



**Middlesex
University
Dubai**

APRIL · 08 · 2021

**8th ANNUAL
CONFERENCE OF
APPLIED PSYCHOLOGICAL
RESEARCH**

IN THE MIDDLE EAST



SOCIAL
PSYCHOLOGY
RESEARCH LAB



**THURSDAY,
APRIL 8, 2021**

11:30 AM TO 5:30 PM

Conference Chair

Dr Anita Shrivastava Kashi

Conference Organizing Committee

Dr Nishtha Lamba

Ms Aditi Bhatia

Supporting Members

Ms Denise Andrzejewski

Ms Meriam Melad

Ms Hafseena Bind Ashraf

Ms Archana Raghavan

Via Microsoft Teams

WELCOME ADDRESS

DR. CEDWYN FERNANDES

Pro Vice-Chancellor, Middlesex University
Director, Middlesex University Dubai



A very warm welcome to the Eighth Annual Conference of Applied Psychological Research in the Middle East, organised by the Psychology Department at Middlesex University Dubai. Keeping the COVID related measures under consideration, the conference will be hosted online. This conference will be of interest to both academics and practitioners alike and also to anyone with a keen interest in psychology. I am pleased that we have expanded to now include the wider Middle East in the scope of this conference.

I am delighted to welcome our special guest and keynote speaker Viren Swami, Professor of Social Psychology and Director, ARU Centre for Societies and Groups, at the Anglia Ruskin University, UK. The Psychology Department at Middlesex University Dubai, led by Dr Anita Shrivastava Kashi, has put together with Dr. Nishtha Lamba, and Ms. Aditi Bhatia an excellent conference programme. The contribution of, Ms. Denise Andrzejewski, Ms. Mariam Melad, Dr. Lynda Hyland, Ms. Magdalena Mosanya, Ms. Seada Kassie, Ms. Archana Raghavan and Ms. Hafeseena Bind Ashraf, along with other members of the psychology team, has added significantly in the organization of this event.

Middlesex University Dubai is London's first and only campus in the UAE, and the first university to offer a Master's programme in Applied Psychology. At the undergraduate level, Middlesex University offers the opportunity for students to graduate with an Honours degree in Psychology with a range of diverse pathways.

As the leading University in Psychology in the region we are pleased to host our 8th psychology conference. I wish you a successful and fruitful event.

WELCOME ADDRESS

DR. ANITA SHRIVASTAVA KASHI

Head and Associate Professor

Department of Psychology, Middlesex University Dubai



On behalf of the Department of Psychology, Middlesex University Dubai, I would like to warmly welcome you all to the 8th Annual Conference of Applied Psychological Research in the Middle East. This first online psychology conference will showcase an exceptional keynote address by Professor Viren Swami on “Nurtured by nature: Why being in nature is good for us”, followed by Oral paper presentations, and a thought-provoking panel discussion on Expatriate acculturation in the UAE.

Our yearly psychology conference started in 2013 and has grown substantially in terms of the diversity of presentations and research areas ever since. Psychology has applications beyond the parameters of its own field, extending to the sectors of health and education, and it finds itself also in various social contexts. This interdisciplinary and far reach will be illustrated by the presentations today.

Research in the Middle East is growing in importance, and this has a direct influence on the continuing social and economic development of the region. Events such as this conference add significantly towards the progress of our field in this part of the world. Building on the successes of our previous seven conferences, this event promises to be an excellent forum for the dissemination of qualitative and quantitative applied research findings.

On behalf of the psychology department at Middlesex University Dubai, I once again welcome you to what I am sure will be a thought-provoking and interesting event!



PROGRAMME

WELCOME ADDRESS

Dr Cedwyn Fernandes, Dr Cody Paris, Dr Anita Kashi

11:30 AM - 11:55 AM

KEYNOTE INTRODUCTION

Dr Anita Kashi

11:55 AM - 12:00 NN

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Prof. Viren Swami

12:00 NN - 1:00 PM

1ST ORAL PRESENTATION

Chair: Dr Nishtha Lamba

1:15 PM - 2:15 PM

2ND ORAL PRESENTATION

Chair: Dr Lynda Hyland

2:45 PM - 3:45 PM

PANEL DISCUSSION

Panellists: Dr Jigar Jogia, Dr Chasity O'Connell,
Dr Rajeshree Singhanian, Dr Thoraiya Kanafani,
Moderator: Ms Magdalena Mosanya

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

CLOSING ADDRESS

Dr Tenia Kyriazi and Dr Anita Kashi

5:00 PM - 5:30 PM

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

PROF. VIREN SWAMI



ABOUT PROF. VIREN SWAMI

Viren Swami is a Professor of Social Psychology at Anglia Ruskin University and Director of the Centre for Psychological Research at Perdana University. His research is focused on body image and human appearance. Dr Swami has previously worked at the University of Westminster and the University of Liverpool after completing his PhD in psychology from University College London. He is a chartered psychologist and associate fellow of the British Psychological Society and an associate editor for the journals *Body Image* and *PLOS One*. He is the author of over two hundred academic papers and three books, including *Attraction, Explained* (now in its second edition) and *The Psychology of Physical Attraction*.

NURTURED BY NATURE: WHY BEING IN NATURE IS GOOD FOR US

Spending time in nature has a range of benefits for physical health and psychological well-being. But why do these effects occur? And how can you make the most of natural environments?

Research has shown that spending time in natural environments had a range of benefits, including better physical health and psychological well-being. In this presentation, Prof Viren Swami will provide a brief overview of historic attempts at using nature to improve well-being before describing what contemporary research has shown. He will also discuss the findings of recent research showing that exposure to natural environments also improves body image outcomes. But understanding why those benefits occur is more complex: Prof Swami describes different theories that have been proposed to explain the impacts of nature on well-being. He'll also discuss what we can all do to reap the benefits of spending time in nature.



SESSION CHAIR

Dr Nishtha Lamba

ORAL SESSION 1

Abstract 1

1:15 PM - 1:35 PM

ABOUT PROF ANTONIA BIFULCO



Antonia Bifulco is a Professor of Lifespan psychology at Middlesex University and director of the Centre for Abuse and Trauma Studies, which seeks to combine health, social care and criminological approaches to issues of abuse. Her research over 30 years has investigated the circumstances around childhood abuse, together with the consequences for later life adjustment, relationships and psychological disorder. She has a particular interest in women's experience and her research has involved hundreds of life history interviews, most with women, to understand the relationship between social context and psychological disorder.

THE IMPACT OF NEGATIVE LIFE EVENTS ON OUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH DURING COVID19

The link between negative life experience and depression is well researched and understood by clinicians (Bifulco, Spence, & Kagan, 2021). Severe events are those which convey significant threat to our lives for example bereavements or partnership breakup, health events, rejections/bullying and career disappointments. These threaten our sense of attachment, security, identity and achievement which undermines our wellbeing and makes us question the meaning of our lives. During Covid19 many will have experienced threats to health (of self or close others) and bereavements but also increased risks from domestic violence and job losses. These have involved significant loss or danger, and with social distancing often a sense of entrapment or unresolved loss. Rates of depression have greatly increased with mental health, being considered a major longer-term consequence of the pandemic. Discussion on barriers to support and coping, as well as any positive messages about lockdown, will be discussed.



Abstract 2

1:35 PM - 1:55 PM



ABOUT MS SAMEEHA MONAFF & MS PRERNA BHOLAH

Ms Sameeha Monaff is a lecturer and Programme Coordinator for BSc (Hons) Psychology with Counselling Skills at Middlesex University Mauritius. Her research interests focus on health psychology, especially around the psychosocial impacts of chronic illness on the individual and the family. Her research interests also include paediatric chronic pain and exploring the experience and impact of parenting a child or young person with chronic pain.



Ms Prerna Bholah has been teaching at Middlesex University Mauritius since 2012 and is currently the Area Head of Science and Education. Her primary research interests lie in the mechanisms underlying visual-spatial attention and working memory, using a combination of behavioural and non-invasive imaging techniques such as EEG.

INVESTIGATING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF COVID-19 IN MAURITIUS

The current study investigated the psychological impacts of the disease in Mauritius through a cross-sectional online survey of 840 respondents. Of the 712 participants analysed, 91.2% reported moderate to severe distress, and 58.8% reported moderate to severe anxiety, with females being more distressed and anxious than males. Younger people living with a chronic illness reported a significantly higher prevalence of GAD symptoms and distress than older people living with or without a chronic illness. Poor sleep quality and being a student were significant predictors of stress and anxiety. These findings have important implications for interventions and policy-making in Mauritius.



Abstract 3

1:55 PM - 2:15 PM

ABOUT DR. SUJATA SRIRAM



Dr Sujata Sriram is employed as Professor at the School of Human Ecology (SHE), Tata Institute of Social Sciences, (TISS) Mumbai. She was awarded the Fulbright Nehru Senior Research Fellowship, 2010-11, at the Department of Anthropology at the University of California San Diego. She has been in the field of higher education for over three decades. Before her stint at TISS, she taught at Delhi University. Dr Sujata enjoys teaching and research and is eternally curious, and enjoys trying to find out what makes people tick. Her areas of research interest are many - families, childcare and parenting; marriage and divorce; mental health and wellbeing; meaning making of identity, religion and spirituality. She teaches courses on psychology, research methods and human development for the MA Applied Psychology students in TISS.

COVID-19 AND TRAVAILS OF WORKING FROM HOME: THROUGH THE LENS OF WOMEN

The coronavirus pandemic arrived in India in January 2020. Lockdown as a response was initiated from the third week of March. This resulted in crises for middle-class urban households where the new normal became work from home. Makeshift arrangements resulted in converting domestic areas into workspaces, where dining tables became office tables. While management professionals examine the economics of work from home, the psychological effects of the same are rarely scrutinized. Work from home impacts men and women differentially. For women employed outside the home, lockdown resulted in multiple shifts of responsibility. While work from home saved on the time taken for travel, the lockdown meant that everyday chores which had been largely taken care of by paid domestic help now rested squarely on the shoulders of women in the household. Patriarchal norms in India resulted in working women taking on household responsibilities in addition to paid work. Care responsibilities for children and the elderly usually rested squarely with women. Redistribution of roles in the household would help in the allocation of work responsibilities. This paper examines some of the issues arising as a result of Covid-19 propelling work from home as the new normal. The effects of the same on gender roles and relations, on women's mental health, work inside and outside the home will be examined, with emphasis on the changing landscape of employment. The paper proposes possible outcomes at the individual, family, workplace and policy levels.



SESSION CHAIR

Dr Lynda Hayland

ORAL SESSION 2

Abstract 1

2:45 PM - 3:05 PM

ABOUT DR CILLIAN MCHUGH



Cillian is an Experimental Psychologist specialising in cognitive and social psychology, with a particular focus on morality and moral judgement. His empirical work has largely focused on the phenomenon of moral dumbfounding; when a person defends a moral judgement in the absence of reasons. In addition to this empirical work, Cillian has proposed a novel theory of Moral Judgment as Categorization (MJAC). His interests extend beyond the moral domain to include learning and knowledge acquisition, categorization, skill/expertise, meaning, motivation, and memory, while his theoretical interests include Ecological Psychology, Enactivism, and Dynamical Systems.

IT'S JUST WRONG! AN OVERVIEW OF THE MORAL DUMBFFOUNDING PHENOMENON

Moral dumbfounding occurs when people defend a moral judgement even though they cannot provide a reason in support of this judgement. The phenomenon has been widely discussed in the morality literature for almost 2 decades. Until recently the empirical evidence for the phenomenon was limited to a single study (with a total sample of $N = 30$) unpublished in peer-review form. Furthermore, no specific measure of dumbfounding is reported in this study, and the phenomenon remains poorly understood. Across a series of 14 studies ($N = 2249$), we develop methods for measuring dumbfounded responding (Studies 1-3, $N = 276$), and additionally test its prevalence in non-WEIRD samples (China, Study 4, $N = 165$; India, Study 5, $N = 181$, MENA, Study 6, $N = 215$). We address specific challenges to the dumbfounding paradigm, and demonstrate that it can be reliably elicited (Studies 7-9, $N = 723$). Having established the dumbfounding effect, we test a dual-processes explanation of moral dumbfounding. We identify specific experimental manipulations and individual difference variables that appear to be related to dumbfounded responses (Studies, 9-14, $N = 689$). Our results show some evidence for a dual-processes explanation of moral dumbfounding, however, it is also clear that the phenomenon is more complex than predicted.



Abstract 2

3:05 PM - 3:25 PM

ABOUT DR YASUHIRO KOTERA



Dr Yasuhiro Kotera is Academic Lead for Counselling, Psychotherapy & Psychology at the University of Derby, Online Learning. As an Accredited Psychotherapist, he has worked with many international clients with diverse symptoms. His research focuses on mental health, self-compassion, and cross-culture. He is also a father of triplets+1. Last academic year, he has published 30 peer-reviewed academic papers while taking care of his newly born triplets.

FROM STRESS TO PSYCHOPATHOLOGY: RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF-REASSURANCE AND SELF-CRITICISM IN CZECH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

One established model of stress is the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, conceptualising stressful experiences via person-environment relationship. This study aimed to explore the pathway from stress to depression/anxiety, with a particular focus on the roles of self-criticism (i.e., inadequate-self and hated-self) and self-reassurance (i.e., reassured-self). A convenience sample of 119 undergraduates completed self-report measures regarding depression, anxiety, stress, inadequate-self, hated-self and reassured-self. Correlation analysis and a series of path analyses were conducted. Depression, anxiety and stress were positively associated with inadequate-self and hated-self, while negatively associated with reassured-self. Both inadequate-self and hated-self partially mediated the stress-depression and stress-anxiety relationships, whereas reassured-self only partially mediated the stress-depression relationship, but not the stress-anxiety relationship. Inadequate-self had greater impacts on the pathway from stress to depression and anxiety than hated-self and reassured-self. Our results indicate that clinical treatment may benefit from targeting the feelings of inadequacy to prevent stress from progressing to psychopathology. This is particularly relevant as the level of stress is rising in many populations globally. Our findings will help practitioners, educators and students to identify solutions to protect challenging mental health of Czech youth.



Abstract 3

3:25 PM - 3:45 PM

ABOUT DR. EMMA PINJIC



Dr. Emma Pinjic has over twenty years of experience in the clinical research field. She has managed a variety of studies including; psycho-educational, clinical trials involving investigational drugs, devices, registries and outcome research studies. She practised medicine in Bosnia and Croatia. In her current role as Research Manager, Dr Pinjic manages research efforts in the Cardiac Surgery Division of the Department of Surgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital.

THE WAR AND REFUGEE TRAUMA

On February 28, 1992, Bosnia-Herzegovina proclaimed independence after a referendum with Serbians voting against it. In April 1992, the Serbian aggression started aiming to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina by force. The war ended in November 1995. During the war people were exposed to a series of shocking, dangerous, traumatic events and many developed mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, PTSD and psychosis. Doctors in the war zone were affected by their environment; adrenaline was overpowering, and doctors faced risking their own lives while facing the effects of working with constant fatigue and dealing with horrific injuries. Great maturity was required from doctors to be able to treat patients with empathy, compassion, and maintain neutrality and professionalism when treating wounded enemy soldiers. Refugees from war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina were often exposed to multiple stressors related to combat, torture, dislocation, resettlement, and acculturation.

PANEL DISCUSSION

4:00 PM - 5:00 PM



MODERATOR
Ms Magdalena Mosanya

PANELLISTS



Dr Chasity O'Connell



Dr Jigar Jogia



Dr Rajeshree Singhanian



Dr Thoraiya Kanafani

Expatriate acculturation in the UAE

Description: With more than 80% of the population comprising of expatriates, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) presents itself as a unique place to explore multicultural attitudes. In this panel discussion, we will deconstruct how UAE preserves its strong national identity while embracing and celebrating the presence of expats in the country. Using psychological frameworks, we would further discuss UAE's 2021 vision to make it 'one of the best countries in the world' and maintaining a 'cohesive society and preserved identity'.

ABOUT THE PANELLISTS

Dr. Chasity O'Connell:

Dr. O'Connell works with individuals, couples, and families to help them through the pain, distress, and challenges that may be preventing them from living a fuller and more engaged life. Chasity uses an integrative approach to psychological therapy—this means that she relies on evidenced-based therapies such as CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy) and ACT (acceptance and commitment therapy) and a thorough understanding of the individual in order to tailor a treatment approach that is specific and unique to each person. Licensed in the USA and in Dubai, Chasity is a mental health counselor and also holds a doctorate in psychology. She is a board-certified counselor (NBCC) in the USA. In addition to providing therapy, Chasity is also a professor at the American University of Sharjah where she teaches and conducts research.

Dr. Jigar Jogia:

Dr. Jogia is a Chartered Psychologist (C Psychol) specializing in neuropsychology and mental health and currently an Associate Professor of Psychology at Zayed University. Prior to joining Zayed University Dr. Jogia was lecturing and conducting research in Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience at some of the most prestigious academic institutions in the UK including King's College London, University of Birmingham and Aston University. More recently Dr. Jogia lectured at the American University in Dubai where he also led the development, accreditation and launch of an undergraduate psychology program. His research focuses on the study of mental health and psychological processes, employing cognitive psychometric testing and imaging methods. This program of research is multidisciplinary and includes the examination of neuropsychological abnormalities in major mental illnesses (including Bipolar and Major depressive disorder).

Dr. Rajeshree Singhania:

Dr. Rajeshree Singhania a recipient of her university's gold medal for top honours in her graduating class of 1980. She also studied in Munich, Germany Charlottesville, Virginia and in New York City and during her career has worked with both rural and urban children in various locations in India. She has headed both a Paediatric and a General Hospital in India and her work with the world-renowned Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children in London resulted in her gaining a Ph.D. in Neuro-developmental Paediatrics from the University of London. She received her M.Ed. (Autism) from Birmingham University and also received her Doctoral in Psychology in the UK. She has over 35 years of clinical experience, 20 of which has been in Dubai, UAE.

Dr. Thoraiya Kanafani:

Dr. Thoraiya Kanafani is a Clinical Psychologist and Clinical Director holding two Master's and a PhD in psychology. She currently has over fifteen years of experience in the field of psychology and mental health. Her main expertise lies in working with adolescents (13-18) and early adults, however, she has much experience working with older adults as well. Dr. Thoraiya also works as an adjunct lecturer of psychology and supervisor of dissertations at Middlesex University, Heriot-Watt University, and previously the American University of Sharjah where she teaches undergraduate and graduate level psychology courses. Dr. Thoraiya supervises psychology interns at HRIC as well.

Ms. Magdalena Mosanya:

Ms. Magdalena Mosanya is an adjunct faculty at the Psychology Department of Middlesex University Dubai. She is currently pursuing a PhD program at the Polish Science Academy and holds Master's degrees in Psychology, Cultural Anthropology, and International Relations. Magdalena is also a certified therapist and coach. Her research interests include cross-cultural communication, gender empowerment, well-being of multicultural individuals, and trauma-related interventions. In these areas, she applies her combined psychological and anthropological expertise.