

## **Conference**

### **National Psychology Conference**

#### **13-14 July, 2001. International Islamic University Malaysia**

The Department of Psychology in collaboration with the Psychology Student Forum of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), and the Malaysian Psychological Association organized a national conference from 13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> July 2001 at the International Islamic University's main campus in Gombak near Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. The theme of the Conference was: 'Psychology: Towards Individual Well Being and Self-Actualization.' The objectives of the conference were: 1) to address the issue of the family and society at large, 2) promote the qualities of family as well as work life and well-being, and 3) address the psychological issues from Islamic perspectives, self-actualization and individual well-being. Two keynote addresses and 36 papers on various aspects of psychology were presented. The conference was attended by an estimated 300 academics, practitioners, and students.

In the opening ceremony, the Deputy Rector (Academic Affairs), of IIUM, Dato' Dr. Jamil Osman, expressed his hope that the conference would serve as a forum for academics and scientists-practitioners to disseminate their findings, share their thoughts and discuss solutions to the issues that concern individuals' well-being in various aspects of life. In her opening speech, the Minister of National Unity and Social Development, Government of Malaysia, Dato' Dr. Siti Zaharah Sulaiman pointed out that the conference is timely. It is being organized at a time when the number of social problems are on the rise and the government is very much in need of psychologists' assistance in offering their expertise to solve the problems. The Minister suggested that a psychology-based institution be established in the nation's capital in order to help the country resolve the problems.

#### **Keynote Addresses**

The first keynote address, presented by Dato' Prof. Dr. Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman, President of PSIMA, covered pertinent issues

concerning globalization, the changing workforce, emerging employment relationship, information technology, work team, organizational behaviour and virtual corporation. He outlined some interventions that are of help for individuals to meet the challenge at personal and organizational levels. In highlighting the importance of accounting cross-cultural perspective, he presented cases that are worth considering in addressing issues posed by the millennium.

In the second keynote address, Prof. Malik Badri brought in his personal experience to clarify the confusion surrounding the concept of Islamization. He presented the summary of his yet-to-be published book "out-of the lizard's hole" which aims at helping Muslim Psychologists to get rid of their dilemma. Prof. Badri outlined the need and the process for the Islamization of Western Psychology, and the content of the Islamization efforts. He pointed out that Islamization process demands intelligence and a creative ability from those engaged in it.

### **Papers**

The papers presented during the conference were wide-ranging and intellectually thought-provoking. The papers presented in the conference can be categorized thematically as follows:

#### **(A) Work, Stress and Well-Being**

Under this theme, Assoc. Prof. Iran Herman discussed the importance of work motivation as an internal drive to increase job performance and productivity, of both employees and organization. He related this issue to a number of work motivation measures that can gauge both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of an individual. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Noraini Mohd Noor presented her findings on work-family conflict and social support that have bearings on a better understanding of the relationship between the number of work hours and distress. She reported that while the support from spouses moderated the relationship between the number of work hours and work-family conflict, only the direct effect of spouse support was found in the relationship between work-family conflicts and distress. Dr. Intan Hashimah Mohd Hashim presented her findings on the real perception of stress and support, and how the perceptions of matching between specific demands and specific support are conceptualized. She reported the likelihood of having discrepancies between the support recipient and support provider. More importantly, she highlighted the effect of cultural context on demands and supports. She found that an

individual's cultural context determines the kind of demands she/he picks up, like in the case of Malaysian participants who tend not to pick up emotional demands because they may not be appropriate within their culture.

In her interesting and stimulating paper, Mai Sumiyati Ishak highlighted the importance to having knowledge on human factors when suggesting some measures for healthy dealings with machines. The paper also suggested the efforts to reduce machine-stress by reviewing the roles of those involved in the design of machine, and of the novice end-users. As far as organizational culture is concerned, Che Su Mustafa and Prof. Dr. Wan Rafaei Abdul Rahman reported that there was a significant positive relationship between organizational communication and organizational commitment. They also established that the cultural dimension of uncertainty avoidance, collectivism-individualism and long-term orientation have served as moderator between the two factors.

Chua Bee Seok and Dr. Mohammad Haji Yusuf presented the studies on response strategies to cope with occupational stress. By using a number of measures, they found that almost all aspects of respond strategies were not used by those with high mental and physical distress.

### **(B) Social Psychological Processes**

Under the theme social-Psychological process, Dr. Shukran Abd. Rahman reported his findings on the attitude of the three major ethnic groups towards the New Performance Appraisal System (NPAS) in Malaysia. He found that the ethnic origins and their cultural index have no bearings on the teachers' attitude towards the appraisal system and that teachers with favourable attitudes towards the NPAS have a higher degree of commitment towards their work. He outlined a number of important suggestions to improve the NPAS process. Rosnah Ismail, Murnizam Mohd Malik and Habibie Ibrahim presented their findings on social axioms among Malay, Chinese and Kadazandusun in Sabah. They found that Malay and Kadazandusun Psychology students highly believe that hard-work and self-confidence determine one's success and failures. The study highlights the importance of noting within-group differences and dissenting factors among respondents, when working in the areas of cross-cultural psychology. Dr. Abd. Main Hj. Salimon discussed the concept of self-actualization in problem seeking and problem solving in innovative work behaviour. His paper also reported the factors relevant to

innovators' behaviour patterns. Beverly, Robert and Nathan had reported their findings on decision making performance in terms of time, accuracy and satisfaction by students. They reported that accuracy of the decision was significantly related to heterogeneous group as opposed to homogeneous group.

Dr. Hazizan Md. Noon discussed the issue of sexual identity and the effeminate concept of well-being. According to him, more thorough and scientific researches need to be conducted to understand the phenomenon of effeminacy although they are difficult. Dr. Mohammad Abdul Rashid reported his findings on a research conducted in two drug-rehabilitation centers. He found that most of the inmates were over 29 years, from urban areas, of low income group and were single. He also mentioned the type of drugs consumed by the addicts and described the role of drug pushers and the addicts' significant others in the life of the drug addicts. Dr. Rashid also highlighted the predicaments, problems and constraints facing the drug addicts. In the effort to give up drug intake, the participants suggested legal measures, counseling and treatment. Galy Mohammad and Prof. Dr. Zafar Ansari reported their findings on the factors related to psychological and socio-cultural adjustment of foreign students in Malaysia. Dato' Prof. Dr. Amir Awang studied twenty families in Negara Brunei Darussalam. He described the prevailing culture and beliefs worth emulating, which shape the relationship between children and parents in the country.

### **(C) Religion and Well-Being**

As stated before, one of the objectives of this conference was to address the psychological issues from Islamic perspectives. In this regard, Dr. Abdul Rahman Aziz and Mohd, Fo'ad Sakdan highlighted the invaluable intellectual discourse of a great Muslim scholar in the south-east Asian region, Hamka. In the paper, both reviewed Hamka's thoughts that pertain to the internalization of Malay-Islam ethical conducts that was outlined in Hamka's literary works. Two main groups of individuals classified by Hamka, namely materialist and spiritual, were analyzed with the aim to enlist the characteristics of both groups.

Rohana Yusof provided a general overview of the importance of religion and how it affects the business start-up among Malay woman business owners. She described the distinctive issues faced by those

who were trying to enter into entrepreneurship that have close relationship with their cultural values and religious beliefs.

Sabeena presented her work on Islamic model of mental health guidance, which among other things, highlighted the views and works of Muslim physicians such as ‘Alī Ibn Rabbān al-Tahārī, Ḥunayn, Ishāq Ibn ‘Imrān, Al-Majūsī, Al-Rāzī, and Ibn Sīnā. She stressed the need to re-examine the works of Islamic thinkers and the scholars of *Taṣawwuf* like Abū ‘Abdullah al-Ḥārīh, Ibn Sa‘d al-Muḥāsibī. Manal Muhammad Asif presented a comparative study of selected works of early Muslim scholars (Al-Balkhī, Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzī, and Ibn Taymiyyah) on Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD). She concluded that Muslim scholars had emphasized the use of Islamic divine sources to address OCD, which is mainly caused by spiritual factors that originate from the *Qalb*. She stressed the importance of referring to the invaluable contributions of Muslims predecessors in order to offer Islamic treatment procedures to their clients.

Dr. Hazizan Md Noon, Dr. Mohamed Aslam Mohamed Haneef, Dr. Selamah Abdullah Yusof and Dr. Ruzita Mohd Amin significantly presented their findings on the degree of religiosity among school children, and the correlation between religiosity and social problems. However due to some professional and ethical reasons, some information and findings were not disclosed.

Assoc. Prof. Mohd. Foad Sakdan and Dr. Abd. Rahaman Aziz highlighted that religion can be the important source of values in that it guides individuals to undergo their lives in peace and harmony. In this context, they presented their analysis on there religions, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam particularly on the aspect that religion can be of an essential guideline for individuals in achieving their self-actualizations.

Dr. Najib Ahmad Marzuki, Kamarudin Ahamd and Shukri Ahamd emphasized the Islamic Perspective on counseling, highlighting the concepts of *Mau‘izah*, *al-Ta‘arif*, *al-Wa‘zu*, and criticizing and *hitting*. The code of conduct of a *wā‘iz* was also included such as piety, *wara‘*, wisdom and *ḥusn al-khuluq*.

**(D) Specific Groups: Women, Adolescents and Children**

Under this theme, Salma Ishak's paper focused on the well-being of young children. Her findings were related to the questions concerning children's choice of friend among their peers, the tendency to change or maintain friendship, the degree of friendship and how it fluctuates and changes. She reported that peer group formation took place when children interacted in pre-school, in play and peer-relationship activities. The activities had contributed to positive development in many domains such as social, emotional, intellectual, academic learning and self-concept. She emphasized that children who have been identified to have poor peer friendship be helped so that they can become more competent in their interactions and avoid rejections among peers.

Prof. Dr. Noran Fauziah, Anne Christopher, Mizuar Nasruddin, Azmi Abu Samah and Rosna Awang Hashim presented their findings on 'Bullying among Malaysian School Children.' Interestingly, some 80 percent of students admitted to being involved in some form of indirect or psychological bullying. They recommended mobilizing teachers to address the problem in their teaching activities, training teachers to handle the problem, having schools to organized intervention programs that involve several parties and creating awareness among parents so that they play their roles in handling the matter. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Habibah bt Elias, Assoc. Prof. Datin Dr. Sharifah Modh Nor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rahil Mahyudin and Dr. Jegak Uli reported their findings on the effects of combined strategy instructions and attributions retraining on student's learning. They concluded that the strategy instruction and attribution retraining be combined in order to yield positive effects on Students' Learning.

Prof. Dr. Siti Maimon Hj. Kamso's reported two profiles of women entrepreneurs from Kelantan and Terengganu respectively. Paper was interesting as the presenter. She outlined the details of profiles, which consisted of types of industries, work and business experiences, ownership of companies, company founders, capital investment, age, motivating individuals, marital status, education,

training, place of work of husbands, opportunities identification, reasons for entry into entrepreneurship and non-financial problems faced by entrepreneurs.

Mirinda, Dr. Rahil Mahyuddin, Dr. Minni and Dr. Mohd Majid Konting investigated music preferences of 35 randomly selected teenagers using 24 brief music experts, namely ethnic-related music (commercial pop/rock) as opposed to ethnic-related Malaysian music. She suggested introducing news strategies in teaching approaches and that the choice or preparation of learning material for music KBSM to realize the government's aim to instill in students the spirit of mutual respect and national integration.

### **The Closing Session**

The closing session was officiated by the Honorable Rector of the International Islamic University Malaysia, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kamal Hassan. In his speech he reiterated the importance of studying psychology and islamizing its input so that it is suitable for, and able to benefit, Muslims and the humanity at large.

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