



Conference Proceedings: The International Psychology Conference Dubai (October 3, 2020)

The International Psychology Conference Dubai (IPCD) aims to act as a forum where practitioners and applied professionals can explore international knowledge and local best-practice to develop the psychology, wellbeing and human performance industry in the region. IPCD's focus is on bringing practice-focused research and professional development opportunities to those working in the GCC and MENA region. For our first fully online conference on 3rd October 2020, under the theme "Social Identity: Co-existence in a Changing World", presenters from around the world gave presentations, panel discussions and workshops covering a range of topics, including positive psychology. See the agenda at www.psychologygcc.com and history of IPCD at www.psych-me.com. Organizers of the conference are Dr. Kirin Hilliar, Dr. Alia Al Serkal and Cakil Agnew.

Citation: King, S., Bolton, L., van Nieuwerburgh, C., Al Serkal, A., El Assaad, L., & Mattar, M. (2020). Do we need indigenous coaching psychology in the Middle East? Conference Proceedings from the International Psychology Conference Dubai (October 3, 2020). *Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology*, 6, 103-106.

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Abstract: This panel aims to explore questions around whether we need a coaching psychology designed for the Middle East, a suggestion that has been made for positive psychology (Lambert et al., 2015). The panel brings together the perspectives of researchers, coaches and users of coaching services in organisations. Panellists will discuss the successes and challenges for coaching in the region, and explore various questions of cross-cultural coaching psychology. Topics are:

- Culture influences social identities in a global working environment. Yet psychology – including coaching psychology with its direct links to positive psychology – is rooted in Western culture (Berry et al., 2011). If coaches and coaching psychology researchers work from a Western cultural basis, what impact will this have on social identities in different coachee cultures like the Middle East? How do cultural influences affect the self-identities of the coachees themselves?
- The field of psychology has been debating these questions for many years and different approaches have been proposed, from the search for a universal psychology for all cultures to so called indigenous forms of psychology that are rooted in a local culture, history and society. In coaching, various cross-cultural coaching models have been proposed to provide coaches with culturally sensitive tools (e.g. Rosinski, 2010). For Muslim contexts, the Ershad coaching framework has been proposed (van Nieuwerburgh & Allaho, 2017). Do we need such cultural coaching models? How do they serve the Middle Eastern coachee?
- English-language research and literature on coaching and coaching psychology for the Middle East is very fragmented. Often, the available research approaches the topic from the



perspective of the coach while little is known how coachees would like to be coached. An exploratory IPA study into the coaching experience of Emirati Muslim coachees raises questions to which extent the current literature captures the full picture of what these coachees seek from coaching and how they experience it (King & van Nieuwerburgh, 2020). How can we get a clearer picture of the coachee perspective?

- Global coaching bodies face the challenge of creating frameworks for universal best practice (Passmore et al., 2010) while their members need to adapt to the coachee (and the coachee culture) to facilitate an optimal coaching process and outcomes. For example, the EMCC and other coaching organisations have created a Global Code of Ethics that includes “Equality and Diversity”. Is such sensitivity enough? What does awareness for diversity and equality mean in practice?

Berry, J. W., Poortinga, Y. H., Breugelmans, S. M., Chasiotis, A., & Sam, D. L. (2011). *Cross-cultural psychology: Research and applications* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

King, S., & van Nieuwerburgh, C. (2020). How Emirati Muslims experience coaching: An IPA study. *Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology*, 6.

Lambert, L., Pasha-Zaidi, N., Passmore, H.-A., & York Al-Karam, C. (2015). Developing an Indigenous Positive Psychology in the United Arab Emirates. *Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(1), 1-23.

Passmore, J., Grant, A. M., Cavanagh, M. J., & Parker, H. (2010). The state of play in coaching. *International Review of Industrial & Organizational Psychology*, 25, 125-168.

Rosinski, P. (2010). *Global coaching: An integrated approach for long-lasting results*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

van Nieuwerburgh, C., & Allaho, R. (2017). *Coaching in Islamic culture: The principles and practice of Ershad*. Karnac Books Ltd.

Citation: Baxter, O. (2020). The science behind making employees happy in the workplace. Conference Proceedings from the International Psychology Conference Dubai (October 3, 2020). *Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology*, 6, 103-106.

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Abstract: We know office design affects behaviour. But to what extent? Does office design actually affect brain activity, as well as behaviour? This session explores findings from new research with the Claremont Graduate University’s Centre for Neuroeconomics Studies. The topic relates to the conference’s theme of social identity because the research demonstrates how the trust molecule ‘oxytocin’ is augmented by social connection.



Citation: Barrington, N. (2020). Positive psychology coaching during COVID-19 pandemic. Conference Proceedings from the International Psychology Conference Dubai (October 3, 2020). *Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology*, 6, 103-106.

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Abstract: Coaches recognise that clients hold multiple and shifting professional, personal and social identities and these shifts may be more prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic (Butcher, 2012). This workshop focuses on how positive psychology coaching (PPC) supports client identity and enhances wellbeing in a changing world. PPC is defined as “evidence-based coaching practice informed by the theories and research of positive psychology for the enhancement of resilience, achievement and wellbeing” (Green & Palmer, 2019). The practice of PPC focusses on three key areas: authentic goals, a solution focussed approach and the GROW (Goal, Reality, Options and Way forward) model (Whitmore, 2002). PPC is underpinned by two key theories: Self Determination Theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2008) and Hope Theory (HT; Snyder, 2002). According to SDT, there are 3 psychological needs that are essential to our wellbeing and they apply across cultures; competence, autonomy and relatedness. PPC helps the client to develop these 3 psychological needs by using their character strengths (Niemic, 2013) to achieve their goals (competence), choose the strengths they want to apply (autonomy) and use their strengths to build relationships (relatedness). During the current COVID-19 pandemic, clients may experience a lack of hope. HT (Snyder, 2002) suggests that there are 3 components to hope, namely goals, agency and pathways. Coaching enhances a client’s level of hope to enable them to set numerous personally meaningful goals, have strong belief that they can achieve their goals (agency) and also generate multiple options to achieve their goals (pathways). PPC uses the PERMA model of wellbeing (Seligman, 2002) to help clients develop positive emotions (P), engagement, (E) positive relationships (R), meaning (M) and accomplishment (A), and suggests positive psychology interventions for those components the client wishes to improve upon. This workshop uses polls, questionnaires and the chat box to encourage personal reflection and invites participants to identify how psychological theories were applied in a PPC case study.

Butcher, J. (2012). Exploring the link between identity and coaching practice. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 6, 129.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Self Determination Theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development and health. *Canadian Psychology*, 49(3), 182-185

Green, S., & Palmer, S. (2019). Positive psychology coaching. In S. Green & S. Palmer (Eds.), *Positive Psychology Coaching in Practice* (pp. 1-20). Routledge.

Niemic, R. M. (2013). VIA character strengths: Research and practice (The first 10 years). In H. H. Knoop & A. Delle Fave (Eds.), *Well-being and cultures: Perspectives on positive psychology* (pp. 11-30). Springer.



Seligman, M. E. P. (2002). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfilment*. Random House.

Snyder, C. R. (2002). Hope theory: Rainbows in the mind. *Psychological Inquiry*, 13(4), 249-274.

Whitmore, J. (2002). *Coaching for performance: Growing people, performance and purpose*. Nicholas Brealey.

Citation: Lambert, L. (2020). Do beliefs about happiness influence its pursuit and understanding? In part, yes. Conference Proceedings from the International Psychology Conference Dubai (October 3, 2020). *Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology*, 6, 103-106.

Dr. Louise Lambert is a leading expert in the development and delivery of happiness and wellbeing programs across the GCC and the Editor-in-Chief of the *Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology*. Email: mejpospsy@gmail.com -- www.happinessmatters.org

Abstract: Wellbeing has become a global priority. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), much research and investment is being committed to increasing wellbeing. However, what constitutes wellbeing and how it is construed by individuals is not completely understood. In particular, fear of happiness and beliefs in its fragility challenge dominant Western views that happiness is desirable and actively pursued by all. How these lay beliefs impact individuals' levels of happiness has not been well explored. Accordingly, this study sought to determine the relationships between cultural beliefs and mental health functioning. Using a sample of 834 Emirati university students in the UAE, the concepts of fear and fragility of happiness were used to develop wellbeing profiles. We found three distinguishable profiles: 'unstable, moderate wellbeing,' 'fearful, moderate wellbeing,' and 'stable, high wellbeing.' Notably, those with a higher fear of happiness had lower wellbeing scores and distinct behaviors: they slept more poorly, exercised less, and were more likely to smoke. On the other hand, those with less fear of happiness scored higher on subjective wellbeing and were more active in all pursuits. Those who believed happiness was a more fragile state were more likely to be married and be parents. Results are useful in dialogue around culture and wellbeing and how beliefs and circumstances influence how happiness is pursued. Implications for practise and program development are considered. This session will present research findings, and invite participants through the use of breakout discussion rooms, to share thoughts on the topic. Be prepared to challenge your assumptions on the nature of happiness.

Lambert, L., Draper, Z. A., Warren, M. A., Joshanloo, M., Chiao, E.-L., Schwam, A., & Arora, T. (under review). *Conceptions of happiness matter: Relationships between fear and fragility of happiness and mental and physical wellbeing*. *Journal of Happiness Studies*.