Dubai, Dr Ruhela has been instrumental in establishing psychology programs at major UAE universities. A licensed psychologist with the Community Development Authority (CDA) Dubai, she specializes in psychotherapy, behavioral interventions, and relationship counseling, serving as a consultant at OpenMinds Psychiatry, Counselling & Neuroscience Center and an Inclusion Champion at GEMS New Millennium School.

With a global presence in over 300 conferences and media engagements, Dr Ruhela is the author of *Counseling Interventions for Millennials*, archived at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Library and awarded the UAE Mastermind Authors Award (2023). Recognized for her contributions, she has received accolades such as the Leader of Impact Award (2023) and Outstanding Positive Impact Speaker (2024). Her interdisciplinary research includes Scopus-indexed publications and funded projects in India and the UAE.

As a TEDx speaker and advocate for mental health and education, Dr Ruhela continues to drive change. More information can be found at www.drsonakshi.com.





Business Meeting

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Psychology

Coaching is a powerful tool for personal and professional development, fostering a high-performance culture by leveraging individual and group strengths (Whitmore, 2009). The Peer Coaching Research Project, launched in 2022 at Heriot-Watt University (HWU), is a collaborative initiative involving the MSc Business Psychology with Coaching programme, the Student Wellbeing Service, and the Coaching Lab. This global initiative enables coaching students to practice their skills through peer coaching, enhancing both theoretical understanding and experiential learning.

Research supports the benefits of peer coaching, demonstrating its ability to improve learning outcomes through hands-on experience (Erikson et al., 2020; Short et al., 2020). By providing a structured, supportive environment, peer coaching strengthens relationships, builds trust, and facilitates the exchange of knowledge and skills. While initially implemented in higher education, this approach offers valuable insights for organizations aiming to develop talent, enhance performance, and promote a culture of collaboration and continuous learning.

Benita Maben

Ms Benita is a Careers Consultant at Heriot-Watt University, contributing to the Professional & Organisational Development coaching team by providing staff coaching, training, and development across HWU's global campuses. She holds an ICF-accredited master's in Business Psychology with Coaching and has completed ICF's ACC coach-specific education, with a strong focus on client coaching experience.

She plays an active role in HWU's award-winning Peer Coaching Research Project, offering training, supervision, and project collaboration. Beyond coaching, Benita engages in research, industry collaborations, and university-wide initiatives. Her diverse career across private and non-profit sectors has enriched her ability to navigate culturally sensitive environments and integrate global perspectives into her coaching approach. Her research interests include Coaching, Leadership Development, Executive Education, and Women Empowerment.



Coaching facilitates the coachee's attainment of professional or personal goals or outcomes (Grant & Atad, 2022, p. 533), aiming for a desired change. The field of coaching psychology (CP) is well-established, particularly in the Western world, with around 70,000 members in the two largest global coaching bodies—ICF and EMCC alone (EMCC Global, n.d.; ICF, 2023). While interest in coaching has grown across the Middle East, there remains a lack of understanding of the role of the coach and coaching itself (Passmore et al., 2019), with regional coaching research still limited (e.g., Dodds & Grajfoner, 2018; King et al., 2021; King & van Nieuwerburgh, 2020). This scoping review aimed to map knowledge of coaching and CP in the MENA and Arab world, using the PRISMA-ScR framework for scoping reviews (Tricco et al., 2018). A total of 95 English-language articles were reviewed, focusing on coaching in work-related contexts for working-age populations. The findings revealed an increase in publications from 2002–2022, mirroring global trends, though the distribution of literature across countries was uneven, and the methodologies often unclear. Most studies ($n = 33$) focused on the private-sector business, followed by education ($n = 38$) and health ($n = 22$). Interestingly, while coaching was frequently mentioned, its relevance to the topic in question was low in nearly half of the articles ($n = 41$), and many publications did not define coaching at all ($n = 43$). However, most articles ($n = 81$) discussed coaching behaviors, often in the context of interventions or programs tested or implemented. This review mapped the existing literature on coaching and CP in the MENA and Arab region, identified gaps for future research, and clarified the varying definitions and understandings of coaching found in the region's research literature.

Silvia King

Mrs Silvia King is a Positive Psychology Coach and PhD candidate at Heriot-Watt University, focusing on Coaching Psychology in the Middle East. She holds an MA from the University of Zurich and an MSc in Applied Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology (MAPPCP) from the University of East London. Silvia is a graduate member of the British Psychological Society (GMBPsS) and an EMCC-accredited Senior Practitioner coach. She is also a certified facilitator for Mindfulness, Emotional Intelligence, EFT Master Practitioner, Laughter Yoga Teacher, and MTa® Experiential Learning facilitator.

With over 20 years of experience in cross-cultural corporate contexts, Silvia works with individuals and teams to promote flourishing through Positive Psychology Coaching, training, and workshops. She has coached at all levels of seniority and developed leadership and wellbeing programs. Silvia is also passionate about advancing the coaching profession and is a guest lecturer for leadership programs and an adjunct faculty member for coaching psychology at Heriot-Watt University. As the Accelerator co-lead for EMCC Global's Centre for Excellence in Research, she supports the development of coaching, mentoring, and supervision professions. Silvia has published several peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters.



This study aims to design and validate an integrative coaching psychology intervention program, drawing from scientific and evidence-based psychological techniques to enhance well-being, work performance, and life experiences in non-clinical populations. By integrating coherent psychological theories and models into a unified framework, the research provides a structured approach to coaching psychology interventions.

A qualitative, grounded theory approach was employed, engaging both domestic and international experts in coaching psychology. The study reached theoretical saturation after 22 interviews, with data collected through checklists and semi-structured interviews. Analysis involved open, axial, and selective coding, identifying core categories that shape the intervention framework. Initially, 1162 codes were extracted, refined to 995 through secondary coding, and ultimately validated using the content validity ratio (Lawshe table) and Holsti's agreement coefficient, confirming 956 open codes with expert consensus ($n = 11$).

Findings indicate that the core causal factors shaping the intervention program include coaching elements, psychological approaches and theories, intervention processes, questioning techniques, and relationship-building strategies. Effective implementation depends on key strategies such as coaching tools, evaluation of irrational beliefs, assessment of well-being indicators, personality evaluation, concept teaching, change strategies, intervention design, and coaching techniques. Additionally, contextual conditions and intervening factors can either facilitate or constrain these strategies.

The intervention program demonstrates significant outcomes, including enhanced efficacy, improved life performance, attitude shifts, a stronger sense of purpose, value-based living, self-awareness, problem-solving, and decision-making skills, ultimately fostering well-being and flourishing. This framework provides a practical tool for coaching psychology experts to enhance individual and group performance across various life domains, including personal development, academia, sports, health, and professional growth.

Dr Amir Mohammad Pahlavnejad

Dr Amir Pahlavnejad is a seasoned expert in organizations, leadership, and coaching psychology, with over 25 years of experience in counseling, executive coaching, and HR consulting. Holding a Ph.D. in counseling psychology, he is also a senior faculty member of William Glasser International (CT, RT, LM), a Board Certified Coach (BCC), licensed counselor, HRD senior consultant, and experienced trainer and facilitator.

Amir has worked extensively with board members and executives in local and multinational companies, assisting in organizational structuring, talent management, leadership development, and executive transitions. His career began in the UK in 1998, later shifting to Iran's manufacturing sector before transitioning to HR consulting in 2005 and leadership development and executive coaching in 2009. He is the chairman of Atieh Roshan Consulting, founder of RaiMana Coaching & Leadership Institute, and a senior coach and consultant with Olver International (USA) and EUNEPA (Austria).



Using an integrative coaching psychology approach, Amir combines modern psychological science with evidence-based coaching strategies to deliver sustainable, high-quality results. A prolific author and translator, he has contributed to over 10 books on life coaching, executive coaching, and personal development.

Based in Tehran, Amir is fluent in English and Persian, enjoys sports and martial arts coaching, and values time with family and friends. His international clients include Bayer Parsian, Renault Pars, MTN, Sasol, Edison, Carrefour (Maf Pars), and Schneider Electric.

This study explores the integration of applied neuroscience into coaching and leadership development, offering a novel approach to enhancing transformational leadership competencies. While coaching and leadership theory are well-established within management and behavioral sciences, advances in neuroscience provide fresh insights into human functioning.

A theoretical neuroscience-based coaching framework was developed and tested using Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA). Two research groups participated: six leaders engaged in a coaching process informed by the framework, while three managers observed and provided feedback on leadership development. Data were collected and analyzed following the IQA protocol.

Findings suggest that applied neuroscience in coaching fosters homeostasis within the brain's three operating neural networks, optimizing neural functioning and psychological congruence. This, in turn, enables leaders to align their behaviors with transformational leadership competencies. The study highlights the potential of integrating neuroscience principles into coaching training and leadership development practices, ultimately enhancing leadership effectiveness.

By bridging neuroscience with coaching, this research contributes to both theory and practice, offering new perspectives and interventions for developing transformational leadership behaviors.

Liesl Keen

Ms Liesl Keen is a leadership coach and industrial-organizational psychologist with 25 years of corporate HR experience across Ireland, the Middle East, and Africa. She has lectured at Southeast Technical University in Ireland, delivering executive coaching programs to master's students and coaches.

Currently finalizing her doctorate in Neuroscience Coaching for Transformational Leadership, Liesl specializes in integrating neuroscience research with coaching techniques to enhance leadership effectiveness. Now based in the UAE, she works as an organizational consultant and coach, designing training programs that help leaders leverage neuroscience for better decision-making, team dynamics, and performance.

Her approach is evidence-based, combining neuroscience, neuropsychology, and psychology to foster coaching cultures in organizations, empowering managers to create high-performing, supportive work environments.



The theme of "Change" is central to our work in Qatar, where peer support and mutual aid have historically been underdeveloped. WHO and UNODC (2020) guidelines emphasize the role of peer support in substance use disorder (SUD) recovery, highlighting its effectiveness in reducing relapse rates, improving patient-provider relationships, and enhancing treatment satisfaction (Eddie et al., 2019). However, in countries like Qatar, where mutual aid systems are scarce, implementing peer support presents significant challenges.

To address this, Recovery Coach Academy, in partnership with Naufar and the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR), introduced culturally adapted recovery coaching. In 2023, over 200 individuals were trained, with 22 achieving accredited Recovery Coach certification, and six becoming facilitators to sustain the program in Arabic. These trained coaches now collaborate with clinical staff, using their lived experiences to support individuals navigating recovery.

This presentation shares insights from our journey, detailing the cultural adaptation of recovery coach training and strategies for scaling peer support in regions lacking a tradition of mutual aid. By highlighting key lessons and implementation considerations, we offer a blueprint for fostering recovery-focused communities, demonstrating how peer support can drive transformative change even in the most challenging environments.

Naetha Uren

Ms Naetha Uren, RCP, RCPF, is the CEO and Owner of Recovery Coach Academy UK, leading efforts to advance recovery coaching locally and globally. Under her leadership, the academy has impacted individuals in over 20 countries, pioneering initiatives in the MENA region and beyond.

As a Certified British Trainer, Naetha has collaborated with CPD Standards and CPD MENA, expanding the CCAR Recovery Coach Academy© framework to create a global ecosystem that includes Recovery Friendly Workplaces, recovery education for schools, and entrepreneurial support for those in recovery. She is the first CCAR Certified Recovery Coach Professional and trainer in the UK, with her team training nearly 2,000 people across 27 countries.

Beyond her academy work, Naetha serves as a Trustee, Advisor, and supporter for various international organizations. Her diverse experiences living in both the USA and UK inform her holistic approach to recovery advocacy, training, and community-building, reinforcing her commitment to fostering resilient recovery communities worldwide.



This study examines the intersection of Emiratisation policies and inclusive leadership in the UAE's banking and finance sector. While Emiratisation aims to increase Emirati representation, its implementation often prioritizes compliance over genuine inclusion, leading to tokenism and a lack of belonging among Emirati employees.

Using a qualitative methodology, the research explores the perspectives of both Emirati employees and expatriate leaders to assess how inclusive leadership influences workplace integration, decision-making, and access to opportunities. Key challenges include stereotype threats, limited skill development, and cultural biases, which hinder authentic inclusivity. While leaders associate inclusion with collaboration and openness, Emirati employees emphasize meaningful involvement and equitable decision-making access.

Findings highlight a disconnect between policy mandates and workplace realities, where Emiratisation often functions as a tick-box exercise rather than fostering true inclusion. To address this gap, the study proposes a hybrid framework integrating Shore et al.'s Model of Inclusive Organizations and Bernstein et al.'s Theory of Generative Interactions, emphasizing psychological safety, trust, and active Emirati participation in shaping inclusive practices.

This research expands the limited literature on inclusion in the UAE, offering actionable insights for leaders and policymakers. By aligning organizational strategies with cultural and social dynamics, it highlights pathways to balance diversity targets with genuine inclusivity, ensuring sustainable and equitable outcomes in the UAE's evolving economy.

Alia AlFardan

Ms Alia AlFardan is an Emiratization Graduate Talent Manager at HSBC, where she focuses on developing Emirati talent and fostering career growth through innovative learning strategies.

Previously, she served as a Learning and Development Manager at Independent Food Company (2022-2023), where she established a learning and development department, enhancing training programs, team performance, and engagement.

With nearly four years at Jumeirah Group (2017-2021), she held progressive roles, including Learning and Development Manager and Assistant Manager, leading impactful learning initiatives across Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts to drive staff development and operational excellence in the hospitality sector.



Dr Gary Pheiffer

Dr Gary Pheiffer is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Dubai. He is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist (BPS), Practitioner Psychologist (HCPC), Chartered Member of the CIPD, and a Fellow of the HEA in the UK. Before transitioning to academia, he gained extensive experience in banking, manufacturing, and the metal industry, specializing in human resource management and change management. His research focuses on adult attachment in the workplace, employee well-being, workplace relationships, and organizational learning. Passionate about bridging research and practice, Dr Pheiffer actively develops evidence-based organizational and educational interventions to enhance workplace well-being, engagement, and professional development.



This study examines the lived experiences of female expatriate leaders in the UAE, focusing on the intersection of cultural and gendered identities in shaping their workplace inclusion. Using Social Identity Complexity and Role Theory as guiding frameworks, ten female leaders were interviewed to explore their perceptions of autonomy, trust, and identity management within a multicultural, male-dominated environment.

Thematic analysis revealed that while definitions of inclusion varied, autonomy and trust were consistently identified as critical factors. However, the lack of formal support structures for female collaboration created challenges in balancing professional roles and personal identities, sometimes leading to burnout. The findings highlight the need for tailored inclusion practices that address the unique pressures on expatriate women leaders, emphasizing the importance of organizational policies that promote both belonging and individuality.

This research contributes to the discourse on expatriate leadership and inclusion by offering a gendered perspective on leadership experiences in the Middle East, with practical implications for creating equitable and supportive workplace environments.

Kerry Gird

Ms Kerry Gird is a Talent Acquisition leader dedicated to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and enhancing the candidate experience. She leads a recruitment team across the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, India, and South Africa, focusing on data-driven decision-making, stakeholder management, and employer branding in local markets. With an inclusive and collaborative leadership style, Kerry emphasizes talent strategy development, balancing proactive talent pooling with responsive hiring. At Gartner, she partners closely with business units to align Talent Acquisition strategies with organizational goals, ensuring a seamless and effective hiring process.



Dr Gary Pheiffer

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This scoping review examines gender-work identity conflict among female managers in the UAE, an underexplored aspect of leadership and identity research. While previous studies highlight the existence and outcomes of this conflict, the psychological mechanisms driving these experiences remain insufficiently understood.

A systematic review of 55 studies identified four key themes: (1) Conditional psychological empowerment, where family and social support bolster female managers but often at the cost of prioritizing domestic responsibilities, restricting autonomy; (2) Adaptive leadership styles, with women adopting 'soft' leadership approaches to align with cultural expectations, often at the expense of authenticity; (3) Psychological strain, as navigating conflicting roles leads to stress, self-doubt, and reduced well-being; and (4) Organizational limitations, with policies lacking cultural sensitivity and failing to provide flexible support systems that mitigate identity conflict.

Despite these insights, gaps remain in understanding the psychological processes underlying gender-work identity conflict. Future research should explore identity compartmentalization, self-concept clarity, psychological flexibility, and impression management to identify resilience strategies. Findings could inform culturally sensitive policies, mentorship programs, and workplace support systems to better assist female leaders in the UAE.

Riffa Fathima Syed

Ms Riffa Syed is a PhD psychology student at Heriot-Watt University, Dubai. Her research focuses on the gender-work identity conflict that female leaders encounter as they face challenges posed by traditional gender roles alongside modern leadership expectations in the UAE. Through her work, she aims to investigate the cultural, internal, social, and organizational factors that shape these experiences while seeking to provide insights into the barriers women face in leadership positions and proposing strategies to address these conflicts in the UAE context.



Dr Zoë Fortune

Dr Zoë Fortune is an Assistant Professor in Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Dubai and a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society. She also holds a position as an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Hong Kong, where she leads a Mental Health Communication Research cluster. Currently, her research focuses on workplace mental health and well-being, graduate and student mental health, and workplace transitions.



Dr Gary Pheiffer

Dr Gary Pheiffer is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Dubai. He is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist (BPS), Practitioner Psychologist (HCPC), Chartered Member of the CIPD, and a Fellow of the HEA in the UK. Before transitioning to academia, he gained extensive experience in banking, manufacturing, and the metal industry, specializing in human resource management and change management. His research focuses on adult attachment in the workplace, employee well-being, workplace relationships, and organizational learning. Passionate about bridging research and practice, Dr Pheiffer actively develops evidence-based organizational and educational interventions to enhance workplace well-being, engagement, and professional development.



This study critically examines the role congruity challenges faced by female managers in the United Arab Emirates private sector and their impact on perceptions of workplace psychological safety. Despite efforts toward diversity and inclusion, female managers continue to encounter entrenched gender biases that undermine their professional credibility and hinder career progression. Masculine and agentic leadership norms remain dominant in organizational expectations, creating a misalignment between the socially expected communal traits of female managers and the assertiveness deemed necessary for effective leadership. Findings reveal that female managers who assert themselves face exclusionary behaviors and backlash, which subsequently undermines their perceptions of psychological safety and discourages open workplace dialogue. Practical recommendations highlight the need for targeted interventions, such as bias reduction training and continuous team coaching, to address organizational culture imbalances and strengthen the psychological safety of female managers.

Michelle Kirkinis Bellingan

Mrs Michelle Kirkinis Bellingan is the Operations Lead at tactical. UAE.



Dr Gary Pheiffer

Dr Gary Pheiffer is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Dubai. He is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist (BPS), Practitioner Psychologist (HCPC), Chartered Member of the CIPD, and a Fellow of the HEA in the UK. Before transitioning to academia, he gained extensive experience in banking, manufacturing, and the metal industry, specializing in human resource management and change management. His research focuses on adult attachment in the workplace, employee well-being, workplace relationships, and organizational learning. Passionate about bridging research and practice, Dr Pheiffer actively develops evidence-based organizational and educational interventions to enhance workplace well-being, engagement, and professional development.



Stress is a constant factor in every individual's life, manifesting in various forms. While a healthy level of stress can act as a motivator, prolonged stress can be detrimental to one's physical and emotional health. This study investigates gender differences in help-seeking behavior among university students and explores how gender roles influence attitudes toward seeking help in the context of academic stress. Help-seeking behavior refers to the ability to effectively communicate personal and psychological problems to receive sufficient assistance (Seamark & Gabriel, 2018). Using thematic analysis, four key themes were identified, with attitudes toward help-seeking, past experiences, and stigma being the three demotivating factors for seeking help. Familiarity with student support services was identified as a factor that motivated students to seek help.

The study addresses three core research questions: (a) common academic challenges faced by students, (b) the influence of gender roles on students' attitudes toward help-seeking, and (c) students' perceptions of Heriot-Watt University's support services (e.g., personal tutors, wellbeing team, academic advisors). The findings highlight opportunities for universities to drive cultural change in how students engage with support systems. A key recommendation is the creation of a "ZeroStigma" social media campaign, where students can openly discuss academic and emotional challenges. A responsible university staff member could manage the platform to filter out insensitive comments and direct students to the respective support departments that can address their issues and provide effective guidance. This initiative could reduce stigma, encourage help-seeking, and foster a sense of community among students. By using technology, universities can transform their approach to student mental health, offering emotional support, reducing isolation, and enhancing the overall student experience. These findings can inform institutional strategies, ultimately creating a more supportive and inclusive environment for all students.

Tahoor Fatima Shaik

Ms Tahoor Fatima Shaik is a passionate business psychologist with a keen interest in applying psychology to improve individuals' lives, particularly in educational and professional contexts. Driven by curiosity about human behavior, she focuses on understanding factors that influence decision-making, mental health, and well-being, especially in students. Her commitment lies in helping students navigate academic and personal challenges, providing them with the tools to achieve their goals.

Currently, by presenting a research paper on gender differences and students' attitudes toward help-seeking behavior, she aims to contribute to the broader conversation about mental health and accessible student support. One of her most rewarding experiences has been participating in the peer coaching initiative at Heriot-Watt University, where she worked directly with students, applying theory to practice while enhancing her communication and interpersonal skills. This experience allowed her to help undergraduate students develop actionable plans for their academic, personal, and professional growth.

Ms Shaik is dedicated to advocating for mental health and well-being and strives to create a supportive environment for those she works with.



This session introduces the concept of Team Resilience, focusing on the factors that enable a team's resilience and the role of leadership behaviors during times of change. While resilience has often been explored at the individual level, it is essential to recognize that the factors that build individual resilience differ from those that build a resilient team. Research suggests that a group of resilient individuals may not necessarily form a resilient team if they are inwardly focused and neglect team-building resilience efforts. Additionally, leadership behaviors significantly impact creating a psychologically safe working environment, which is crucial for team resilience.

Team Resilience refers to the processes through which teams manage pressure and adversity effectively, maintaining performance in the face of challenges. The session will explore the factors contributing to team resilience, the role of leadership in fostering it, the importance of organizational culture—especially psychological safety—and the individual's role in building team resilience.

The session will begin by discussing the concept of resilience and its importance in team dynamics, emphasizing that individual resilience alone does not guarantee a resilient team. Insights from research will be shared, highlighting the need for collaborative efforts in resilience-building. The importance of psychological safety as a critical mediator in enabling team resilience will be a significant focus, with practical strategies for leaders to create open communication, trust, and support within their teams.

By the end of the session, participants will have a deeper understanding of the interplay between leadership, team dynamics, and organizational culture in promoting team resilience. They will be equipped with practical strategies to enhance their teams' resilience, leading to improved performance in challenging situations. As Hartwig et al. (2020) proposed, Team Resilience is crucial for maintaining team performance during adversity.

Agata Perepeczko

Mrs Agata Perepeczko is a Business Psychologist and coach with a background in clinical and business psychology. Educated in Poland and London, she is currently pursuing a Professional Doctorate at Birkbeck University, focusing on building and maintaining resilience in workforces. Agata works for Resilient WorkForce LTD, leveraging her unique skills to support clients. She is a member of the British Psychological Society, CIPD, Association of Business Psychology, EMCC, and is President of The Society of Business Psychology Middle East (SoBPME).



With experience across multiple sectors, including UK Government, healthcare, finance, media, and NGOs, Agata has designed and delivered training programs in leadership, mental health at work, crisis management, diversity and inclusion, and soft skills across Europe and North America. A resilience expert, she has worked on developing strategies to improve workforce resilience. Agata co-created a resilience assessment tool, used widely for employees on overseas missions. As an executive coach, she helps individuals and teams unlock potential, create vision, and improve performance.

This presentation examines the impact of cultural diversity on managerial well-being, with a specific focus on the UAE's semi-government sector, a multi-cultural environment where both public and private-sector practices intersect. While managerial well-being is known to affect productivity, performance, and job satisfaction, there is limited research on how cultural diversity influences well-being in diverse workplaces, particularly in semi-government settings.

Based on qualitative interviews with ten managers from individualistic (self-focused) and collectivist (group-oriented) cultural backgrounds, the study identifies key themes such as cultural adaptability, trust, psychological safety, and the challenges posed by localisation pressures and hybrid sector demands. The research reveals that managers from individualistic cultures prioritize autonomy, personal achievement, and recognition, while collectivist managers value group cohesion, community support, and relational stability. A key finding is the gap between organizational values and managers' lived experiences, highlighting the need for culturally adaptive well-being practices that balance organizational goals with diverse employee needs.

The presentation fosters a discussion on inclusive practices and provides an adaptable model for managerial well-being in the UAE, GCC, and other multicultural environments, contributing to the broader discourse on change in business psychology.

Simon Welsh

Mr Simon Welsh is a Master of Business Psychology student at Heriot-Watt University, Dubai, with over 25 years of leadership experience in telecommunications, retail, and hospitality. He is known for leading digital transformation, driving customer-centric innovations, and implementing omnichannel strategies to optimize operational efficiency. Simon's expertise spans market expansion, data-driven decision-making, and promoting inclusive workplaces across multicultural environments.

With a blend of academic psychology and extensive industry experience, Simon helps leaders in Dubai's diverse workforce develop a growth mindset, build resilience, and enhance leadership capabilities. His dual expertise in business operations and psychology provides a unique perspective on workplace well-being and leadership challenges in fast-changing environments. Simon advocates for high-performing, inclusive teams and effective, culturally responsive leadership.



Higher Education Institution (HEI) employees play a vital role in addressing climate change through research, education, and innovation, acting as environmental change-makers. However, strategies to encourage greater environmental sustainability among HEI employees remain unclear. This study investigates the predictors of Organisational Citizenship Behaviours for the Environment (OCBE)—voluntary employee actions that support institutional sustainability goals. Specifically, it examines the relationship between OCBE and Environmental Commitment, Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC), Environmentally Specific Transformational Leadership (ETFL), and Green Organisational Climate (GOC).

A survey of approximately 250 HEI employees (Mage = 42.8 years, SD = 10.3, 70% female) provided self-reported data on these variables. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) revealed Environmental Commitment as the strongest predictor of OCBE. PBC directly influenced green behaviours and moderated the Environmental Commitment-Behaviour relationship, indicating that employees with higher perceived control are more likely to act on their environmental values. Both ETFL and GOC directly influenced OCBE and indirectly fostered Environmental Commitment, suggesting that leadership and organisational culture shape employee engagement with sustainability.

These findings highlight the central role of Environmental Commitment in promoting OCBE and underscore the need for HEIs to cultivate environmental leadership and a sustainability-oriented culture. However, fostering commitment alone is insufficient—providing employees with greater control over their actions is crucial for translating intention into behaviour. This research offers a framework for HEIs to enhance employee engagement with sustainability, reinforcing the importance of a holistic, organisation-wide approach to meeting climate targets.

Dr Çakıl Agnew

Dr Çakıl Agnew is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University, Dubai. She is the Director of the Online MSc Business and Organisational Psychology Programme. She is an industrial psychologist with a background in Human Factors and Applied Psychology. She is particularly interested in the impact of safety and leadership on performance at work in high-risk industries. She is a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society (BPS) and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA). She also supervises PhD students.



Dr Mioara Cristea

Dr Mioara Cristea completed a PhD in Social and Political Psychology at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University (Iași, Romania) in February 2011. She worked as a Postdoctoral Fellow in Applied Social Psychology at the Mobility and Behaviour Psychology Lab at the French Institute of Science and Technology for Transport, Development and Networks (IFSTTAR, France) for three years. She is currently the PGR Lead within the Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences at Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh, UK). Her main research interests include political trust and collective actions, conspiracy beliefs and individual behaviors, as well as sustainability in the workplace.



Oscar Thompson

Oscar Thompson completed his undergraduate degree in Psychology at Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh, UK). He has worked in Grant Management at Scotland's National Walking Charity, Paths for All, where he helped allocate funding to initiatives promoting Active Travel. Currently, he is a Research Assistant in Psychology with interests in Social Psychology, Health Psychology, and, more recently, environmental sustainability in the workplace.

Workplace wellbeing is a complex issue requiring an interdisciplinary and comprehensive approach. In Hong Kong, a multicultural and demanding work environment, understanding workplace wellbeing is further complicated by cultural stigma around mental health, limited access to support, and environmental stressors such as SARS, COVID-19, and social unrest. These challenges are exacerbated by workplace norms, including long working hours and expectations of physical presence, which negatively impact employee wellbeing.

This study develops and applies an intra-disciplinary, mixed-methods framework to explore workplace wellbeing in dynamic, multicultural environments. Originally designed for professional services, this approach integrates psychological and socio-linguistic perspectives through collaborative problem framing, followed by surveys and interviews with multiple stakeholder groups. The framework was later applied in a large-scale study examining the transition of graduates from university to professional settings, assessing mental health needs and workplace skills from the perspectives of students, graduates, university staff, and employers. Triangulation across disciplines, methods, and participant groups strengthened the depth and validity of results, supporting a holistic interpretation.

Findings highlight the effectiveness of intra-disciplinary, mixed-methods approaches in addressing the complexities of mental health and wellbeing in diverse workplaces. This framework enhances understanding and support for employee wellbeing, particularly in workplaces undergoing change due to environmental and societal stressors. The study offers recommendations for future research on workplace wellbeing and methodological advancements.

Dr Zoë Fortune

Dr Zoë Fortune is an Assistant Professor in Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Dubai and a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society. She also holds a position as an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Hong Kong, where she leads a Mental Health Communication Research cluster. Currently, her research focuses on workplace mental health and well-being, graduate and student mental health, and workplace transitions.



Dr Olga Zayts-Spence

Dr Olga Zayts-Spence is an Associate Professor at The University of Hong Kong and Director of the Research and Impact Initiative on Communication in Healthcare (HKU RIICH). With expertise in sociolinguistics and public health, her research spans genetic counseling, cancer care, and end-of-life communication. Her recent work examines the mental health impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable workforce groups, including working mothers and young adults transitioning to employment. She collaborates with government agencies, healthcare institutions, NGOs, and businesses in Hong Kong and internationally.



Workplace wellbeing is gaining prominence in the UAE, yet research on mental health in organizational settings remains fragmented. This study outlines a developing research agenda, beginning with a scoping review of existing literature. Using Google Scholar, relevant studies were identified and refined, excluding those focused primarily on frontline workers post-COVID, as these dominated prior research.

Key themes emerged, highlighting persistent stigma as a major barrier to mental health support due to cultural misconceptions and societal norms (Andrade et al., 2022). Traditional family values reinforce these attitudes, and workplace mental health awareness programs remain scarce (Haak-Saheem et al., 2022). Burnout is a significant issue, particularly in high-pressure industries like healthcare, where stress surpasses that of corporate sectors. Anxiety and exhaustion remain prevalent across industries, yet organizational support structures are inadequate.

Despite these challenges, corporate awareness of mental health as a driver of employee retention and productivity is increasing (McKinsey & Company, 2023). Government initiatives, such as the UAE National Wellbeing Strategy 2031, reflect progress, with organizations exploring AI and digital solutions for mental health support (Moonesar et al., 2024). However, mental health regulations remain inconsistent (Al Suwaidi, 2019), with outdated policies and a shortage of professionals.

This research enhances understanding of workplace wellbeing in the UAE, identifying critical gaps in policy, support structures, and cultural attitudes. Addressing these through targeted interventions and evidence-based strategies is essential for fostering a more inclusive and psychologically supportive work environment.

Nariman Elewa

Ms Nariman Elewa is an Organizational Psychologist and Leadership Coach at INSPIRE COE, specializing in workplace wellbeing, cultural alignment, and talent management. With over 250 hours of coaching experience across different organizational levels, Nariman has helped leaders navigate cultural complexities and optimize team performance. As a graduate research assistant, she is currently conducting a landscape analysis on mental health and organizational wellbeing in the UAE, with a focus on domestic workers' mental health.



Dr Gary Pheiffer

Dr Gary Pheiffer is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Dubai. He is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist (BPS), Practitioner Psychologist (HCPC), Chartered Member of the CIPD, and a Fellow of the HEA in the UK. Before transitioning to academia, he gained extensive experience in banking, manufacturing, and the metal industry, specializing in human resource management and change management. His research focuses on adult attachment in the workplace, employee well-being, workplace relationships, and organizational learning. Passionate about bridging research and practice, Dr Pheiffer actively develops evidence-based organizational and educational interventions to enhance workplace well-being, engagement, and professional development.



The UAE's multicultural work environment hosts a predominantly expatriate population (89%), with private-sector companies often adopting international best practices in Human Resource management. However, expatriate families face unique challenges, including limited extended family support and traditional or semi-traditional gender roles that rely on paid childcare. Despite this, research on expatriate parenting experiences, family role adjustments, and work-life balance in the UAE remains scarce.

This qualitative exploratory study examines how men and women navigate dual work and family roles and their impact on career perception and progression. Semi-structured interviews with 13 private-sector employees from diverse nationalities revealed a heightened invisible mental workload among working mothers, leading to career reprioritization or personal well-being sacrifices. In contrast, working fathers focused more on long-term family planning without experiencing the same daily conflicts. The findings underscore the need for organizational policies that support women's career progression, providing flexibility and reassurance that their family commitments will not hinder professional growth. Addressing these gaps can foster a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture.

Tina Dias

Ms Tina Dias is pursuing her MSc in Business Psychology at Heriot-Watt University in Dubai. She has over 14 years of experience in Marketing and Communications and is currently employed at Emirates Airline. She has a keen interest in workplace well-being and empowering working mothers.



Dr Zoë Fortune

Dr Zoë Fortune is an Assistant Professor in Psychology at Heriot-Watt University Dubai and a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society. She also holds a position as an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Hong Kong, where she leads a Mental Health Communication Research cluster. Currently, her research focuses on workplace mental health and well-being, graduate and student mental health, and workplace transitions.



Becoming a parent is one of the most profound life changes, yet the term 'matrescence'—the process of becoming a mother—remains unrecognized by most spell-checking software. This reflects the disconnect many new parents feel when returning to work after such a major transition, often lacking the necessary understanding and support from colleagues and employers. This isolation increases the likelihood of women leaving the workforce—an issue businesses should be motivated to address, with business psychologists playing a potential role in driving change.

This presentation explores the theory of matrescence, alongside research on the lasting cognitive and neurological impacts of motherhood. It examines global maternity leave practices, with a particular focus on the UAE, and the career-long effects of career breaks taken by mothers with young children. Existing corporate reintegration strategies for returning employees will be discussed, followed by an exploration of group coaching as a potential intervention.

Group coaching offers a structured approach for returning mothers, enabling them to acknowledge challenges while connecting with others undergoing similar experiences. The presentation will outline the process of developing a group coaching intervention, supported by both research and practical experience. Delegates will have the opportunity to engage in selected coaching exercises from an ongoing program. The session will conclude by considering how group coaching can not only support individuals but also inform organizational policies, fostering a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture.

Maddy Scott

Ms Maddy Scott is a business psychologist and ICF-accredited coach from the UK, currently based in Dubai. With an MSc in Occupational Psychology from Goldsmiths, University of London (2014), she has dedicated her career to people development.

As Co-Founder of Together We, a coaching and development company, Maddy supports individuals at transition points—helping new parents find balance, first-time managers build leadership skills, and professionals navigate career changes. She specializes in coaching both individuals and groups, designing and facilitating engaging workshops on leadership, career development, confidence, and resilience. With experience in multinational companies, she is passionate about equipping people with practical tools to embrace change while staying true to their values.



Melissa Shapiro

Ms Melissa Shapiro is an ICF-credentialed coach based in Seattle, Washington, dedicated to helping individuals align their goals, actions, and mindset with what matters most to them. She has worked with clients worldwide, supporting both professional and personal development.

As Co-Founder of Together We, Melissa helps individuals navigate key life transitions—whether it's new parents seeking balance, first-time managers developing leadership skills, or professionals exploring career changes. The company provides practical tools and techniques to foster confidence and growth.

Before co-founding Together We, Melissa spent over 20 years in Talent Development at large corporations, focusing on employee success, leadership programs, and executive development. She began her career in engineering and product roles before shifting her focus to empowering people through coaching and development.



The modern workplace presents increasing challenges, with the pandemic intensifying existing pressures and exacerbating burnout. Rapid shifts in work practices have heightened stress, making it clear that most workplace conditions do not support sustainable high performance. Knowledge workers often succeed despite systemic inefficiencies rather than because of them, raising a crucial question: How can workplace cultures be reshaped to foster thriving teams and individuals?

The Better Workplace Project, a global collective of researchers and coaches, has been tackling this issue for the past three years. Through extensive research, including hundreds of interviews with high-stakes professionals—corporate executives, elite athletes, military personnel, religious leaders, and government officials—patterns of burnout, resilience, and self-awareness have emerged. While many professionals have experienced burnout, others have developed strategies that protect against future risks.

This presentation shares key findings, introducing frameworks, models, and tools designed to enhance self-awareness, mitigate burnout, and foster growth through adversity. Attendees will gain insights into practical interventions that support employee well-being, reduce cognitive strain, and create workplace environments that drive engagement, retention, and sustainable success.

Matthew Bartlett-Bond

Mr Matt is a researcher focused on understanding burnout and promoting sustainable workplace performance. With nearly 30 years of experience in commercial and technical roles within the IT industry, he has seen firsthand the impact of effective and poor management on employee well-being and organizational success.

In 2019, he earned an MSc in Occupational and Organisational Psychology from the University of Surrey, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. His dissertation explored remote team management during lockdown, highlighting the critical role of communication, empathy, and self-care in preventing burnout.

Matt's research and expertise offer valuable, evidence-based strategies for improving workplace well-being, making his insights highly relevant for organizations aiming to foster resilience and sustainable performance.



PRESENTATION

Thriving in the Modern Workplace: Insights and Interventions for Burnout Prevention and Sustainable High Performance

Nick Petrie

Nick Petrie is a researcher and speaker on leadership, resilience, and burnout prevention. He helps organizations prepare for the future by creating solutions that help leaders become more adaptable, resilient, and strategic. His clients include Google, Salesforce, Walmart, Home Depot, NASA, Wells Fargo, Kellogg's, and Comcast. He has worked globally across industries, including engineering, tech, banking, pharmaceuticals, energy, law, retail, and television.

He holds a master's degree from Harvard University and is the co-author of the book *Work Without Stress: Building Resilience for Long-Term Success*.



As global mobility increases, expatriates face challenges such as cultural adaptation, family separation, and workplace integration, particularly in dynamic environments like the UAE. Effective social and supervisory support is crucial in enhancing adjustment, reducing isolation, and improving workplace engagement. Limited social interaction at work can negatively impact expatriates' psychological well-being and contribute to role overload, underscoring the need for strong support networks.

Supervisor support plays a key role in reducing emotional exhaustion while improving job satisfaction and overall well-being. In culturally diverse environments like the UAE, social support fosters a sense of community, aiding expatriates in navigating cultural and professional transitions. Strong workplace networks enhance job satisfaction, engagement, emotional stability, and organizational commitment.

However, challenges arise when supervisory support is inconsistent or perceived as inequitable, with favoritism in workplace support increasing stress and reducing employee well-being. This study highlights the importance of tailored support mechanisms in facilitating expatriate adjustment, well-being, and performance. Organizations can better manage global mobility complexities by fostering inclusive social environments through peer interaction, expatriate communities, and cross-cultural team activities. Practical recommendations include structured onboarding programs with mentorship initiatives, enhanced social support systems, cultural training, and language support.

Ayca Demiran

Mrs Ayca Demiran holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. She is working as a Graduate Teaching Assistant and pursuing her PhD in Business Psychology at Heriot-Watt University. Parallel to her academic career, she has over 15 years of HR management experience in the consumer goods, manufacturing, construction, and government sectors in the MENA region. Ayca is passionate about combining literature findings with professional work environments to create a culture where employees thrive. Her research interests include well-being, leadership, psychological safety, organizational development, and workplace culture.



Dr Mioara Cristea

Dr Mioara Cristea completed a PhD in Social and Political Psychology at Alexandru Ioan Cuza University (Iași, Romania) in February 2011. She worked as a Postdoctoral Fellow in Applied Social Psychology at the Mobility and Behaviour Psychology Lab at the French Institute of Science and Technology for Transport, Development and Networks (IFSTTAR, France) for three years. She is currently the PGR Lead within the Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences at Heriot-Watt University (Edinburgh, UK). Her main research interests include political trust and collective actions, conspiracy beliefs and individual behaviors, as well as sustainability in the workplace.



Dr Çakıl Agnew

Dr Çakıl Agnew is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University, Dubai. She is the Director of the Online MSc Business and Organisational Psychology Programme. She is an industrial psychologist with a background in Human Factors and Applied Psychology. She is particularly interested in the impact of safety and leadership on performance at work in high-risk industries. She is a Chartered Psychologist with the British Psychological Society (BPS) and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA). She also supervises PhD students.





UPCD

Developmental &
Educational Psychology

Raising teenagers presents unique challenges, requiring parents to navigate complex emotional dynamics. Emotional intelligence (EI) is a critical factor in effective parenting, fostering deeper understanding, empathy, and communication between parents and teens. This ongoing study explores the impact of parental EI on parent-teen relationships, particularly in conflict resolution and emotional support. By developing EI skills, parents can create a nurturing environment that promotes healthy emotional development, stronger relationships, and enhanced problem-solving abilities in adolescents. This research highlights the significance of EI in parenting, offering valuable insights for parents, educators, and mental health professionals supporting adolescent growth.

Dr Maya Al Hawary.

Dr Maya Al Hawary is a pioneering Emirati expert in smart educational leadership and emotional intelligence in the MENA region. Recognized among Dubai's 50 most influential figures in 2024, she was also selected by the Ministry of Tolerance among 80 global writers and creators. She serves as the Chairwoman of Dubai Carmel School and a Professional Development Consultant, delivering over 1,000 hours of training for government employees across the UAE.

A prolific author, Dr. Maya has written several books, including *Towards Confident Femininity* (2022) and *You Lead Your Life* (2021), available in both English and Arabic. She is an Ambassador of Positive Digital Citizenship for the UAE, a columnist for *Sayidaty* and *Al Khaleej*, and the founder of Maya Al Hawary Abayas. Additionally, she hosts the #Rukn_Maya Podcast on YouTube, where she shares insights on leadership, personal growth, and emotional intelligence.



In an era of rapid transformation, understanding how change impacts adolescent development is crucial for fostering resilience and well-being. This study examines the relationship between family functioning and materialism among Pakistani adolescents, with a focus on the mediating role of positive youth development.

A survey-based approach was used, collecting data from university students through standardized questionnaires. Data analysis, conducted using PROCESS statistical software, tested hypotheses to confirm existing theories in youth development. Findings revealed a significant positive correlation between materialism, family functioning, and positive youth development. Moreover, positive youth development emerged as a key mediator in the relationship between family functioning and materialism, with gender differences observed in youth development outcomes.

This research offers valuable insights into the role of family dynamics in addressing materialistic tendencies among adolescents. By highlighting the significance of positive youth development, the study provides guidance for policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals to design family-based interventions that enhance well-being and resilience in Pakistani youth.

Dr Aisha Perveen

Dr Aisha Perveen is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the National University of Pakistan (NUP). She holds a PhD in Psychology and has expertise in both quantitative and qualitative research. Her areas of interest include family science, gender psychology, developmental and social psychology, cyber psychology, artificial intelligence and behavior, digital well-being, assessments, and interventions. She is the founder of the Well-being and Counseling Center and the focal person for the Center of Cyberpsychology at NUP.



This study investigates the "RUT Factor"—a concept representing student readiness to undertake academic tasks—and examines how generative artificial intelligence (AI), specifically tools like ChatGPT, serves as a moderating variable through structured interventions. Aligning with the International Psychology Conference Dubai (IPCD) 2025 theme, "Change," it explores how technological advancements can enhance student adaptability and transform educational experiences.

A mixed-methods design will be employed with third-year BSc Psychology students, divided into two groups: one using structured AI assistance and a control group relying on traditional methods. Pre- and post-intervention surveys and task performance data will assess changes in readiness, engagement, and productivity. The intervention will include task simulations with structured AI guidance, analyzing its impact on self-efficacy, task completion speed, and perceived difficulty. Participants will complete baseline task assessments before engaging in AI-supported task completion, with data analysis involving comparative statistics to measure changes in readiness and thematic analysis of participant feedback to evaluate engagement levels.

This research contributes to understanding the role of AI in education, highlighting both its benefits—such as increased efficiency, reduced task-related anxiety, and enhanced learner satisfaction (Noy & Zhang, 2023)—and its potential drawbacks, including over-reliance (Ju, 2023). To mitigate these risks, the study incorporates structured AI guidance. The findings will be framed within the broader societal context of adapting to rapid technological and individual changes, as emphasized by IPCD 2025.

Amaan Iqbal Ibrahim

Mr Amaan Iqbal Ibrahim is a high-achieving BSc Psychology (Hons) student at the University of Birmingham Dubai, maintaining a 4.0 GPA while actively advocating for mental health and student welfare. As a Student Welfare Leader, UN Millennium Campus Director, and Student Representative, he has led initiatives to enhance student well-being and engagement.

His experience spans clinical psychology, research, and public speaking, with internships at Medeor Hospital, Camali Clinic, and Fortis Healthcare. A six-time TEDx speaker and Dubai Lead for Neolth Mental Health Awareness, he has built support networks and received recognition, including The International Diana Legacy Award.

Passionate about community engagement, Amaan has spearheaded initiatives like the Under 25 Project Hope, impacting thousands of students. Fluent in multiple languages and certified in strategic thinking and mental health, he blends empathy, research, and leadership to foster psychological growth and innovation.



This study challenges the conventional approach to teaching Critical Thinking (CT) by shifting the focus from a checklist of skills to fostering critical thinking dispositions—habits of mind such as reflection. Conducted among university students, it evaluates an educational intervention integrating structured reflective practices and a digital reflection module into their learning journey.

The findings reveal that reflection transformed students' problem-solving abilities, making decisions more intuitive and learning more engaging. By connecting concepts with real-world contexts, students developed a deeper understanding of their coursework and embraced learning as a rewarding process. The intervention also fostered growth in confidence, self-awareness, empathy, time management, and the ability to learn from mistakes.

This study highlights the holistic impact of nurturing critical thinking dispositions to cultivate lifelong learning habits. It bridges the gap between theory and practice, demonstrating how modelling and encouraging reflection can help students adopt an identity as critical thinkers. For educators, it presents a dynamic approach to moving beyond skills, fostering the dispositions that make critical thinking actionable, meaningful, and enduring.

Sharmila Fathima

Ms Sharmila Fathima is a PhD student passionate about empowering youth through education, critical thinking, mentorship, and community engagement. An engineer-turned-educator, her research focuses on driving positive social change and innovation. Beyond academia, she finds inspiration in travel, enriching her perspective and research with global insights. Committed to both academic excellence and real-world impact, Sharmila strives to foster a more empowered and interconnected youth.

Dr Chia Ping Lee

Dr Chia Ping Lee is an Associate Professor at the School of Engineering & Physical Science and the Associate Director of Learning and Teaching at Heriot-Watt University, Malaysia campus. Her publications can be accessed through the HWU research portal: [Chia Ping Lee - Publications](#).



Dr Ron Salden

Dr Ron Salden is an Associate Professor in Psychology at the School of Social Sciences. He has an extensive background, having worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the Computer Science department of Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), USA, as a Research Assistant Professor at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), USA, and as an Assistant Professor at the University of Madeira in Portugal. With over 14 years of experience in research and teaching, his publications can be accessed on his [ResearchGate profile](#).



Dr Terry Lansdown

Associate Professor Terry Lansdown is a Human Factors lecturer in the School of Life Sciences. Previously, he was a senior researcher at the Transport Research Laboratory in Crowthorne. He has extensive experience in research and project management, having contributed to numerous projects funded by the European Union, Health & Safety Executive, Scottish Executive, Department for Transport, and various research councils. His publications can be accessed on the [HWU Research Portal](#).

Dr Deborah Hall

Professor Deborah Hall is an experimental psychologist with a PhD from the University of Birmingham, UK. She has over 20 years of experience conducting human studies and has held academic positions at the Medical Research Council Institute for Hearing Research, Nottingham Trent University, and the University of Nottingham's School of Medicine. In February 2021, she joined Heriot-Watt University Malaysia as a Professor of Positive Psychology, where she focuses on strengthening positive education across the institution. Her research evaluates student benefits and supports coaching initiatives for students and staff. She has authored over 170 publications in psychology, which can be accessed on [Scopus](#).



This study examines the relationship between East Asian students' educational trajectory, epistemological and cultural beliefs, and their critical thinking disposition in Western academic settings. While East Asian students are often perceived as lacking critical thinking skills, research findings remain inconsistent. Some scholars argue that Confucian traditions restrict criticality, while others suggest that certain belief systems within East Asia promote its development.

To explore these perspectives, 118 international East Asian students at UK universities completed a questionnaire via Qualtrics. Multiple regression analysis revealed that (1) the duration of education in the UK significantly predicted critical thinking disposition, (2) epistemological beliefs in simple knowledge, certain knowledge, omniscient authority, and quick learning negatively influenced critical thinking, particularly by fostering misconceptions that hinder its development, (3) Restrictive Confucianism negatively predicted confidence and criticality, whereas Benevolent Confucianism positively influenced confidence and valuing of criticality, and (4) Taoist principles, particularly embracing contradiction, positively predicted valuing in criticality.

These findings underscore the need for culturally sensitive pedagogical practices and contribute to the broader discussion on decolonizing Western education. Aligned with the IPCD 2025 theme of "Change," this research highlights critical thinking as an essential educational outcome worldwide. By identifying psychological factors that shape criticality among diverse learners, this study offers insights into fostering adaptive educational practices that support students in navigating complex, modern challenges.

Leila Lai

Leila Lai is currently a postgraduate student at the University of Cambridge, Faculty of Education. She graduated with first-class honours in BSc Psychology with Education from University College London.



Dr Andrew Holliman

Dr Andrew Holliman is an Associate Professor (Teaching) and Programme Leader of the BSc Psychology with Education at the UCL Institute of Education. He currently chairs the Psychology of Education Section at the British Psychological Society and holds titles including Chartered Psychologist (CPsychol.), Science Council Chartered Scientist (CSci), Fellow of the British Psychological Society (FBPsS), and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA).



This study aimed to investigate the predictive association between maternal parenting practices—perceived autonomy support, involvement, and warmth—and two key adolescent outcomes: subjective well-being (positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction) and academic achievement. A purposive sample of 531 adolescents (275 males, 256 females) aged 17.18 years ($\pm SD$ 1.41) was recruited from public and private sector schools and colleges in Karachi, Pakistan. Participants completed the Perceptions of Parents Scales: The College-Student Scale (Robbins, 1994) and the ICP-Subjective Well-Being Scale (ICP-SWBS; Moghal, 2012).

Multiple regression analyses revealed that maternal parenting dimensions explained 24% of the variance in positive affect ($R^2 = .24$, $F = 54.81$, $p < .05$), with autonomy support ($\beta = .34$, $p < .05$) and involvement ($\beta = .34$, $p < .05$) emerging as significant predictors. For negative affect, these dimensions accounted for 18% of the variance ($R^2 = .18$, $F = 37.71$, $p < .05$), with autonomy support ($\beta = -.32$, $p < .05$) and involvement ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .05$) significantly predicting lower negative affect. Life satisfaction was influenced by maternal parenting practices, explaining 7% of its variance ($R^2 = .07$, $F = 12.99$, $p < .05$), with autonomy support ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$) and involvement ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$) as key predictors.

Academic achievement showed a strong association with maternal parenting practices, with these factors explaining 42% of its variance ($R^2 = .42$, $F = 129.86$, $p < .05$). Autonomy support ($\beta = .30$, $p < .05$), involvement ($\beta = .28$, $p < .05$), and warmth ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted academic success.

These findings underscore the crucial role of maternal parenting dimensions in shaping adolescents' well-being and academic outcomes. The study provides valuable insights for educators, psychologists, and policymakers, highlighting the importance of fostering autonomy-supportive and involved parenting to enhance adolescent development. Future research should explore additional contextual and cultural influences on these relationships.

Dr Sajid Iqbal Alyana

Dr Sajid Iqbal Alyana, PMD, PhD (Clinical Psychology), is an Assistant Professor and Consultant Clinical Psychologist at the National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS), Islamabad, Pakistan. Previously, he served as a Consultant Clinical Psychologist at the University of Karachi and as an Assistant Professor at Ziauddin University. He earned his PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Karachi in 2020.

Dr Alyana is a certified addiction professional (ICAP-1) and an INEP-Plus facilitator, actively engaged in clinical practice, training, teaching, and research. His research interests include family dynamics, attachment, substance use, academic achievement, well-being, and parenting. He has presented extensively at international conferences in Pakistan and abroad.



Kiran Mushtaq

Ms Kiran Mushtaq is a PhD fellow in Clinical Psychology at the Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi, researching suicidal behavior in individuals with substance use through the lens of the Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicide (Joiner, 2005). She holds an MPhil in Clinical Psychology and a Postgraduate Diploma in Mind Sciences from prestigious institutions in Pakistan.

Her academic contributions include co-authoring publications on psychometric properties of psychological scales and presenting research at international conferences such as the NIDA International Forum. An alumna of the International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP), her work on parenting styles, academic stress, and adolescent anxiety has informed culturally relevant mental health interventions.

As a clinical psychologist, Ms Mushtaq specializes in psychological assessment and psychotherapy, including CBT, REBT, and hypnotherapy. Through her doctoral research, she aims to advance clinical psychology, particularly in substance use and mental health treatment, both in Pakistan and globally.



Dr Riaz Ahmad

Dr Riaz Ahmad is a seasoned educator and mental health professional with over 24 years of experience in teaching, research, administration, and clinical practice. Committed to academic excellence, he implements effective instructional strategies to enhance learning and student success.

Specializing in clinical psychology, Dr Ahmad provides tailored therapeutic services, including Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Narrative Therapy, Solution-Focused Therapy, and Mindfulness, catering to diverse populations. He excels in building strong relationships with clients, families, and community service providers, ensuring seamless resource coordination and support. Dedicated to continuous professional development, he seeks to contribute his expertise to dynamic academic and clinical environments.



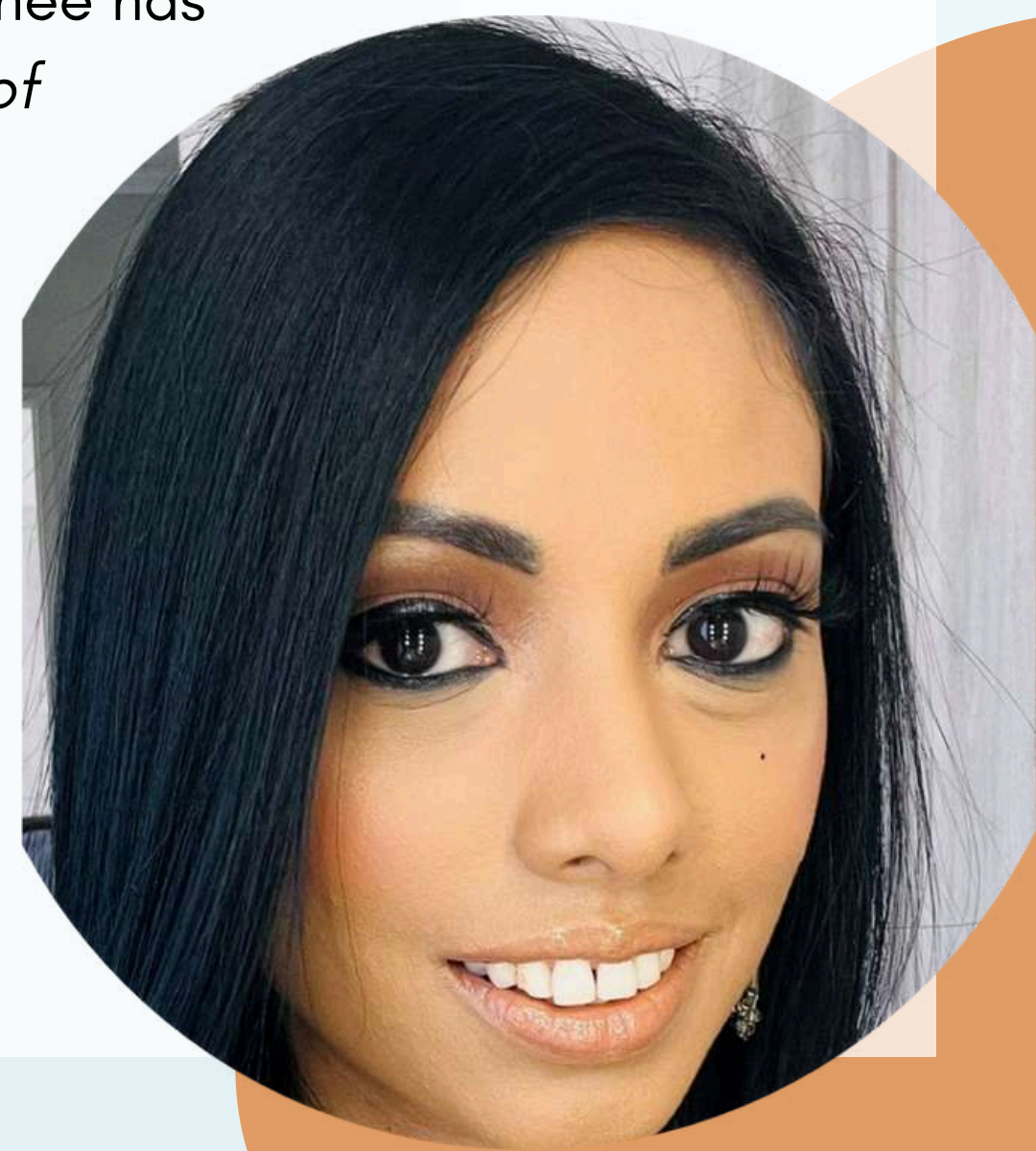
The changing landscape in education has led to a shift in student engagement, making it a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. This shift has also resulted in the excessive use of digital technology and social media, prompting higher education institutions to heavily invest in digital tools. While some researchers argue that social media usage (SMU) provides valuable communication and social support (Azizi, Soroush & Khatony, 2019), others highlight its contribution to academic and psychological challenges, negatively affecting student engagement and learning (Zhao, 2021).

The excessive use of social media and digital technology has significant psychological effects on young adults in higher education, including anxiety, stress, depression, sleep disturbances, and reduced creativity and critical thinking. This study explores the increasing complexity of student engagement, the rise in digital technology and social media usage, and the psychological impact of excessive use on young adults.

Using a qualitative approach, the study will recruit young adults aged 18–25 and collect data through questionnaires, narrative reflections, and interviews. The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS; Gomez et al., 2024) will guide the formulation of questions to assess social media usage and its impact on academic performance, as well as students' preferences for integrating social media into teaching and learning. Schindler's (2017) conceptual framework for student engagement and Hoffman and Nadkarni's (2013) Dual Factor Model of Facebook Use will help explain the complexity of engagement and SMU habits. The study aims to suggest interventions for developing healthy digital habits and provide insights into using digital technology and social media effectively and responsibly within the higher education environment.

Dr Nirashnee Padayachee

Dr Nirashnee Padayachee is a Senior Lecturer at Stadio Higher Education with expertise in Educational Psychology. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Life Science and Technology, along with Honours, Master's, and PhD degrees from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. With 16 years of experience in basic education and six years in higher education, she currently serves as a module coordinator and research supervisor for the Bachelor of Education Honours programme in Inclusive Education. A dedicated researcher and lifelong learner, Dr Padayachee has contributed to book chapters, published in the *International Journal of Education Management*, and presented at various conferences. She also enjoys traveling.



Fathima Badat

Ms Fathima Badat is an educational psychologist and lecturer based in Durban, South Africa, with a diverse background in higher education, psychotherapy, and child development. Beginning her career as a teacher, she saw a significant need for mental health awareness in education. She has a passion for helping learners overcome barriers and reach their full potential, Fathima trains student teachers in higher education, fostering their ability to support diverse learners in the classroom. In addition to this, she offers psychotherapy services and provides psych-educational assessments and interventions at a children's centre, focusing on the holistic development and well-being of young learners. Drawing from local and international experience, Fathima has a well-rounded perspective on mental health and educational support.



In an era where digital technologies are integral to education, their overuse can lead to distraction, diminished interpersonal communication, and a decline in critical thinking skills. This paper explores the innovative integration of digital detox practices within the curriculum, where digital tool usage is intentionally controlled and replaced with social interaction and face-to-face discussions to enhance cognitive engagement and collaborative learning.

While digital platforms remain essential for research and collaboration, this study examines the benefits of structured digital detox periods during the academic day. These intervals reduce screen exposure, emphasizing peer collaboration, discussion-based learning, and active engagement. By incorporating non-digital learning strategies, this approach fosters deeper understanding, enhances communication skills, and promotes critical thinking among students.

The paper highlights case studies of schools in Kerala, India, that have successfully implemented controlled digital use alongside detox strategies. Findings indicate that alternating between technology-assisted learning and traditional interaction-based methods improves student focus, problem-solving abilities, and soft skills such as empathy, teamwork, and verbal communication. Additionally, structured detox practices alleviate cognitive overload and encourage meaningful dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and creative thinking.

The study concludes that integrating digital detox periods into curricula—alternating between controlled technology use and active social engagement—can significantly enhance learning outcomes. By balancing digital tools with interpersonal interaction, educational institutions can cultivate a more effective learning environment that nurtures both intellectual growth and essential life skills.

Sinan Abdullah

Mr Sinan Abdullah is an MSc Psychology student at Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, India, specializing in the intersection of psychology and digital technology. He has presented over nine papers at national and international conferences, focusing on the psychological impact of digital technologies. A certified trainer in digital detoxing and personality development, he helps individuals cultivate a balanced relationship with technology. His research explores how advanced technologies shape personality and adaptation, aiming to integrate digital tools for productivity and well-being while minimizing their negative effects. He aspires to develop strategies that promote healthy digital habits and innovative psychological solutions.



This study examines how a Habits of Mind-based teaching and learning program fosters adaptive change in reading self-efficacy and attitudes toward reading among fifth-grade female students in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It highlights the impact of strategic psychological interventions on young learners' confidence and literacy attitudes, equipping them with cognitive tools for resilience, adaptability, and strategic thinking—essential for navigating educational and societal changes.

A true-experimental design was employed with 66 students (ages 10–11), randomly assigned to a control or experimental group. The experimental group participated in a nine-week, 27-session interactive program designed to enhance adaptable reading practices and literacy confidence. Assessments used the Reader Self-Perception Scale (RSPS) and the Attitude Toward Reading Scale, adapted to the Saudi context, to measure shifts in reading self-efficacy and attitudes.

Results indicated significant improvements in the experimental group's reading self-efficacy and attitudes, with sustained positive effects observed in follow-up assessments six weeks post-intervention. These findings underscore the program's efficacy in fostering long-term psychological and behavioral changes, preparing students to face academic and personal challenges with confidence.

The study provides valuable insights into the role of cognitive and psychological strategies in education, emphasizing the potential of Habits of Mind programs to develop adaptable, resilient learners who are not only equipped to succeed but also to lead change in an evolving world.

Dr Asma Amin

Dr Asma Amin is an esteemed educator and researcher specializing in Educational and Developmental Psychology, with a focus on reading science in Arabic language contexts. She earned her PhD with highest honors from King Saud University, where she explored the impact of cognitive habits on reading self-efficacy and attitudes. Her academic journey includes an MA in Developmental Psychology from Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada, where she examined cross-linguistic perspectives on Arabic script reading, and a BA (Honors) in Special Education, reinforcing her commitment to inclusive education.

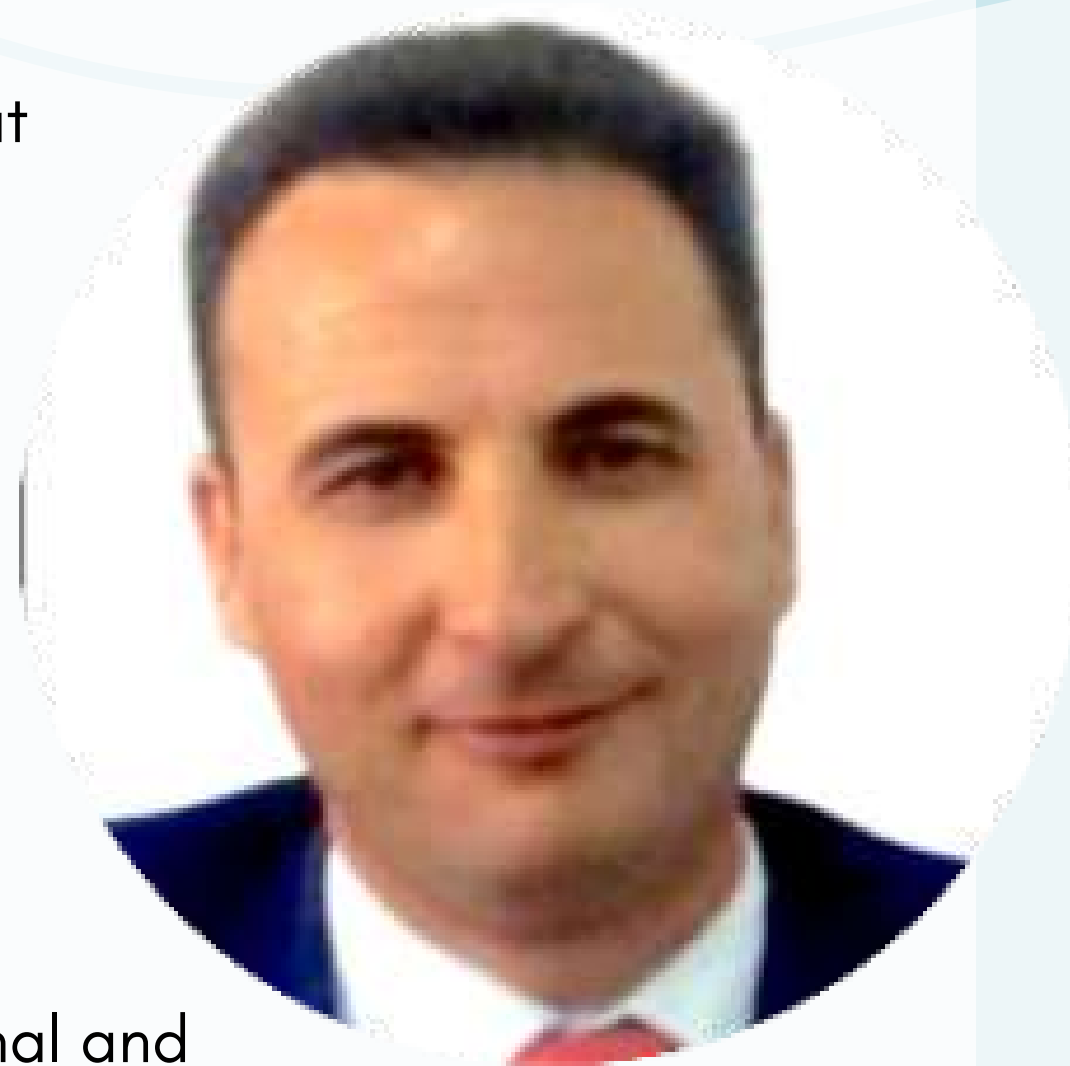
Dr Amin is certified in the Habits of Mind approach, Data Analytics, and Language and Literacy Development from Harvard Graduate School of Education, enhancing her research with advanced analytical and educational methodologies. Her work has been published in leading journals such as *Learning and Individual Differences*, and as a featured speaker at IPCD 2025, she aims to offer insights on educational transformation and psychological resilience in times of change.



Dr Mohammad F. Al-Qudah

Professor Mohammad F. Al-Qudah is a Full Professor of Psychology at King Saud University, with a research focus spanning self-efficacy, creative performance, and the psychological impacts of digital technology. His work on smartphone addiction explores its links to academic procrastination, quality of life, and cyberbullying, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beyond digital behavior, Professor Al-Qudah examines cognitive and emotional predictors of creativity, such as emotional creativity and thinking styles, offering insights into how psychological traits shape academic and social behaviors. His cross-cultural research on regional and gender differences in technology use and academic performance provides valuable perspectives for policy and educational practice in Middle Eastern contexts.



Growth mindset interventions, which emphasize that intelligence and abilities can be developed through effort and perseverance, have been shown to enhance academic achievement and motivation, particularly during periods of academic transition (Blackwell et al., 2007). This study examines the impact of a growth mindset intervention on the academic outcomes of Argentine high school students, focusing on self-efficacy, math anxiety, and mathematics performance.

Conducted across 10 schools in rural and urban settings, the study employs an experimental design, where participants completed a brief online intervention consisting of two 35-minute modules. The intervention integrated neuroplasticity research with reflective exercises to reinforce the belief that abilities are malleable. The control group engaged in parallel activities on general neuroscience topics without growth mindset reinforcement.

Additionally, the study investigates whether perceived classroom support moderates the intervention's effectiveness, particularly in environments where students feel encouraged. Data were collected at three time points: before the intervention, three weeks after completion, and three months later, assessing both immediate and sustained effects.

Preliminary findings are expected to show that the growth mindset intervention enhances students' self-efficacy, reduces math-related anxiety, and improves academic performance, particularly in diverse educational settings with pronounced disparities. By examining the intervention's effectiveness in a non-WEIRD sample and analyzing contextual and psychological mediators, this research contributes to developing educational strategies that support students through academic transitions.

Juan Soto

Mr Juan Soto is a senior student at NYU Abu Dhabi, majoring in Psychology and Social Research & Public Policy. His research focuses on implicit theories of intelligence and their impact on motivation, self-efficacy, and academic performance. He explores how these beliefs intersect with gender, rural upbringing, and socioeconomic class, shaping students' learning experiences and development. Through his work, Juan aims to empower marginalized communities by identifying strategies that foster resilience and educational success despite systemic barriers.



Dr Antje von Suchodoletz

Prof. Antje von Suchodoletz specializes in optimizing children's development, emphasizing the interactional and contextual nature of learning. Her research focuses on school readiness, effective teaching strategies, and enhancing young children's self-regulation and social competence. She also explores the physiological and biological foundations of self-regulation, examining how classroom processes and teacher-child relationships influence these mechanisms. Prof. von Suchodoletz has taught at the Universities of Munich, Freiburg, and Lüneburg and previously worked as a school psychologist in Switzerland.



PRESENTATION

Shifting Attitudes: Creating Neurodiversity-Affirming Spaces and Communities

This presentation highlights the significance of neurodiversity, emphasizing that it is not merely a trending concept but a reality—one in five individuals have neurodivergent traits. While some face challenges due to unrecognized or unsupported neurodivergence, many also leverage their unique strengths for success. However, when neurodivergence is pathologized or unsupported, it can negatively impact socio-emotional, educational, and vocational outcomes across the lifespan. To reduce these costs at both individual and societal levels, a collaborative, multi-level shift in attitudes and practices is urgently needed.

The presentation will raise awareness about common forms of neurodivergence, such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, discussing both the challenges and strengths associated with them in workplace contexts. It will advocate for working with one's brain rather than against it, promoting productivity, mental health, and fulfillment.

Additionally, the presentation encourages systemic change by fostering neurodiversity-affirming environments in families, schools, workplaces, and communities. A neurodiversity-affirming approach includes:

1. Recognizing neurodiversity as natural rather than abnormal.
2. Valuing neurodivergent traits and their contributions.
3. Understanding the benefits of embracing human diversity.
4. Supporting leaders, educators, and mental health professionals in working more effectively with neurodivergent individuals.

Ultimately, this presentation seeks to inspire a shift from pathologizing neurodiversity to embracing it as a strength in schools, workplaces, and relationships, fostering inclusivity and mutual growth for all.

Anna Kaminski

Ms Anna Kaminski, MA Psych., is an internationally certified ADHD coach, neurodiversity presenter, educator, and advocate for inclusive employment. She is the Founder and CEO of NeuroKinds, a social enterprise dedicated to supporting neurodivergent individuals and helping businesses and educational institutions create neurodiversity-affirming environments.

As a neurodivergent person herself, Anna is passionate about shifting perspectives from a pathology-centered view to a strengths-based approach. She actively advocates for students with ADHD and other neurodivergent traits, working to reduce stigma and misunderstanding through science-based guidance for families and organizations worldwide.

Having lived in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, Anna has spent the last 18 years in Abu Dhabi, UAE, where she continues to engage with diverse communities, fostering awareness, inclusion, and empowerment for neurodivergent individuals.



Dyslexia is the most common developmental condition, with documented prevalence ranging from 5% to 17% in Western populations (e.g., Badian, 1984; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2003). It is characterized by persistent difficulties in reading and spelling, particularly when converting written symbols into sounds (reading) or articulating words into written symbols (spelling and writing; World Health Organization, 2011). These difficulties can hinder one's ability to understand written materials, such as academic textbooks or job applications.

Historically, dyslexia was understood through the phonological processing deficit hypothesis, which emphasized a singular deficit. However, the multiple deficit approach suggests that dyslexia is associated with broader cognitive challenges, including difficulties in executive functions, time perception, and prospective memory. These issues persist into adulthood, leading to further investigation into their presence in both adults with and without dyslexia.

In a study involving university students, both with and without dyslexia, a range of cognitive tasks was used to investigate prospective memory, executive functions, and time perception. The results showed that adults with dyslexia struggled with prospective memory when tasks relied on time-cues (as opposed to environmental cues) and when these cues were one-off rather than repetitive. Additionally, adults with dyslexia exhibited difficulties in executive functions such as set-shifting, dual-task performance, and planning. However, there were no significant issues in time perception tasks in both short-duration (milliseconds) and long-duration (minutes) ranges.

The findings suggest that dyslexia-related problems extend beyond reading and spelling deficits, impacting cognitive functioning in areas critical for success in educational and workplace settings. The results support the dyslexia automatization deficit hypothesis and the supervisory attentional system rather than the phonological deficit hypothesis alone, highlighting the need for reasonable adjustments in environments supporting individuals with dyslexia.

Dr Charles Agyepong-Mensah

Dr Charles Agyepong-Mensah holds a PhD in Psychology from London South Bank University, focusing on executive functioning, time perception, and prospective memory in adults with dyslexia. He has an MSc in Psychology of Education from University College London and a BSc in Psychology from London South Bank University. With years of experience in lecturing and supervising dissertations at undergraduate and HND levels, his expertise spans psychological research methods, statistics, applied psychology, and cognitive psychology.

As an academic researcher, his work on cognition and memory in dyslexia has been published, with additional publications planned. He has substantial experience in both quantitative and qualitative research methods, as well as in conducting experimental research and administering psychometric tests. Currently, Dr Charles is involved in an ongoing dyslexia-related research project and also teaches psychology modules at Liverpool John Moores University at Westford University College in the UAE.



Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are encouraged to achieve high academic standards to enhance their understanding of the world, develop life skills, and attain career success. Assistive technology (AT) plays a crucial role in special needs education by improving learning and communication. Despite rapid technological advancements in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), research on AT's implementation in special education remains limited.

This review synthesizes existing qualitative and quantitative research to examine AT integration, available tools, professional development opportunities, and barriers within UAE special needs centers. Findings indicate that a variety of AT devices support students with different disabilities in classroom settings. However, challenges such as limited access, insufficient training, and resource constraints hinder effective implementation. Additionally, teachers' perceptions underscore the need for enhanced resources and targeted professional development.

The study provides recommendations to improve AT integration, ensuring better educational outcomes for students with special needs in the UAE.

Dr Nida Khan

Dr Nida Khan is an Instructor in Psychology at Fatima College of Health Sciences (FCHS), Abu Dhabi, with extensive experience in teaching and counseling. She is dedicated to fostering student success and enhancing psychological well-being.

Dr Khan is the Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) of a Ministry of Education, UAE-funded project titled Development of Innovative Diagnostic Tools for Special Needs, with a grant of 1.35 million AED. Her research focuses on psychological assessment, counseling strategies, and the integration of innovative methodologies in education. Committed to bridging theory and practice, Dr Khan plays a key role in advancing psychological research and developing impactful solutions for societal needs.



Dr Ansarullah Tantry

Dr. Ansarullah Tantry, PhD in Psychology and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA), is an Instructor in Psychology at Fatima College of Health Sciences, Abu Dhabi. With expertise in clinical psychology, research methods, and statistical data modeling, he has over eight years of experience teaching across academic levels.

He is Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) of a 1.35 million AED Ministry of Education, UAE-funded project on innovative diagnostic tools for special needs. Dr. Tantry has 34 publications in SCOPUS, ABS, and UGC CARE-listed journals and has served as Editor-in-Chief of the *Westford Research Journal* and a reviewer for international academic journals.

Previously, he contributed to psychological assessment tool development at DRDO, India, and worked on a national substance use survey at AIIMS, India. His work reflects a multidisciplinary approach and a strong commitment to academic excellence and impactful research.



Dr Saher AlSabbah

Dr Saher AlSabbah is an Associate Professor and Head of the Psychology Department at Fatima College of Health Sciences (FCHS), Abu Dhabi, with over 20 years of experience in teaching and research.

As an active researcher, Dr AlSabbah is the Principal Investigator (PI) of the Ministry of Education, UAE-funded project Development of Innovative Diagnostic Tools for Special Needs, with a grant of 1.35 million AED. His leadership in this project highlights his commitment to advancing psychological research and developing impactful solutions for individuals with special needs.

Dr AlSabbah has a strong track record of leading and contributing to numerous funded projects, demonstrating expertise in securing grants and managing high-impact research initiatives. His research interests include psychological assessment, innovative intervention strategies, and evidence-based practices to improve mental health outcomes. Through his leadership and dedication, Dr. AlSabbah continues to make significant contributions to academia, research, and applied psychology, fostering growth and innovation in the discipline.





UPCD

**Applied Cognitive &
Social Psychology**

This presentation examines the systemic legacies of inequality that persist in modern workplaces, despite efforts to promote inclusion and well-being. While interpersonal racism is increasingly addressed, deeper historical ideologies, such as colonialism and racial hierarchies, continue to shape inequities in hiring, pay structures, access to opportunities, and belonging.

Common concepts like imposter syndrome are often treated as universal challenges, failing to acknowledge how they uniquely impact marginalized employees facing stereotypes and systemic barriers.

A multi-level framework for equity-led transformation is introduced, guiding organizations through:

1. The impact of historical ideologies on systemic and interpersonal racism in workplaces.
2. How stereotype threat and imposter syndrome disproportionately exclude marginalized groups.
3. The role of power networks in reinforcing privilege and shaping DEI and workplace well-being strategies.

Using behavioral science and systems mapping, the presentation demonstrates how organizations can tackle inequities by analyzing actors, structures, and processes within their systems. A practical case study illustrates how systemic interventions drive sustainable change.

Irfaan Arif

Mr Irfaan Arif is a Behavioural Scientist, DEI expert, and founder of Develop Minds and Behaviour Labs, specializing in designing equitable workplace cultures that balance performance and inclusion. As an adjunct professor at Hult Business School, Dubai, he teaches leadership, inclusion, and change management, integrating neuroscience and psychology into practical solutions.

With over 20 years of experience, Irfaan has worked with multinational corporations, educational institutions, and frontline organizations to address disparities in well-being and inclusion. His approach critiques tokenistic DEI initiatives, advocating for systemic, practical solutions. He has led programs across the UK and GCC, navigating the intersection of race, class, and status in workplace well-being.

Irfaan holds an MA in HRD, an Executive MBA, and an MSc in Psychology, and is finalizing an MSc in Business Psychology at Arden University. He contributed a chapter on Mindset in *The Key to Inclusion* and regularly writes and speaks on behavioral science in inclusion and well-being.



Globalization and increased mobility have led to a rise in third-culture kids (TCKs)—individuals raised in mobile families who integrate aspects of multiple cultures rather than fully identifying with one. While traditional migration has been extensively studied, research on TCKs, particularly non-Western populations, remains limited.

This study examined the impact of cultural, social, and individual factors on TCKs' cultural adaptation and acculturative stress. A sample of 322 non-Western TCK students (71% South Asian, 75% female, $M\text{ age} = 20$, $SD = 3$) in the UAE was assessed using validated scales measuring multicultural identity, cultural distance, social connectedness, parent-adolescent communication, self-efficacy, cultural intelligence, and adaptation outcomes.

Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that cultural adaptation was positively influenced by multicultural identity integration, cultural intelligence, self-efficacy, strong family bonds, and host-country integration efforts, while social marginalization and identity compartmentalization had negative effects. Conversely, acculturative stress was heightened by marginalization, cultural distance, and identity compartmentalization but reduced by cultural intelligence and identity integration.

Findings highlight the importance of multicultural identity configurations, family support, and inclusive host-country policies in promoting TCKs' well-being and adaptation. These insights contribute to understanding the unique challenges and strengths of non-Western TCKs, offering guidance for fostering their successful cultural integration.

Dr Magdalena Mosanya

Dr Magdalena Mosanya, PhD in Psychology, is the Discipline Lead for Psychology and Criminology at Murdoch University Dubai. An accomplished researcher and speaker, she has contributed extensively to international conferences and scientific publications. Her research interests include intercultural communication, third-culture kids (TCKs), sports psychology, and women's emancipation. Additionally, she is skilled in cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and EMDR, bringing a strong therapeutic foundation to her work.



Dr Anna Kwiatkowska

Dr Anna Kwiatkowska, Professor of Psychology and Head of the Cultural Psychology and Cross-Cultural Research Lab at the Polish Academy of Sciences, specializes in cultural and gender identity, with a focus on self-construals across cultures. Her research interests include gender stereotypes, gender-based violence, and migration from a gender perspective, as well as the cultural dimensions of aggression, attachment, cheating, time perception, and environmentalism. A prolific author, she has published numerous papers, book chapters, and books, including her latest, *Wielokulturowość w ujęciu interdyscyplinarnym (Multiculturalism in an Interdisciplinary Perspective)*, PWN, Warsaw, 2021.

PRESENTATION

“Wait, Don’t all Autistic People...?” Examining Differences in Autism Understanding and Awareness in the UAE and the UK

This study examines the differing perspectives on autism between the UAE and the UK, where the latter has seen a rise in neuro-affirmative models and advocacy through the Neurodiversity Movement (NDM). It explores public perceptions of autism in both regions and the influence of contact with autistic individuals on these views. Participants from the UAE and UK completed the free association task (Abric, 1993) and the justification task (Di Giacomo, 1981) in a survey format.

Key research questions included:

1. How does the general public view and describe autism?
2. What are the key cultural differences and similarities in autism perceptions between the UAE and the UK?
3. How does personal contact with autistic individuals shape understanding and attitudes?

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participant characteristics, and word frequency analysis identified commonly used terms in the free association task, visualized through a word cloud. Inductive thematic analysis was applied to responses from the justification task to identify key themes.

This presentation will discuss the findings and their application in developing an education-based intervention in the UAE. The goal is to enhance public awareness, reduce stigma, and promote a more inclusive mindset toward autism.

Leyli Afsari

Ms Leyli is a UK-trained psychotherapist specializing in children, adolescents, and families. She holds a Master’s in Counselling and Psychotherapy from the University of Strathclyde, a Bachelor’s in Psychology with Counselling Skills from Middlesex University, and is currently pursuing a PhD in Psychology at Heriot-Watt University. She has worked as a counsellor in Dubai and the UK and is registered with the Community Development Authority, Dubai.

Using a Person-Centred approach, Leyli provides a compassionate and confidential space for clients to explore their experiences, fostering self-awareness, acceptance, and healthier relationships. She works affirmatively with neurodivergent clients, including autistic individuals and ADHDers, and has training in Executive Function, Working with Hard-to-Reach Children, and Supporting Autistic Adults. Additionally, she has experience in treating trauma, anxiety, and abuse.

Leyli adopts a strengths-based approach with young clients, integrating parents and school professionals into therapy to enhance well-being. She is committed to helping individuals develop resilience and reach their full potential.



Dr Mary Stewart

Prof. Mary Stewart is a Professor of Psychology at Heriot-Watt University. Her research focuses on understanding the social and cognitive barriers to participation in society—including access to social support, education, employment, and healthcare—and identifying the most effective support strategies for individuals. She leads the Social Interaction, Mental Health, and Wellbeing Lab.



Dr Kirin Hilliar

Dr Kirin Hilliar is a psychologist specializing in forensic, organizational, and clinical psychology across Australia and the UAE. She has experience in corrective custodial services, forensic mental health, workplace recruitment assessments for Dubai government entities, and outpatient therapeutic services. Alongside her full-time role at Heriot-Watt University, she practices part-time at a private mental health clinic in Dubai and is licensed by the Community Development Authority (CDA). Dr Hilliar actively consults, trains, and collaborates with government, semi-government, and private organizations, advocating for research-informed practices in legal and workplace settings.



Dr Mercedes Sheen

Professor Mercedes Sheen has been teaching at the university level in the UAE since 2002 and currently serves as the Head of the Psychology Department and Associate Director for Research at Heriot-Watt University, Dubai. She earned her PhD from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, where she researched false memories, introducing the concept of 'disputed memories' based on differing recollections shared with her identical twin sister. Her current research focuses on social cognition, specifically how facial attractiveness influences perceptions of others.



In a rapidly evolving world, understanding the factors shaping attitudes toward Artificial Intelligence (AI) is crucial for fostering acceptance and trust. This study explores the interplay between personality traits, basic psychological needs, and AI attitudes, drawing on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Big Five Personality Traits. It examines how personality influences the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and how these factors collectively shape AI perceptions.

A diverse sample of 500 professionals in the UAE completed validated measures assessing psychological needs (Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction and Frustration Scale), personality traits (Big Five Inventory), and AI attitudes (AI Positivity and Negativity Scale). Regression analyses revealed that traits like openness, extraversion, and conscientiousness enhance the positive effects of autonomy, competence, and relatedness on AI acceptance. Conversely, neuroticism increases anxiety and mistrust, weakening AI positivity.

Findings highlight the importance of designing AI systems that align with individual psychological profiles, fostering engagement and addressing resistance. By tailoring AI solutions to diverse personality and motivational needs, organizations can enhance AI adoption and trust in an era of rapid technological transformation.

Dr Rabia Aftab

Dr Rabia Aftab is a Psychology Lecturer at Bath Spa University, RAK, UAE, with a PhD in Psychology from Aligarh Muslim University, specializing in Positive Psychology. She has published 12 research articles in peer-reviewed and Scopus-indexed journals and has received the Research Excellence Award for her scholarly contributions. Her research focuses on personality, emotional intelligence, resilience, and well-being, with an emphasis on practical applications in various cultural and professional contexts. Dr. Rabia is dedicated to inspiring students through engaging lectures and research mentorship, fostering innovation in psychology.



Microaggressions, subtle yet pervasive forms of discrimination, contribute to hostile environments in academic and workplace settings, impacting individual well-being and organizational dynamics. This study examined the prevalence and motivations behind ethnicity- and gender-based microaggressions among students at a multicultural university in the Middle East, where ethnocentric values are predominant.

Through focus groups with 16 students, thematic analysis identified five key drivers of microaggressions: psychological, gender- and ethnicity-related, social, and sociocultural factors. These discriminatory behaviors often manifested as defense mechanisms or expressions of superiority. Participants reported gender-based devaluation, where their achievements were minimized compared to male peers, and discrimination against those deviating from traditional gender roles. Social exclusion based on race or gender was a recurring theme, with humor frequently used to mask microaggressions, reinforcing stereotypes. Additionally, normalization of discriminatory behaviors and social desirability pressures perpetuated exclusion and bias within peer groups.

The findings underscore the urgent need for sustained education and awareness to combat microaggressions and promote cultural competence in educational institutions and workplaces. Effective diversity and inclusion strategies must move beyond surface-level diversity by actively addressing underlying biases through tailored training programs and inclusive policies. In educational settings, structured communication and diversity training can foster more supportive environments, enhancing student engagement and well-being. In the workplace, developing culturally competent teams and mitigating exclusionary practices can improve morale and productivity.

This research aligns with the IPCD 2025: Change theme by highlighting microaggressions as subtle yet powerful barriers to inclusivity and equity. By uncovering their underlying drivers, this study emphasizes the need for transformative strategies to challenge entrenched biases and foster environments that genuinely embrace diversity. The findings offer actionable insights to dismantle barriers and drive meaningful, lasting change in academic and professional contexts across the Middle East and beyond.

Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani

Dr Hajar Aman Key Yekani is an Assistant Professor of Psychology specializing in social psychology, cognition, and language. Her interdisciplinary research explores social issues, implicit attitudes, and reading processes across languages, using advanced techniques such as eye tracking. Dr Yekani's work bridges social and experimental psychology, offering novel insights through collaborative and innovative approaches.



Ria Viswanathan

Ms Ria Viswanathan is an MSc Mental Health Studies student at King's College London and a psychology graduate from Heriot-Watt University. With interests in clinical, forensic, and personality psychology, she is passionate about research that drives social impact. She has presented at conferences, completed internships, and engaged in qualitative research projects, strengthening her analytical and interpersonal skills. Ria aims to pursue a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology to advance research and practice in the field.



Ankita Kristine D'Silva

Ms Ankita Kristine D'Silva, a psychology graduate from Heriot-Watt University, has a strong interest in human behavior and psychological research. She has honed her research skills through her dissertation and collaborative projects, including presenting at the 2024 Psychology Student Research Conference. Passionate about counseling, she plans to pursue a Master's in Counseling to further her expertise and contribute to the field.



Irha Mateen

Ms Irha Mateen, a final-year psychology honors student at Heriot-Watt University, focuses on cognitive science and social psychology. Her thesis explores negative emotion recognition in older adults, reflecting her interest in lifespan cognitive and social processes. Actively engaged in community volunteering and research, she supports psychiatric care for older adults and social anxiety studies. As an Outreach Ambassador, she promotes STEM education for children. Irha aims to advance mental health and education through impactful research.



Zaida Jafar

Ms Zaida Jafar, a psychology graduate from Heriot-Watt University, is a research assistant studying microaggressions in university settings. Her dissertation examined reassurance-seeking behavior, personality, parenting styles, and gender in young adults, exploring links between environmental stressors and well-being. With experience supporting students with special needs and volunteering at psychology conferences, she blends academic research with practical application. Her interests center on resilience in high-stimulation digital environments, aiming to deepen our understanding of mental health in a fast-paced world.



Anthra Devi Cirimulla

Ms Anthra Devi Cirimulla, a master's student in Clinical Psychology at the University of Sussex and a psychology graduate from Heriot-Watt University, is a research assistant studying microaggressions and gender in university settings. Her undergraduate dissertation explored how special needs students' developmental progress affects educators' well-being and coping strategies. With over a year of experience as an assistant special-needs educator, she is passionate about improving interventions for neurodevelopmental disorders and enhancing the well-being of both students and educators.

Texting while driving (TWD) is a dangerous yet prevalent behavior, despite being illegal in 49 U.S. states. Many drivers engage in TWD due to overconfidence in their multitasking abilities, despite research showing that only a small percentage can multitask without impaired performance. This study tested whether reducing drivers' self-efficacy in multitasking could lower TWD intentions.

An online experiment was conducted with U.S. drivers. The treatment group completed a challenging multitasking exercise with feedback, while the control group performed simple, sequential tasks without feedback. Results showed that the treatment reduced TWD self-efficacy by 9% ($p < .01$) and TWD intention by 6% ($p < .05$), after controlling for covariates.

These findings suggest that targeting drivers' overconfidence in their multitasking ability is a promising behavioral intervention to discourage TWD. Future research could explore scalable online simulations to reinforce these effects and assess their impact on actual driving behavior.

Vanessa Heywood

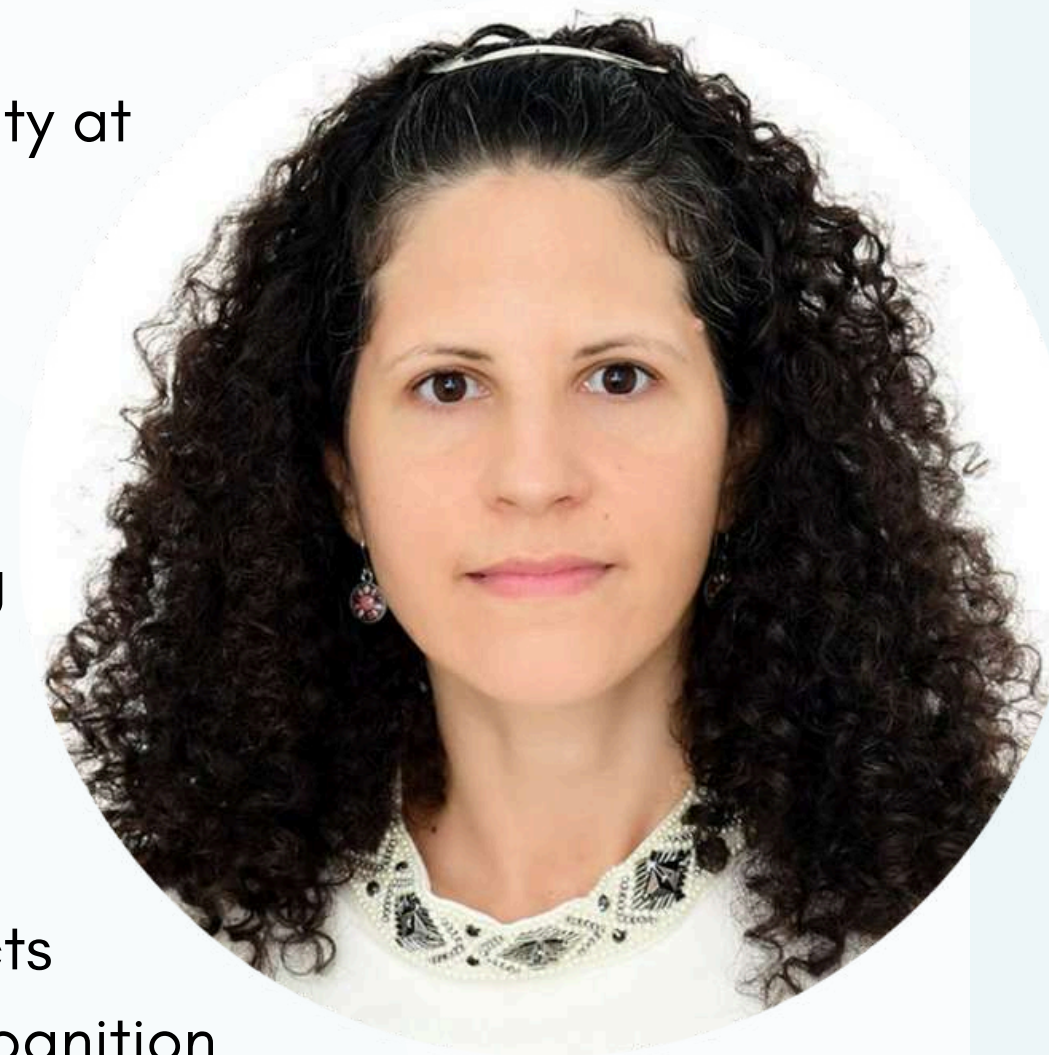
Ms Vanessa Heywood is a Chartered Accountant and behavioral scientist with 25 years of experience across audit, finance, conference production, and business development. She holds a Master's in Behavioral Science from the London School of Economics and a BA in French and Management Studies. A member of the Global Association of Applied Behavioural Scientists (GAABS), she applies behavioral science to public policy and organizational challenges. Based in Dubai, she works as a freelance behavioral scientist, drawing on her diverse experience with the UK government, EU, UN, private sector, and professional bodies.



Intellectual humility (IH)—the recognition of the limits and fallibility of one’s knowledge—may enhance the accuracy of metacognitive judgments. While prior research on IH’s role in reducing overconfidence has yielded mixed results, these inconsistencies likely stem from differences in IH measurement. This study examined the relationship between IH and overestimation using the Comprehensive Intellectual Humility Scale (CIHS), which assesses four dimensions: Independence of Intellect and Ego, Openness to Revising One’s Viewpoint, Respect for Others’ Viewpoints, and Lack of Intellectual Overconfidence. A convenience sample of 209 UAE residents completed the CIHS and a matrix reasoning test, followed by self-assessments of their performance. Results indicated a negative association between IH and overestimation, with Respect for Others’ Viewpoints and Lack of Intellectual Overconfidence emerging as the strongest predictors of reduced overestimation. These findings underscore the educational value of fostering intellectual humility to enhance students’ awareness of their cognitive limitations and improve metacognitive accuracy.

Dr Mariana Veiga Chetto Coutinho

Dr Mariana earned her PhD in Cognitive Psychology from the University at Buffalo, SUNY, and completed a six-month postdoctoral research fellowship at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Cognitive Sciences at UAEU, having previously spent seven years at Zayed University. Passionate about teaching and research, she is dedicated to helping students develop critical thinking skills. Her research focuses on understanding the causes of overconfidence, particularly examining why individuals struggle to assess their own knowledge, why low performers exhibit greater miscalibration, how critical thinking impacts metacognitive accuracy, and effective strategies to enhance metacognition and reduce overconfidence in learning. She explores these questions within the domains of memory and reasoning tasks.



Baraka Saeed Binishaq

Ms Baraka Saeed Binishaq graduated from Zayed University Abu Dhabi with a bachelor’s degree of Science in Psychology in 2021. Baraka has multidisciplinary experience with proven administrative capabilities, research skills, medical interpretation, school counseling, and public policy that leverage into her administrative assistant role at the NYUAD Center for Brain and Health.



Holding a phone in one hand and passing it to the other without sight relies on the haptic sense—proprioception and touch—allowing for precise object interaction. This presentation explores how sensory modalities such as audition, vision, and touch contribute to object perception and action. It provides an overview of how the brain processes and integrates information from these senses to guide everyday actions. Experimental studies will highlight the interplay between sensory inputs, offering insights into sensorimotor processes in both healthy individuals and those with sensory impairments. These findings have implications for rehabilitation and the development of assistive technologies.

Dr Ivan Camponogara

Ivan is a kinesiologist investigating how humans process and merge multiple sensory inputs into motor commands to plan and execute skilled actions. He uses a multimodal approach that combines behavioral experiments, custom-made experimental setups, a motion capture system, and Bayesian statistics. Ivan's multidisciplinary approach intersects multisensory integration, motor control, movement physiology, psychology, computational modeling, and cognitive neuroscience.



PRESENTATION

Neurocognitive Effects of Sleep Apnea in Adults with ADHD: A Comprehensive Review

This review examines the neurocognitive effects of untreated obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) in adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and explores integrated approaches for diagnosis and treatment. ADHD, a neurodevelopmental disorder marked by inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity, frequently coexists with OSA, compounding cognitive impairments, particularly in executive functioning, memory, and daytime alertness. The overlap in symptoms creates diagnostic challenges and complicates treatment strategies.

A systematic review of studies from 2000 to 2023 found that OSA exacerbates ADHD-related cognitive deficits, amplifying impairments in planning, working memory, and cognitive flexibility. Daytime somnolence caused by OSA further intensifies ADHD symptoms, creating a cycle of neuropsychological burden. Given these findings, screening for sleep apnea should be a key component of ADHD care. Treatments such as Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) therapy, when combined with ADHD management strategies like medication or Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), have shown promising cognitive and functional improvements.

This review underscores the need for interdisciplinary treatment approaches that address both conditions simultaneously. It also highlights challenges in CPAP adherence and the necessity of behavioral interventions to enhance compliance. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to better understand the progression of comorbid ADHD and OSA, as well as the efficacy of combined treatments. The findings provide a framework for improving clinical care, emphasizing early diagnosis and comprehensive management to mitigate neurocognitive impairments in affected adults.

Dr Safina Naaz

Dr Safina Naaz is a clinical and child psychologist dedicated to transforming mental health care through holistic and innovative approaches. As the Clinical Director at Hear and Heal, she leads programs that support individuals and families, specializing in child psychology and addressing challenges like academic stress and behavioral issues.

An NLP Master Practitioner and life coach, Dr Safina mentors early-career psychologists, offering training programs that integrate therapy and business skills. She envisions a state-of-the-art mental health sanctuary and advocates for reducing stigma through culturally sensitive, cutting-edge treatments like neurofeedback and virtual reality therapy. Passionate about mental wellness, she continues to inspire change and elevate global mental health standards.



Dr Amiya Bhaumik

Professor Dr Amiya Bhaumik is the Founder and President of Lincoln University College, Malaysia, and the Lincoln Institute of Higher Education, Australia. A distinguished leader in education, he holds multiple degrees, including a PhD, spanning biology, psychology, culture, and international management.

With a rich background in global education, Dr Bhaumik has served as Executive Vice President of the International Education Consulting Group in the USA and as a UNESCO Research Fellow, working across 108 countries. Under his leadership, Lincoln University College has expanded to offer over 95 programs across 12 faculties. Recognized for his contributions to education, he was awarded the prestigious BCM (Bintang Cemerlang Melaka) by the Malaysian government. His visionary leadership continues to shape higher education worldwide.



PRESENTATION

Reimagining Mental Health Labels in a Changing World: A Cultural Perspective

This presentation examines the cultural, historical, and socio-political dimensions of mental disorder labels and their impact on perceptions, identity, and societal attitudes toward mental health. While diagnostic frameworks like the DSM-5 and ICD-11 offer standardized classifications, they often overlook cultural contexts, reinforcing a one-size-fits-all approach.

Aligned with the IPCD 2025 theme of Change, this work critiques the limitations of these frameworks through a case study, applying the theory of looping effects to illustrate how diagnostic labels shape and are shaped by individual identity. Drawing on PhD research exploring cross-cultural perceptions of mental disorder labels in the UK and UAE, the presentation advocates for a more culturally sensitive approach to diagnosis, aiming to better capture the lived experiences of individuals worldwide.

Seiara Imanova

Seiara is a PhD student at the University of Birmingham, focusing on the Philosophy of Psychiatry. Her research examines the perception of mental disorder labels among student populations, comparing Western and Middle Eastern perspectives. She is also the host and producer of *Behind the Stigma Podcast*, where she discusses Psychology, Neuroscience, and Mental Health with clinicians, researchers, and educators. Driven by a desire to bridge the gap between academia and the public, her podcast aims to raise awareness of important issues in these fields. The show has featured academic guests from prestigious institutions such as King's College London, Harvard, Columbia, Imperial College, and Johns Hopkins. Seiara holds a Mental Health First Aid certificate from Lighthouse Arabia, UAE.



Dr Lisa Bortolotti

Dr Lisa Bortolotti is a leading philosopher of cognitive science at the University of Birmingham UK, focusing on the philosophy of psychology and psychiatry. She is also the Editor-in-Chief of *Philosophical Psychology* Journal and the founder of The Philosophy Garden.



Dr Matthew Broome

Dr Matthew Broome is a Professor of Psychiatry and Youth Mental Health at the University of Birmingham UK. He is also an academic psychiatrist and the Director of the Institute for Mental Health at the University. He is a leader in the field of early psychosis and in the philosophy and ethics of mental health.



This presentation explores the transformative role of botanic gardens as therapeutic spaces for trauma recovery, resilience, and community cohesion, particularly in regions affected by conflict and instability, such as the Middle East. Grounded in contemplative neuroscience, these nature-based interventions support emotional healing by providing accessible, calming environments designed to regulate the nervous system and reduce PTSD symptoms.

Through *The Wellbeing Planet's* partnerships across 48 countries, botanic gardens have been repurposed with sensory pathways, restorative plantings, and tranquil water features, fostering emotional grounding. Artificial intelligence (AI) is integrated to monitor visitors' physiological and emotional responses, generating real-time insights that inform adaptive garden design.

Beyond individual healing, these spaces serve as community hubs, encouraging dialogue, reducing mental health stigma, and reinforcing social bonds. For displaced and trauma-impacted communities, botanic gardens offer both personal refuge and collective healing opportunities. This integrative model—combining nature-based therapy, neuroscience, and AI—presents a scalable and adaptive solution for trauma recovery and mental health support in a rapidly changing world.

Dr Koncha Pinos

Dr Koncha Pinos is the co-director of *The Wellbeing Planet*, a global organization focused on health, education, and sustainability across 48 countries. A pioneer in neuroarchitecture and neuroaesthetics, Dr Pinos develops nature-based solutions for trauma recovery, blending well-being science with art and nature. With over thirty years of experience, she has led transformative programs using therapeutic gardens and designed environments to foster healing and resilience, inspired by figures like Gaudí and Picasso.

Dr Pinos is the recipient of the Luxembourg Peace Prize and UNESCO recognition. Her research explores how adaptive environments can reduce stress and enhance wellness in healthcare systems and communities worldwide.



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