Short Report:
Tasking Universities with Change: Strategies for Building Greater Wellbeing in the United Arab Emirates

Khadri, Y., Mayet, S. S., Vedanayagam, J., Varma, V., & Lambert, L.

Abstract: Asking students for their views on happiness can help institutions understand what is important, as well as engineer ways to develop and sustain their wellbeing. Yet, the voices of students are often overlooked to the detriment of institutions themselves as they lose opportunities to improve their own institutional quality and effectiveness in the process. Based on our previous study of what students consider useful in building their wellbeing within universities, we expand on how institutions can do so in practical ways. From building relationships in classrooms between students and faculty to prioritizing wellbeing curricula and policies, institutional wellbeing and the promise of positive universities is within reach. As the number of international students grows, research into student happiness and how universities can secure it is not only a means to fulfill national mandates and business imperatives but equally a chance to raise levels of wellbeing in societies as a whole.

سؤال الطلاب بآرائهم حول السعادة يمكنها أن تساعد المؤسسات على فهم ما هو مهم لأصحاب المصلحة، بالإضافة إلى هندسة طرق لتطوير والحفاظ على صحة الذات.   غالبًا ما يتم التغاضي عن أصوات الطلاب على حساب المؤسسات نفسها التي تفقد الفرص لتحسين الجودة والفعالية المؤسسية الخاصة بها في هذه العملية. استنادًا على دراستنا النوعية السابقة بما يعتبره الطلاب مفيدًا لبناء صحة الذات في محيط الجامعات، يمكننا توسيع كيفية قيام المؤسسات بذلك بطرق عملية. من بناء العلاقات في الفصول الدراسية بين الطلاب وأعضاء هيئة التدريس إلى إعطاء الأولوية لمناهج وسياسات صحة الذات، أصبحت صحة الذات المؤسسية ووعد الجامعات الإيجابية في متناول الوصول. مع زيادة عدد الطلاب الدوليين، البحث في سعادة الطلاب وكيف يمكن للجامعات تأمينها ليس فقط وسيلة للوفاء بالولايات الوطنية وضرورات العمل، ولكن فرصة للمساهمة في رفع مستويات صحة الذات في الخريجين والمجتمعات ككل

About the Authors: Yasmeen Khadri, Suhina Mayet, Jessica Vedanayagam and Vaishnavi Varma are psychology students at the Canadian University Dubai (UAE). Dr. Louise Lambert was Associate Professor there and is the Editor of the Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology.

Disclosure Statement: The full version of this study was previously published as Lambert, L., Khadri, Y., Mayet, S., Vedanayagam, J., Varma, V., & Kertechian, K. S. (2022). Thanks for asking! How UAE-based university students conceptualize happiness and how institutions can improve it. In F. Irtelli, & F. Gabrielli (Eds.), *Happiness: Biopsychosocial and anthropological perspectives.* IntechOpen. https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.107363

With more freedom to make life choices as much as experience greater stress and isolation, university is a time of transition, independence and worry (Abelson et al., 2022; Baik et al., 2019; du Toit et al., 2022). While many young people thrive in these years, some flounder and others suffer in the halls of academia. Indeed, the mental health of young people is challenged upon university entrance with depression, anxiety, and stress peaking around the age of 25 and seemingly immune to a return to baseline (Auerbach et al., 2018; Colizzi et al., 2020; Solmi et al., 2022). In the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region specifically, depression and anxiety in young people are higher than global averages (Chan et al., 2021; Zuberi et al., 2021); however, an awareness of mental health issues is also growing (Zeinoun et al., 2020).

Beside this attention to illbeing is a greater focus on wellbeing too. Greater than an absence of illbeing, the presence of wellbeing is conducive to positive life outcomes. Young people who experience greater life satisfaction and frequent experiences of positive emotions are more likely to graduate, find work and gain higher salaries (DeNeve & Oswald, 2012; Haase et al., 2012; Longhi et al., 2018). Studies conducted in schools and universities show that greater wellbeing boosts learning by as much as 11 percentage points and six months of additional learning (Bücker et al., 2018; Cárdenas et al., 2022; Dix et al., 2012; Keyes et al., 2012; Suldo et al., 2011). In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), it spells stronger academic performance (Marquez et al., 2022). Greater wellbeing brings less depression, loneliness, and anxiety into adulthood (Kansky et al., 2016; Richards & Huppert, 2011). More than nice to have, wellbeing is protective and promotive of good living.

Yet, mental health and wellbeing are often relegated to institutional counselling departments, taking the form of consumable skills and awareness raising (Abelson et al., 2022; du Toit et al., 2022; Hellström & Beckman, 2021). But, by construing the needs of university students as individual mental health issues, institutions avoid their pastoral duty of care ensuring positive developmental learning environments (Abelson et al., 2022). Progress in wellbeing science however, is tasking institutions with broader responsibilities (Baik et al., 2019; du Toit et al., 2022; Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020; Lambert, Abdulrehman et al., 2019; Young et al., 2022). Becoming an international imperative, the demand for wellbeing also fulfils local obligations. Based on the OECD's (2021) advice, education authorities in the emirate of Dubai (UAE) recently instituted wellbeing requirements for schools. Whether this will be extended to higher education remains unseen.

"Positive Universities": More than Learning and Profit

Despite interest in wellbeing, there is little consensus around what it means, especially at university (du Toit et al., 2022; Kern et al., 2020; Sender et al., 2021), and even less attention to stakeholder voices. Further, research often reveals an incongruency between the approaches young people want and those put forward by institutions. For instance, young people report wanting informal, immersive ways to foster social connectedness and interpersonal support and not the individual skills-based tools and strategies they are offered (Filia et al., 2021; Hellström & Beckman, 2021). Huang et al. (2020) demonstrated similar findings: in identifying wellbeing offerings they felt would help, Chinese university students in Australia named cross-cultural interaction, help with housing and employment, as well as non-discriminatory campus environments, rather than stress-management. Such findings align with recent iterations of positive psychology that consider wellbeing

a product of contextual systems and the interactions between individuals and social groups (Kern et al., 2020; Lambert et al., 2021).

Accordingly, positive universities (Oades et al., 2011) explicitly prioritize wellbeing and take an active role in developing contexts for its emergence. Together with attention to academic performance, the priorities of positive universities are expressed via wellbeing skills delivered within interactional courses, curriculum innovation, campus-wide initiatives, attention to spatial and green design, explicit policies aimed at wellbeing, improved administrative, learning and management processes, as well as strengthening interpersonal relationships as examples. Aimed at students as much as faculty, leadership and management, wellbeing is construed as a business imperative given its associations with organizational productivity, turnover, profit, and customer loyalty (Bellet et al., 2020; Harter et al., 2003; Krekel et al., 2019), as well as employability, university drop-out rates, learning and workplace satisfaction (Kertechian et al., 2022; Reitz et al., 2021).

Yet, the reality of institutional life is often strikingly different. Being a university student is marked by loneliness, lack of meaning, and low or negative affect (Abelson et al., 2022; Baik et al., 2019; du Toit et al., 2022). Poor English language proficiency also affects learning, socialization and the ability and willingness to ask for assistance (Guo-Brennan et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2020; van der Rijst et al., 2022). In the UAE, young people are often "Third Culture Kids" (Dillon & Ali, 2019); that is, neither a product of their parent's home country, or the one in which they currently reside. Belonging and identity development take different paths than those seen elsewhere. That nearly all faculty are also expatriates and have their own culturally embedded notions of learning as well as relating socially to students (van der Rijst et al., 2022) is another hurdle.

In the MENA's Gulf economies, private institutions strive to be competitive, profitable and ascend international rankings (Ryan & Daly, 2019; Tight, 2022; van der Rijst et al., 2022; Wilkins, 2020). They do not consider themselves accountable for the wellbeing of students (Sweileh, 2021) and community service, professional development, as well as mental health commitments are calculated as costs. Identifying the institutional drivers that fuel illbeing issues are uncommon. Yet, institutions have a vested interest in addressing wellbeing demands as higher education becomes even more internationalized and the number of international students grows (Ryan & Daly, 2019; Tight, 2022; van der Rijst et al., 2022). Universities are the "last stop" for young people prior to embarking on their life goals, occupying workplaces, engaging in relationships and raising children.

Our Previous Study

We explored the views of 80 UAE-based university students (Lambert, Khadri et al., 2022). Our findings showed they were aware of what they needed, as well as what institutions could do to help. We summarize those most conducive to the development of social relationships and wellbeing as these were most often expressed (see Table 1). Respondents reported feeling happier when they felt valued and seen in the classroom, as well as when they were socially included by friends and unknown peers. Their experiences were most unhappy when they felt intentionally or otherwise ignored by others, with such experiences making them feel socially isolated, disconnected and as though they did not belong. Still, they felt such events could be easily addressed by intentional means of connecting, particularly at the hands of professors who could engineer interactions on their behalf

in the classroom. Moments of connection like these created great days for many students, while their absence was a contributing and often exacerbating factor to existing or growing mental health issues.

Table 1

Themes relevant to university (un)happiness

Question	Themes Reported
Contributors to Happiness	- Social interactions in/out of classrooms - Group projects and social events (versus individual) - Physical settings that make socializing easy (open space, game areas, large tables which force engagement; quiet zones to think)
Statements to support	*"maybe if they give us some [students] or create a group of students who have problems to make friends" (Iraq, 22, Female), "make it easier to meet new people" (Sudan, 19, Female), "involve community-building or friendship-building activities. I mean events where we get closer to people we already know" (Jordan, 21, Male), "adding group work and keeping it in uni classes, so that we meet new people" (Jordan, 28, Female).*
Contributors to Unhappiness	- Classroom difficulties (feeling disrespected by professors, not understanding content and having little support) - Personal/social issues (and feeling like no one cares about it)
Statements to support	*"it's just lonely" (UAE, 19, Male), "living without my parents can be lonely sometimes" (Madagascar, 19, Female), "when I'm eating alone and there are a lot of students laughing around me" (Iraq, 22, Female), "when I feel left out socially. No one thinks to include or ask me if I would like to join" (Jordan, 21, Male), "not being able to meet new people because I'm shy" (Jordan, 18, Female). "I hate sitting or walking alone at university because I'm afraid people will think I don't have friends" (Syria, 19, Female)*

Our data supported the notion that what universities offer is not always aligned with the needs of young people. Students rarely proffered mental health services as a solution; rather, they wanted help making friends and feeling connected to others so that they could develop for themselves, a foundation from which to derive emotional and instrumental support. In sum, they wanted social contexts in which this could be easy. How can institutions help?

How Can Universities Build Wellbeing?

Recommendation 1. Beyond the development of student councils, members of which ideally sit in faculty and management meetings to ensure a student voice, councils can also initiate quarterly discussion sessions with faculty and management on a range of topics critical to wellbeing. These can include a sense of belonging and inclusion opportunities to raise awareness, instill a habit of being heard and solicited, as well as model candour and leadership. Student councils across the nation can also organize themselves into larger associations to legitimize their roles, much like those seen in

other parts of the world. This would enable them to advocate for student wellbeing practises and policies across institutions and potentially develop sanctioned ministry partnerships in the process.

Recommendation 2. Students depend on faculty to engineer classroom peer interactions, especially in the early years when supports are not in place and interpersonal skills are few. Yet, faculty often consider university students to be responsible for their own social and emotional needs. Thus, training in wellbeing, as much for themselves as for students, classroom discussion and activity design for greater interaction and meaningful conversation, as well as updated training on emerging topics like how to prevent micro-aggressions, include non-binary students, advocate for non-sexist behavior in classrooms, as well as mentor students (Byrd et al., 2021; Goldberg et al., 2019; Russell et al., 2018; Seelman, 2016) is critical. Training can be part of onboarding and annual professional development, particularly as most may not have been exposed to such ideas in their university years or countries of origin.

Recommendation 3. Given that 50% of mental health concerns peak by age 25 (Colizzi et al., 2020; Solmi et al., 2022), the need for attention to wellbeing and mental health is at its most critical during university. Positive psychology intervention programs are useful in decreasing symptoms of mental illness and increasing wellbeing (Carr et al., 2021; Chakhssi et al., 2018; Hood et al., 2021; Young et al., 2022) and have been successfully used in the region including in the UAE (see Basurrah et al., 2022). Programs include learning skills like gratitude, savoring, capitalization, and the development of meaning as examples. Classroom approaches minimize stigma, remediate mental health concerns and strengthen wellbeing while imparting skills for positive mindsets, meaningful relationships and learning (Baik et al., 2019; Young et al., 2022). Simple in-class interventions like affirming one's values is effective in reversing GPA scores as well (Brady et al., 2020; Layous et al., 2017; Marksteiner et al., 2019).

Mandatory for-credit wellbeing courses can also include financial literacy, career guidance, life skills (i..e, cooking, physical health, assertiveness in relationships, managing family dynamics, identifying character strengths, etc.), as well as wellbeing promotive content that aligns with evidence that changes to syllabi, courses, teaching pedagogy and classroom cultures foster positive student experiences (Abelson et al., 2022; Baik et al., 2019; Gilken & Johnson, 2019; Gurung & Galardi, 2021; Harper & Neubauer, 2021). Assigning new students an institutionally designated mentor and learning community (i.e., peer cohort groups that study together over an academic program versus semester) can provide social support, reinforce learning and the practice of skills, and initiate students to higher academic standards, with which many students are unfamiliar, and which cause much anxiety, shame and isolation (du Toit et al., 2022; Martin & Kilgo, 2015).

Recommendation 4. Mental health screening tools at registration and mechanisms to update one's mental health status every semester (or as needed) are cost-effective ways institutions can identify, address, and prevent escalating issues. These can be done online much like student satisfaction surveys with results flagging at-risk students to mentors, professors, parents, or other services. These, alongside more immediate daily tracking features, can also serve as a gauge of institutional intervention success (Fedorchak & Cimini, 2018; Schwartz & Davar, 2018). These innovations can track faculty and leadership wellbeing levels and how they influence one another, as well as identify broader institutional dynamics and additional entry points for intervention.

Recommendation 5. The OECD (2021) recommended that UAE schools be accountable to a measure of student wellbeing in school rankings. Indeed, regulators must support institutions with guidelines and programming options to improve student wellbeing, as much as they do for institutional effectiveness. To date, this has not been prescribed for higher education, but given that wellbeing is as critical for young adults as it is for young people, there is no reason why it should not. Rather than wait for legislative changes or institutional requirements, universities can shape their sector by including wellbeing, mental health, and satisfaction rankings for students and faculty and consider these as new key performance indicators of success. Having such metrics in place will enable consumers and their parents to make better choices and consider where academic and wellbeing needs will be best served.

Conclusion

Despite university students being experts on identifying their needs for greater wellbeing, universities are not always listening (Filia et al., 2021; Hellström & Beckman, 2021; Huang et al., 2021). Many, if at all, offer individual-level interventions to help students with their perceived shortcomings but overlook more effective systemic changes that would alleviate the need for students to shoulder the responsibility alone (Kern et al., 2020; Lambert et al., 2021). Relying on the notion of positive universities (Oades et al., 2011) can be helpful for institutions to see beyond their singular aim of maximizing profit and see that wellbeing offerings are also a market differentiator with tangible economic and employment outcomes for students and institutions alike (e.g., Bücker et al., 2018; Cárdenas et al., 2022; DeNeve & Oswald, 2012; Haase et al., 2012; Kansky et al., 2016; Longhi et al., 2018). The recommendations made here are only a start but can help institutions fulfill national mandates around wellbeing agendas, as well as strengthen the role of regional institutions as they strive to be recognized globally (Wilkins, 2020).

References

Abelson, S., Lipson, S. K., & Eisenberg, D. (2022). Mental health in college populations: A multidisciplinary review of what works, evidence gaps, and paths forward. In L. W. Perna (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research.* Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76660-3_6

Auerbach, R. P., Mortier, P., Bruffaerts, R., Alonso, J., Benjet, C., Cuijpers, P., ... WHO WMH-ICS Collaborators. (2018). WHO World mental health surveys international college student project: Prevalence and distribution of mental disorders. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 127*(7), 623–638. https://doi.org/10.1037/abn0000362

Baik, C., Larcombe, W., & Brooker, A. (2019). How universities can enhance student mental wellbeing: The student perspective. *Higher Education Research and Development, 38*(4), 674–687. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1576596

Basurrah, A. A., Di Blasi, Z., Lambert, L., Murphy, M., Warren, M. A., Setti, A., ... Shrestha, T. (2022). The effects of positive psychology interventions in Arab countries: A systematic review. *Applied Psychology: Health & Wellbeing,* https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12391

Bellet, C., De Neve, J.-E., & Ward, G. (2020). *Does employee happiness have an impact on productivity?* CEP Discussion Papers dp1655, Centre for Economic Performance, London

School of Economics. Saïd Business School. WP 2019-13. https://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1655.pdf

Brady, S. T., Cohen, G. L., Jarvis, S. N., & Walton, G. M. (2020). A brief social-belonging intervention in college improves adult outcomes for black Americans. *Science Advances, 6*(18). https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.aay3689

Bücker, S., Nuraydin, S., Simonsmeier, B. A., Schneider, M., & Luhmann, M. (2018). Subjective well-being and academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Personality, 74*, 83-94. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2018.02.007

Byrd, W. C., Luney, L. A. T., Marie, J., & Sanders, K. N. (2021). Demanding attention: An exploration of institutional characteristics of recent student demands. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 14*(1), 25–36. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000133

Carr, A., Cullen, K., Keeney, C., Canning, C., Mooney, O., Chinseallaigh, E., & O'Dowd, A. (2021). Effectiveness of positive psychology interventions: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 16*(6), 249-269. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2020.1818807

Cárdenas, D., Lattimore, F., Steinberg, D., & Reynolds, K. J. (2022). Youth well-being predicts later academic success. *Scientific Reports, 12*(1), 2134. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-05780-0

Chakhssi, F., Kraiss, J. T., Sommers-Spijkerman, M., & Bohlmeijer, E. T. (2018). The effect of positive psychology interventions on well-being and distress in clinical samples with psychiatric or somatic disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Psychiatry, 18*(1), 211. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-018-1739-2

Chan, M. F., Al Balushi, R., Al Falahi, M., Mahadevan, S., Al Saadoon, M., & Al-Adawi, S. (2021). Child and adolescent mental health disorders in the GCC: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 8*(3), 134–145. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpam.2021.04.002

Colizzi, M., Lasalvia, A., & Ruggeri, M. (2020). Prevention and early intervention in youth mental health: Is it time for a multidisciplinary and trans-diagnostic model for care? *International Journal of Mental Health Systems, 14*, 23. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-020-00356-9

DeNeve, J. E., & Oswald, A. (2012). Estimating the influence of life satisfaction and positive affect on later income using sibling fixed effects. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA, 109*(49), 19953–19958. doi:10.1073/pnas.1211437109

Dix, K. L., Slee, P. T., Lawson, M. J., & Keeves, J. P. (2012). Implementation quality of whole-school mental health promotion and students' academic performance. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 17*(1), 45–51. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-3588.2011.00608.x

Dillon, A., & Ali, T. (2019). Global nomads, cultural chameleons, strange ones or immigrants? An exploration of Third Culture Kid terminology with reference to the United Arab Emirates. *Journal of Research in International Education, 18*(1), 77–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240919835013

du Toit, A., Thomson, R. & Page, A. (2022). A systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies of the antecedents and consequences of wellbeing among university students. *International Journal of Wellbeing, 12*(2), 163-206. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v12i2.1897

Fedorchak, D., & Cimini, M. D. (2018). Implementing screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment in college student behavioral health settings. In M. D. Cimini & E. M. Rivero (Eds.), *Promoting behavioral health and reducing risk among college students* (pp. 117–126). Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315175799-7/implementing-screening-brief-intervention-referral-treatment-college-student-behavioral-health-settings-diane-fedorchak-dolores-cimini

Filia, K., Eastwood, O., Herniman, S., & Badcock, P. (2021). Facilitating improvements in young people's social relationships to prevent or treat depression: A review of empirically supported interventions. *Translational Psychiatry, 11*, 305. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41398-021-01406-7

Gilken, J., & Johnson, H. L. (2019). Supporting belongingness through instructional interventions in community college classrooms. *Community College Enterprise, 25*(1), 32-49.

Goldberg, A. E., Kuvalanka, K., & Dickey, L. (2019). Transgender graduate students' experiences in higher education: A mixed-methods exploratory study. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 12*(1), 38–51. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000074

Guo-Brennan, L., VanLeeuwen, C., MacPhee, M. M., & Guo-Brennan, M. (2020). Community-based learning for international graduate students impact and implications. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 26*(2), https://doi.org/10.3998/mjcsloa.3239521.0026.203

Gurung, R. A. R., & Galardi, N. R. (2021). Syllabus tone, more than mental health statements, influence intentions to seek help. *Teaching of Psychology*, 6–11. https://doi.org/10.1177/0098628321994632

Haase, C. M., Poulin, M. J., & Heckhausen, J. (2012). Happiness as a motivator. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 38*, 1093–1104. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167212444906

Harper, G. W., & Neubauer, L. C. (2021). Teaching during a pandemic: A model for trauma-informed education and administration. *Pedagogy in Health Promotion, 7*(1), 14–24. https://doi.org/10.1177/2373379920965596

Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Keyes, C. L. M. (2003). Well-being in the workplace and its relationship to business outcomes: A review of the Gallup studies. In C. L. M. Keyes & J. Haidt (Eds.), *Flourishing: The positive person and the good life* (pp. 205–224). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/10594-009

Hellström, L., & Beckman, L. (2021). Life challenges and barriers to help seeking: Adolescents' and young adults' voices of mental health. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(24), 13101. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182413101

Hernández-Torrano, D., Ibrayeva, L., Sparks, J., Lim, N., Clementi, A., Almukhambetova, A., … Muratkyzy, A. (2020). Mental health and well-being of university students: A bibliometric mapping of the literature. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11,* 1226. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01226

Hood, B., Jelbert, S., & Santos, L. R. (2021). Benefits of a psychoeducational happiness course on university student mental well-being both before and during a COVID-19 lockdown. *Health Psychology Open, 8*(1), 2055102921999291. https://doi.org/10.1177/2055102921999291

Huang, L., Kern, M. L., & Oades, L. G. (2020). Strengthening university student wellbeing: Language and perceptions of Chinese international students. *International Journal of Environmental*

Research and Public Health, 17(15), 5538. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17155538

Jones, J., Fleischer, S., McNair, A., & Masika, R. (2020). The international foundation year and first-year transition: Building capital, evolving habitus, developing belonging, preparing for success. *Teaching in Higher Education, 25*(1), 36–51. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2018.1541879

Kansky, J., Allen, J. P., & Diener, E. (2016). Early adolescent affect predicts later life outcomes. *Applied Psychology, Health and Well-Being, 8*(2), 192–212. https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12068

Kern, M. L., Williams, P., Spong, C., Colla, R., Sharma, K., Downie, A., ... Oades, L. G. (2020). Systems informed positive psychology. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 15*(6), 705-715. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2019.1639799

Kertechian, K. S., Hussein, N. I., & Karkoulian, S. (2022). How employable do students perceive themselves to be in the future? Evidence from the Middle East. *Industry and Higher Education,* in press.

Keyes, C. L., Eisenberg, D., Perry, G. S., Dube, S. R., Kroenke, K., & Dhingra, S. S. (2012). The relationship of level of positive mental health with current mental disorders in predicting suicidal behavior and academic impairment in college students. *Journal of American College Health, 60*(2), 126–133. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2011.608393

Krekel, C., Ward, G., & deNeve, J. (2019). Employee wellbeing, productivity, and firm performance. *Labor: Human Capital eJournal,* https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3356581

Lambert, L., Abdulrehman, R., & Mirza, C. (2019). Coming full circle: Taking positive psychology to GCC universities. In L. Lambert & N. Pasha-Zaidi (Eds.), *Positive Psychology in the Middle East/North Africa: Research, Policy, and Practise* (pp. 93-110). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13921-6_5

Lambert, L., Draper, Z. A., Warren, M. A., Joshanloo, M., Chiao, E.-L., Schwam, A., & Arora, T. (2021). Conceptions of happiness matter: Relationships between fear and fragility of happiness and mental and physical wellbeing. *Journal of Happiness Studies,* https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-021-00413-1

Lambert, L., Lomas, T., van de Weijer, M. P., Passmore, H. A., Joshanloo, M., Harter, J., ... Diener, E. (2020). Towards a greater global understanding of wellbeing: A proposal for a more inclusive measure. *International Journal of Wellbeing, 10*(2), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v10i2.1037

Lambert, L., Passmore, H.-A., & Joshanloo, M. (2019). A positive psychology intervention program in a culturally-diverse university: Boosting happiness and reducing fear. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 20*(4), 1141-1162. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-018-9993-z

Lambert, L., Passmore, H. - A., Scull, N., Al Sabah, I., & Hussain, R. (2019). Wellbeing matters in Kuwait: The Alnowair's Bareec education initiative. *Social Indicators Research, 143*(2), 741-763. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-018-1987-z

Lambert, L., Warren, M. A., Schwam, A., & Warren, M. T. (2021). Positive psychology interventions in the United Arab Emirates: Boosting wellbeing – and changing culture? *Current Psychology,* https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-02080-0

Layous, K., Davis, E. M., Garcia, J., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Cook, J. E., & Cohen, G. L. (2017). Feeling left out, but affirmed: Protecting against the negative effects of low belonging in college. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 69*, 227–231. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2016.09.008

Limone, P., & Toto, G. A. (2022). Factors that predispose undergraduates to mental issues: A cumulative literature review for future research perspectives. *Frontiers in Public Heath,* https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.831349

Longhi, S., Nandi, A., Bryan, M., Connolly, S., & Gedikli, C. (2018). *Transitions from full-time education into employment: The role of wellbeing.* What Works Centre for Wellbeing, UK. https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/education-to-employment-May2018.pdf

Marksteiner, T., Janke, S., & Dickhäuser, O. (2019). Effects of a brief psychological intervention on students' sense of belonging and educational outcomes: The role of students' migration and educational background. *Journal of School Psychology, 75*(2018), 41–57. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.06.002

Martin, G. L., & Kilgo, C. A. (2015). Exploring the impact of commuting to campus on psychological well-being. *New Directions for Student Services, 150,* 35–43. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20125

Marquez, J., Lambert, L., & Cutts, M. (2022). Geographic, socio-demographic and school type variation in adolescent wellbeing and mental health and links with academic competence in the United Arab Emirates. *Child Indicators Research,* https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-022-09993-7

Maunder, R. E. (2018). Students' peer relationships and their contribution to university adjustment: The need to belong in the university community. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 42*(6), 756–768. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877x.2017.1311996

Mitic, M., Woodcock, K. A., Amering, M., Krammer, I., Stiehl, K. A. M., Zehetmayer, S., & Schrank, B. (2021). Toward an integrated model of supportive peer relationships in early adolescence: A systematic review and exploratory meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12,* 589403. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.589403

Oades, L. G., Robinson, P., Green, S., & Spence, G. B. (2011). Towards a positive university. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 6*(6), 432-439. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2011.634828

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (2021). *OECD review of well-being policies and practices in Dubai's private school sector.* OECD Publishing, https://doi.org/10.1787/0e9aa172-en

Reitz, A. K., Luhmann, M., Bleidorn, W., & Denissen, J. J. A. (2021, June 10). Unraveling the complex relationship between work transitions and self-esteem and life satisfaction. *PsyArXiv,* https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/y2akc

Richards, M., & Huppert, F. A. (2011). Do positive children become positive adults? Evidence from a longitudinal birth cohort study. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 6*(1), 75–87. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2011.536655

Russell, S. T., Pollitt, A. M., Li, G., & Grossman, A. H. (2018). Chosen name use is linked to

reduced depressive symptoms suicidal ideation and suicidal behavior among transgender youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 63*(4), 503–505. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.02.003

Ryan, J. C., & Daly, T. M. (2019). Barriers to innovation and knowledge generation: The challenges of conducting business and social research in an emerging country context. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge, 4*, 47-54. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2017.10.004

Schwartz, V., & Davar, D. (2018). A comprehensive model to promote mental health and address risk for suicide. In M. D. Cimini & E. M. Rivero (Eds.), *Promoting behavioral health and reducing risk among college students* (pp. 145–171). Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315175799-9/comprehensive-model-promote-mental-health-address-risk-suicide-victor-schwartz-david-davar

Seelman, K. L. (2016). Transgender adults' access to college bathrooms and housing and the relationship to suicidality. *Journal of Homosexuality, 63*(10), 1378–1399. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2016.1157998

Sender, G., Carvalho, F., & Guedes, G. (2021). The happy level: A new approach to measure happiness at work using mixed methods. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 20,* https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211002413

Solmi, M., Radua, J., Olivola, M., Croce, E., Soardo, L., Salazar de Pablo, G., ... Fusar-Poli, P. (2022). Age at onset of mental disorders worldwide: Large-scale meta-analysis of 192 epidemiological studies. *Molecular Psychiatry, 27*, 281–295. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41380-021-01161-7

Suldo, S., Thalji, A., & Ferron, J. (2011). Longitudinal academic outcomes predicted by early adolescents' subjective well-being, psychopathology, and mental health status yielded from a dual factor model. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 6*(1), 17-30. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2010.536774

Sweileh, W. M. (2021). Contribution of researchers in the Arab region to peer-reviewed literature on mental health and well-being of university students. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems, 15,* 50. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-021-00477-9

Tight, M. (2022). Internationalisation of higher education beyond the West: Challenges and opportunities – the research evidence. *Educational Research and Evaluation, 3-4,* 239-259. https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2022.2041853

van der Rijst, R. M., Lamers, A. M., & Admiraal, W. F. (2022). Addressing student challenges in transnational education in Oman: The importance of student interaction with teaching staff and peers. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education,* https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2021.2017768

Wakefield, J., Sani, F., & Herrera, M. (2018). Greater university identification-but not greater contact-leads to more life satisfaction: Evidence from a Spanish longitudinal study. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-being, 10*(2), 330–344. https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12125

Wilkins, S. (2020). The positioning and competitive strategies of higher education institutions in the United Arab Emirates. *International Journal of Educational Management, 34*(1), 139–153. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-05-2019-0168

Young, T., Macinnes, S., Jarden, A., & Colla, R. (2022). The impact of a wellbeing program

imbedded in university classes: The importance of valuing happiness, baseline wellbeing and practice frequency. *Studies in Higher Education*, 47(4), 751-770. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1793932

Zeinoun, P., Akl, E. A., Maalouf, F. T., & Meho, L. I. (2020). The Arab region's contribution to global mental health research (2009–2018): A bibliometric analysis. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, *11*, 182. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2020.00182

Zuberi, A., Waqas, A., Naveed, S., Hossain, M. M., Rahman, A., Saeed, K., & Fuhr, D. C. (2021). Prevalence of mental disorders in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean region: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, *12*, 665019. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2021.665019