



Gulf Research Centre Cambridge
Knowledge for All

Workshop 11
GRM 2021

Psychosocial Impacts and Social Policy Responses to the COVID 19 Pandemic in the Gulf Region

Workshop Directors:

Dr Anis Ben Brik

Associate Professor
Founding Director of Social Policy and
Evaluation Research Program
College of Public Policy
Hamad Bin Khalifa University
Qatar
Email: abrik@hbku.edu.qa

Dr. Said Aldhafri

Professor
College of Education
Sultan Qaboos University
Director of Social Observatory
Email: aldhafri@squ.edu.om

Dr. Humoud Al Qashan

Dean of College of Social Sciences
Kuwait University
Kuwait
Email: hq1965@yahoo.com

Abstract

The COVID 19 pandemic has significantly caused profound social implications for the large majority of households, including children, youth, migrant workers, people with disabilities, older adults, women, and people exposed to gender-based violence. The consequences for the labour market and society are unforeseeable in their extent and duration. Welfare state institutions and social policies, which play a central role in ensuring social security and stabilising the economy, face major challenges amid the

pandemic in the gulf region. The pandemic presents a unique “test” of the Gulf countries’ various institutional conditions and governance constraints. It presents an opportunity to explore institutional responses and coping mechanisms that might allow policymakers to improve service delivery. The COVID 19 pandemic also presents an opportunity for policymakers to examine which capacity deficits are truly structural and which might be overcome through a combination of technical assistance and political will. The workshop will bring a critical perspective to the social implications amid the pandemic in the region, as well as open lines of inquiry on this development among scholars from across the disciplines..

Description and Rationale

Objectives and Scope

As the pandemic finds its exponential phase in the gulf region, it is clear that the pandemic will have profound social implications for the large majority of households, including children, youth, migrant workers, people with disabilities, older adults, women, and people exposed to gender- based violence. The consequences for the labour market and society are unforeseeable in their extent and duration. COVID 19 has significantly caused social and psychological impacts by causing mass hysteria, negative emotions (e.g., anxiety, depression and indignation) and has generated a plethora of psychiatric manifestations across the different strata of societies (Dubey et al., 2020). Theories such as behavioral immune system theory (John et al., 2013), stress theory (Norris et al., 2002) and perceived risk theory (Slovic, 1987), have indicated that, during health emergencies, people are likely to develop negative emotions (e.g., aversion, anxiety), negative cognitive assessments for self- protection, and avoidant behaviors and obey social norms strictly.

The success of national governments in combating the pandemic and its economic and social consequences depends on political factors and national institutions. Especially welfare state institutions and social policies, which play a central role in ensuring social security and stabilizing the economy, face major challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic strongly influences the duties of welfare state organisations ensuring fast access to welfare payments and offering extensive measures of job security. The pandemic might also change the goals, the design and implementation of social and labour market policies. Furthermore, it has consequences on the public services. While most processes of counselling and assistance were conducted on a face-to-face basis, the pandemic will result in new ways of communication and collaboration enforcing a trend to more digitised public services.

The pandemic presents a unique “test” of the Gulf countries’ various institutional conditions and governance constraints. It presents an opportunity to explore institutional responses and coping mechanisms that might allow policymakers to improve service delivery. It also presents an opportunity for policymakers to examine which capacity deficits are truly structural and which might be overcome through a combination of technical assistance and political will.

This workshop will provide a space for dialogue and discussion on current knowledge about the social and psychological implications of the pandemic in the Gulf region; discuss state policies that attempt to address the challenges that face societies in the region, as well as the implications of the pandemic and government responses to COVID19.

Contribution to the Gulf Studies

The workshop is designed to address several major deficits in knowledge regarding psychosocial implications of the COVID 19 pandemic in the Gulf countries. The workshop will contribute to the discourse on social policy responses to the pandemic and the role played by the welfare institutions amid the pandemic in the Gulf region. The workshop also will provide a context in which to understand how the state and social policies can promote physical health, behavioral adjustment, well-being, social relationships, safety, cognitive development, and social security in the Gulf countries. The existing welfare state institutions play a major role in coping with the crisis. Protecting jobs and ensuring access to income support for those losing their jobs seem to be appropriate initial policy responses to deal with the crisis. The effectiveness and efficiency of social protection will vary across countries due to differences in the generosity of the welfare state and the specific institutional setting. Research and data to guide these efforts are lacking in the Gulf region.

The workshop will bring a critical perspective to the social and psychological implications amid the pandemic in the region, as well as open lines of inquiry on this development among scholars from across the disciplines.

Anticipated Participants

The desired outcome of the workshop is the production of an edited volume. Towards that purpose, original contributions are encouraged from diverse disciplines (e.g., psychology, sociology, economics, political science, education, public health) and methodologies. The workshop welcomes research from across the humanities and social sciences—from the perspective of social and political theorists, psychologists, philosophers, cultural theorists, as well as from researchers in social policy. Theoretical and/or empirical contributions with a comparative and Gulf regional perspective are equally encouraged. The workshop welcomes research from across the humanities and social sciences—from the perspective of social and political theorists, philosophers, cultural theorists, as well as from researchers in social policy. Papers can focus on a single country case or propose cross-country analyses.

We encourage articles on these or other relevant topics, addressing but not limited to the following questions:

- What are the social and psychological impacts of the pandemic on households, children, youth, migrant workers, women, vulnerable groups?
- How have Gulf countries responded to the pandemic?

- What are the key factors that account for the variety of national responses to the pandemic in the Gulf region?
- How does the response to the pandemic affect the plight of social justice and social protection in the region?
- How might the pandemic restructure, reshape, or challenge social policies or welfare regimes in the Gulf region?
- What gaps in service delivery (especially in education) and institutional capacities have been exposed?
- What inequalities are being highlighted by the pandemic and policy responses?
- What are the implications of the pandemic on vulnerable populations?
- How does the pandemic impact job security or unemployment?
- What is the role of social protection in mitigating the impacts of COVID-19?
- What will the region look like after the pandemic?
- What are the future social implications?
- What are the prospects for improved governance and regional solidarity?
- What steps should governments take today to ensure that lessons translate into better policies?

Workshop Directors' Biographies

Dr. Anis Ben Brik

Anis B. Brik is an associate professor and founding director of the Program for Social Policy Evaluation and Research (PROSPER) at the College of Public Policy at Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Qatar. Dr. Ben Brik is the founding president of the MENA Evaluation Society and the Global Observatory for Family Research and Policies. He also serves as the MENA region Organizing Partner of the United Nations NGO Major Group. Dr. Ben Brik has published empirical research in a wide range of international peer-reviewed journals, including *Children and Youth Services Review*, *Early Child Development and Care*, *Child Indicators Research*, and *Decision Sciences*. His most recent publications include *Families and Social Change in the Gulf Region* (Routledge). Dr. Ben Brik is the lead principal investigator of the UN-sponsored international research project “The Impact of the Pandemic on Family Life Across Cultures”, a research study that has been conducted in 72 countries across Europe, Africa, Latin America, Asia, North America, and the MENA regions. He is a frequent speaker on family issues, child welfare, and social protection, and an advocate of family policy and child rights. He has appeared on numerous radio and TV programs.

Dr. Said Aldhafri

Dr. Said Aldhafri is Director of Social Observatory Strategic Research Program and a Professor at the Department of Psychology, College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University. He graduated from the University of British Columbia in Canada. He has (co-) authored 100 referred journal articles, four books, 6 book chapters, and 140 conference papers. His research focuses on parenting styles, teachers and students'

motivation (Efficacy beliefs, self-concept, self-esteem, self-regulated learning, and goal orientation) in relation to multiple intelligence, teaching anxiety, burnout and organizational school climate; and organizational justice, Development and adaptation of educational and psychological measures (attitudes, interests and Intelligence) as a means for facilitating cross-cultural psychological research. He received many academic awards including Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture and Science, Shoman's Arab Research Award in Jordan, Faisal Al Thani Research Award in 2017 & 2018, TRC national award in 2014, 2015, & 2019 and the G. M. Dunlop Award for the best doctoral thesis in Canada, Educational Psychology, 2006 from the CAPS.

Dr. Humoud Al Qashan

Dr. Humoud Al Qashan, is the dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Kuwait University, Professor and Family & Marital Therapist. He graduated from the University of Pittsburgh, USA. Dr. Humoud hold a Pennsylvania Family Therapy Practice Certificate and an International Certificate in Counseling Practice for Children and Teens from the US National Council on Family Relationships (NCFR). His research focuses on marital relationships, divorce, family counselling. He published 13 books and over sixty peer-review articles. Dr. Humoud has conducted numerous marital counselling training across the gulf region.

Selected Readings

- Ben Brik, A. (Ed.). 2021. The Palgrave Handbook of Social Protection and Social Welfare in the Global South. Palgrave: New York.
- Ben Brik, A., Pal, L. A. (Eds.). 2021. The Future of Policy Sciences, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar (forthcoming).
- Ben Brik, A., Gilbert, N., 2021. Preparation and Response to COVID19: An Exploratory Analysis of Policy Response Spending and Health Expenditures in 20 OECD Countries. *Journal of social policy* 48 (3).
- Lansford, J. E., Ben Brik, A. B., & Badahdah, A. M. (Eds.). 2020. Families and Social Change in the Gulf Region. Routledge.
- Gilbert, N., Ben Brik, A. 2020. Family-Sensitive Policy: Broadening the Conceptual Lens for Evaluating Social Protection. *Society*, 57(6).
- Ben Brik, A. B., Lansford, J. E., & Badahdah, A. M. 2020. Policies and Programs to Promote the Well-being of Families in the Gulf Region. In *Families and Social Change in the Gulf Region* (pp. 184-204). Routledge.
- Lansford, J. E., Badahdah, A. M., & Ben Brik, A. B. 2020. Families in the Gulf Region. In *Families and Social Change in the Gulf Region* (pp. 1-16). Routledge.
- Williams, N. A., Ben Brik, A., Petkus, J. M., & Clark, H. 2020. Pediatric psychosocial care: Historical context and a theoretically informed practice model. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 107, 104504.
- Lansford, J. E., Ben Brik, A. B., & Al Fara, H. 2019. A framework for child wellbeing in the Gulf countries. *Child Indicators Research*, 12(6), 1971-1987.
- Williams, N. A., Ben Brik, A., Petkus, J. M., & Clark, H. 2019.

- Importance of play for young children facing illness and hospitalization: rationale, opportunities, and a case study illustration. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1-10.
- Ben Brik, A., Lansford, J. E., & Al Fara, H. 2019. Policies and programs to promote child well-being in the Gulf countries. *Early Child Development and Care*, 1-14.
 - Aldhafri, S., & Alhashmi, S. (2020). Family challenges and strategies to deal with them during COVID-19 pandemic facing Sultan Qaboos University employees and students in Oman. *Journal of Arabic Childhood*, (84), 81-102.
 - Aldhafri, S., Alkharusi, H., Alharthy, I., Alrajhi, M., Alhadabi, A., & Albarashdi, H. (2020). Modeling the Relationship between Parenting Styles and Students' Academic Efficacy Beliefs: School vs. University Students. *Educational Sciences*, 10(9), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10090229>
 - Aldhafri, S. (2021). Children's perceptions of parenting styles: Ten years of research with Omani families. In J. Lansford, A. Ben Brik, & A. Badahdah (Eds.), *Families and Social Change in Gulf Region* (20 pages). New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003037996>
 - Alhadabi, A., Aldhafri, S., Alkharusi, H., Alharthy, I., Alrajhi, M., & Albarashdi, H. (2019). Modeling parenting styles, moral intelligence, academic self-efficacy and learning motivation among adolescents in grades 7–11. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 39(1), 133-153.
 - Alrajhi, M., Aldhafri, S., Alkharusi, H., Alharthy, I., Albarashdi, H., & Alhadabi, A. (2019). Grade and gender effects on self-concept development. *The Open Psychology Journal*, 12, 3-12.
 - Alkharusi, H., Aldhafri, S., Alrajhi, M., Alharthy, I., Albarashdi, H., & Alhadabi, A. (2019). Cross cultural validation of the motivated strategies for learning questionnaire for grades 7-11 students in the Sultanate of Oman. *Indian Journal of Psychology and Education*, 9(1), 33-42
 - Aldhafri, S., & Alhadabi, A. (2019). The Psychometric Properties of the Student –Teacher Relationship Measure for Omani Grade 7-11 Students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 1-15. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02283
 - Albusaidi, S., Aldhafri, S., Alrajhi, M., Alkharusi, H., Alkharusi, B., Ambusaidi, B., & Alhosni, K. (2019). Emotional intelligence among school teachers in Oman. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*. 65(4), 320-345.
 - Aldhafri, S., & Abo Shandi, Y. (2019). An Investigation of the Psychometric Properties of Emotional Intelligence Scale Using Item Response Theory. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 8(4), 1-12.
 - Gadelrab, H. F., Alkhadher, O., Aldhafri, S., Almoshawah, S., Khatatba, Y., El Abiddine, F. Z., ... Slimene, S. (2018). Organizational Justice in Arab Countries: Investigation of the Measurement and Structural Invariance. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 1- 25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069397118815099>

- Alrajhi, M., Aldhafri, S., Alkharusi, H., Albusaidi, S., Alkharusi, B., Ambusaidi, B., & Alhosni, K. (2017). The Predictive Effects of Math Teachers' Emotional Intelligence on their Perceived SelfEfficacy Beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 67, 378-388. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.07.003>
- Alkharusi, H., Aldhafri, S., Alhosni, K., Albusaidi, S., Alkharusi, B., Ambusaidi, B., & Alrajhi, M. (2017). Development and Validation of a Scale for Measuring Mathematics Teaching SelfEfficacy for Teachers in the Sultanate of Oman. *International Journal of Instruction*, 10(3), 143- 158.
- Alrajhi. M., Alkharusi, H., & Aldhafri, S. (2016). Learning processes and academic achievement among Omani school students. *Review of European Studies*, 8(4), 62-71. doi:10.5539/res.v8n4p62
- Alqashan, Humoud (2008). Enrichment Training Program and Successful Marriage in Kuwait: a Field Study on Kuwaiti Couples. *Digest of Middle East Studies "DOMES"*, Vol 17, No 2. 1-16. USA.
- Alqashan, Humoud; Alzubi, Ali (2009) Job Satisfaction Among Counselors Working at Stress Center—Social Development Office—in Kuwait. *Traumatology*, Volume 15 Number 1, 29-39.
- Al-Kandari, Hayfaa and Al-Qashan, Humoud. (2010). Maternal Self-Efficacy of Mothers of Children with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities, Down Syndrome, and Autism in Kuwait. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 27:21–39. USA
- Najla N. Wadaa, Humoud F. Alqashan ; Norzarina Mohd Zaharim. (2010). The Use of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) In Treatment of Traumatized Children. *Digest of Middle East Studies "DOMES"*, Vol 23, No 1. USA
- Alqashan, Humoud and Alkandari, Hayfaa. (2010) Attitudes of Kuwaiti Young Adults toward Marriage and Divorce: A Comparative Study between Young Adults from Intact and Divorced Families. *Advances in Social Work Journal "Indiana University – School of Social Work"*. Vol 11, No1. USA.

References

Dubey, S., Biswas, P., Ghosh, R., Chatterjee, S., Dubey, M. J., Chatterjee, S., ... & Lavie, C. J. (2020). Psychosocial impact of COVID-19. *Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research & Reviews*, 14(5), 779-788. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsx.2020.05.035>

Norris, F. H., Friedman, M. J., & Watson, P. J. (2002). 60,000 disaster victims speak: Part II. Summary and implications of the disaster mental health research. *Psychiatry*:

Interpersonal and Biological Processes, 65(3), 240–260.
<https://doi.org/10.1521/psyc.65.3.240.20169>

John, A. T. J., Natalie, J. S., & Michael, A.M. (2013). The behavioral immune system and social conservatism: A meta-analysis. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 34(2), 99–108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2012.10.003>

Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K., McGuire, L., Robles, T. F., & Glaser, R. (2002). Emotions, morbidity, and mortality: New perspectives from psychoneuroimmunology. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53, 83–107.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.53.100901.135217> Slovic, P. (1987). Perception of risk. *Science*, 236, 280–285.
<https://doi.org/10.1126/science.3563507>