

Chapter 12

Positive Psychology in the Arab World



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Positive Psychology (henceforth PP) concepts and applications are increasingly attracting researchers and decision making alike in modern societies. If we agree that ‘happiness’ is one of the core concepts of PP, one can exemplify the existence of this trend in the Arab region in the decision of the Emir of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to nominate a ‘Minister of State for Happiness’. At the occasion, the UAE Vice President declared that “Happiness and positivity in the UAE are a lifestyle, a government commitment and a spirit uniting the UAE community. The government system is evolving to realize the goals that every human seeks: Happiness for him and his family” (UAE Cabinet, 2016).

Notable also is that this Emir chose a 24-year-old lady, Ohood bint Khalfan Al Roumi, as the new Minister. In a conservative monarchy such a choice seems unusual. Nevertheless, the expressed commitment to cater to people’s happiness, may be motivated by some other reasons, such as improving women’s representation at the governmental level; a positive move towards youth in times of the Arab Spring revolts initiating change within the Arab World; or even more importantly for the sake of this chapter is that this decision may also indicate to a political openness to modern social sciences, represented mainly in the new scientific field of PP. Indeed, with such a decision PP seems to be gaining official legitimacy and reaching new territories within the scientific arena. This is expected to motivate researchers to explore the yet unknown boundaries of personal and social life of Arab populations.

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It should be reminded that since acquiring official recognition, back in the nineties, as a nascent scientific discipline, PP has been advancing rapidly in the Western parts of the world. However, very little is known on the state of this discipline in other global regions. The present chapter aims to fill in some of this gap. It principally aims to review the situation of PP in the Arab World. Our narrative will be divided into a number of sections: Firstly, we will sketch out some of the characteristics of the Arab world and the historic roots of PP in this region. Then, we will move to a general overview of Arab psychological sciences to discuss the general situation of PP. Next, we will introduce the reader to the main themes studied so far by Arab positive psychologists, and review topics such as positivity, happiness, well-being and some more recent issues. Afterwards, we will introduce some of the Arab psychologists who enriched the field of PP in the Arab World. We will conclude with a number of recommendations on how to further strengthen this important discipline.

It should be noted that while preparing this chapter, the authors had two choices, either to present the state of PP in each of the 22 independent Arab states that make the Arab World or adopt an approach based on the Arab region as a single entity. Our decision was to adopt the second approach. The main reasons are that this region generally shares the same language of Arabic for the teaching and publication of psychological works. Moreover, generally the same major peer-reviewed journals which are based in a handful of countries, such as Egypt or the Gulf States, publish works of all Arab researchers. Notable also is that the major associations of psychologists are based in the same small number of Arab countries and are open for contributions across the Arab World. It is also known that Arab countries have been historically linked and continue to share the same main problems and challenges. Therefore, we feel that discussing the state of PP in the region as a whole will give us the opportunity to explore in depth the major topics researched by Arab psychologists and find out the contribution of these latter in the face of the major problems of the region.

In this chapter, PP means the scientific inquiry of a panoply of subjects related to the study of human strengths, personal growth and individuals' and communities' thriving for happiness and self-fulfillment (e.g., Compton & Hoffman, 2012). Compared to mainstream psychology, this nascent discipline seeks ways to understand and further personal and societal flourishing in all human conditions alike, whether in times of good health and high well-being, or in times of conflict, infirmity, disease and so forth.

Historical Background to Positive Psychology in the Arab World

The 'Arab World' or the 'Arab nation' generally refers to the community of the 22 states which share the use of the Arabic language and are part of the 'Arab League', founded back in 1945. This entity of countries stretches from the Arabian

Sea in the east to the Atlantic Ocean in the west, and from the Mediterranean Sea in the north till the Indian Ocean in the southeast. These lands comprise geographic points that link the continents of Africa, Europe, and Asia. The majority of Arab populations are part of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) which have been strongly linked historically, partly because of the centuries-old, well-established land and sea networks found throughout the region, and the belongingness to the Arabo-Islamic civilization (Tiliouine & Meziane, 2017).

The Arab region has been at the heart of the world's major events since antiquity and has been known for globally influential civilizations. Amongst these latter: the Phoenicians who reigned over the coastal areas of the Mediterranean Sea from 1550 BCE to 300 BCE (Before the Common Era). The Babylonians also reigned during the beginning of the second millennium BCE. They developed the advanced Code of Laws, urban planning, the 60-minute hour system, and agricultural cultivation skills. In North Africa, which is a major part of the Arab World, the architectural oeuvres of the Pharaohs (3100 BCE—870 BCE) continue to inspire people from everywhere. Their neighbours of the Nubian lands (800 BCE—to about 320 CE, Common Era), helped link the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa to the rest of the world and enriched human culture and knowledge. Carthage (575 BCE—146 BCE), Numidia and the other Berber dynasties controlled the southern coasts of the Mediterranean Sea and reached deep into the sub-Saharan regions. At later dates, Romans succeeded some of their most important architectural and intellectual achievements in this region. Famous intellectuals such as St Augustine who reformed the Roman Church were natives of the east of current Algeria (Estes & Tiliouine, 2014; Tiliouine, 2014b; Tiliouine & Meziane, 2017).

Furthermore, the Arab World has been the cradle of the monotheistic Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The teachings of these religions continue to exert a major impact on the present global civilisation. But, because Islam is considered by Muslims as the last revealed and the most authentic religion, the majority of the region's inhabitants are Muslims. The Prophet of Islam, Mohammed (born in 570 CE in present-day Saudi Arabia), succeeded in only 23 years in laying down the basics of a strong new nation and united the entire Arabian Peninsula into a single Islamic polity. His companions spread Islam across three continents (Africa, Asia, and Europe), which, in turn, led to what is referred to as the Golden Age of Islam (see more details in: Renima et al., 2016). Some of the major successes of this period include the establishment of Arabic as the language of science and as the unifying language for the Islamic world; the compilation of the Prophet's sayings (the *Hadith*); and the translation and expansion of important intellectual works into Arabic, including those of major Greek philosophers. Islam's schools, the *madrassas*, proliferated during this period and succeeded in delivering high-quality education at primary, secondary, and postsecondary levels (see a short review in Tiliouine, 2014c). The world's first universities emerged in North Africa: Al-Qarawiyyin in Fes, Morocco (859 CE) and Al-Azhar in Egypt (970–972 CE). By comparison, Europe's earliest universities were not established until 1088, with the founding of the University of Bologna in Italy (Tiliouine, 2014c). Recent estimates of the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita for the countries of the Arab region in the tenth century indicate they were among the wealthiest regions of

the world compared with those of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Western Europe for the same period (Tiliouine & Meziane, 2017).

Among the factors that led to the subsequent decline of the Arab World is the fall into classicism intellectually, plunging into recurrent internal conflicts, and the devastating foreign invasions. These latter include the destruction of the Abbasid capital Baghdad by the Mongols in the year 1258 and the Crusade Wars led by Western Christians (initiated in 1096 and continued for two centuries until 1291). It also comprises the frequent destructive incursions of the Spanish forces in North Africa, which followed the fall of Andalusia in present-day Spain. The Muslim Ottoman Empire helped fighting these foreign forces, but ended up as the major ruler of most of the Arab land.

With the slow decline of the Ottomans, Arab territories started to fall again victim to Western colonial powers that sought principally to exploit the peoples and resources of their new colonies. France and Britain were particularly adept at this approach to colonisation, but, over time, Spain, and Italy adopted similar approaches to the Arab lands they occupied, e.g., the Sykes-Picot secret agreements of 1916 (Tiliouine & Meziane, 2017; Tiliouine et al., 2016).

Then, another phase of turmoil began. In the midst of the liberation battles, and exactly in 1948, Israel declared an independent state on the Palestinian land and expelled about one million Palestinians as political refugees in neighbouring countries (Sitta, 2016). Palestinians were replaced by thousands of Jews who immigrated to the newly established State of Israel from all over the world. Many wars were subsequently fought between the Arab states and Israel, which was backed by the United States and other Western powers (Sitta, 2016). This conflict is yet a source of tensions in the whole Arab region with some disastrous repercussions on the well-being of all inhabitants of the region (Jabr & Berger, 2016), which in turn may potentially endanger world peace in the future.

It should be added that the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and the European colonization which was followed with bitter wars of independence, led to reshaping the Arab World map. Though not all Arab countries are represented, Table 12.1 shows that some of the Arab states acquired independence just recently (Bahrain in 1971, UAE in 1972, Algeria in 1962 and Yemen in 1990). Currently, types of polity diverge across the region with 8 of the 17 countries being led by monarchies. All over the Arab World, population growth has increased sharply between 1950 and 2014 (Table 12.1, adapted from Tiliouine & Meziane, 2017).

Presently the total population of the Arab World is estimated at 422 million people who overwhelmingly belong to the Islamic faith (Column 7, Table 12.1), with Egypt being the most populated country. Furthermore, the median age of Arab population is low, which indicates that the majority of the population is young (more than 50% are under the age of 25). This has put a lot of pressure on governments' budgets to provide education opportunities, adequate health care, and employment opportunities.

In their systematic analysis of social development in the Arab World in the 2000–2011 period, using the World Index of Social Progress (WISP), Estes and Tiliouine (2016) concluded that the Arab top performing countries on the WISP

Table 12.1 Demographics of Arab Countries (*N* = 17)

Country	Region	Type of Polity	Date of Independence	Population (millions) 1950	Population (millions) 2014	Percent Muslims 2011	Population Growth Rate 2013	Median Age, Years
Bahrain	West Asia	Constitutional monarchy	1971	0.1	1.3	81.2	2.6	31.6
Iraq	West Asia	Republic	1932	5.3	36	98.9	2.3	21.5
Jordan	West Asia	Constitutional monarchy	1946	0.5	6.7	98.8	0.1	21.8
Kuwait	West Asia	Constitutional monarchy	1961	0.2	3.3	86.4	1.7	28.9
Lebanon	West Asia	Republic	1943	1.4	4.1	59.7	-0.04	29.3
Oman	West Asia	Absolute monarchy	1650	0.5	4.1	87.7	2.1	24.9
Palestine	West Asia	Occupied	Occupied	0.9	4.6	97.5	2.7	18.2 (Gaza), 22.4 (West Bank)
Qatar	West Asia	Absolute monarchy	1971	0.3	2.3	77.5	4.2	32.6
Saudi Arabia	West Asia	Absolute monarchy	1932	3.2	30.8	97.1	1.5	26.4
Syria	West Asia	Republic	1946	3.6	23	92.8	0.1	23.3
United Arab Emirates	West Asia	Absolute monarchy	1971	0.07	9.4	76.0	2.9	30.3
Yemen	West Asia	Republic	1990	4.3	26	99.0	2.5	18.6
Algeria	North Africa	Republic	1962	8.8	38.7	98.2	1.9	27.3

(continued)

Table 12.1 (continued)

Country	Region	Type of Polity	Date of Independence	Population (millions) 1950	Population (millions) 2014	Percent Muslims 2011	Population Growth Rate 2013	Median Age, Years
Egypt	North Africa	Republic	1922	21.8	87.7	94.7	1.9	25.1
Libya	North Africa	Republic	1951	1.0	3.3	96.6	4.8	27.5
Morocco	North Africa	Constitutional monarchy	1956	9.0	33.5	99.9	1.0	28.1
Tunisia	North Africa	Republic	1956	3.6	11	99.8	0.9	31.4

Notes: (1) Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, and Sudan are part of the Arab League of nations but not included in Table 12.1; (2) Data from Tiliouine and Meziane (2017)

were: Qatar, Kuwait, Tunisia, Lebanon, Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, and Bahrain. The majority of these countries continued to build on their earlier social accomplishments. The presence of large reserves of high quality petroleum (Kuwait and Qatar), comparative ease of access to international financial markets (Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar), and a favorable geographic location along the Mediterranean Sea (Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, and oil revenues in Algeria), all combined to accelerate the pace of social development that is occurring within this group of Arab states. Comparatively small populations and the existence of established land and water transportation networks also figure prominently in the rapid development changes observed for these countries. At the same time, substantial gains were recorded for other countries (i.e., Mauritania and Saudi Arabia). Estes and Tiliouine's analysis (2016) identified Iraq, Sudan, and Yemen as the most poorly achievers on the WISP. The situation of these latter countries, along with Syria and Libya seem to have worsened after the Arab Spring because of the terrorist insurgency and foreign interventions.

Of more importance in the present chapter is the state of social sciences in this region, with PP being one of its disciplines. Briefly, it should be noted that because Arab countries are highly diverse with respect to their social, demographic, economic, and political profiles, the status of social sciences differs greatly. In his recent report: *'Social Sciences in the Arab Region: Five Years after the Arab Uprisings'*, Amer (2016) indicated that only a few countries contain the majority of university-based social science research centers. Eighty-nine percent of the university research centers are found in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq, with Egypt and Algeria combined accounting for 57% of these centers. The largest number of scholars and the greatest number of university degrees are offered in Egypt and Algeria (44% of the region's master's degrees and 39% of Ph.D.'s; Amer, 2016). We expect, therefore, that the major part of scientific works in PP would be produced in these major countries

As a summary of this section, it should be reminded that the Arab World is going through a harsh period of turmoil. Many factors contribute to worsen the situation. On the one hand, the world and regional superpowers continue to exert their hegemony over this region. On the other, the internal fragile situation is characterized by widespread mismanagement of internal affairs, and the existing political systems are ignoring democratic aspirations of the populations. All these combined factors led to the resurgence of extremist and terrorist activity, next to the growing needs of a young population. Despite all these factors, it is encouraging to know that many sciences, PP included, have been regarded as a good opportunity to help alleviate current challenges. Hence, the following sections of the chapter propose to look closely at the role assigned to psychological sciences and their achievements in this region

Psychological Sciences in the Arab World

It should be noted in the beginning of this section that modern psychology gained acceptance and has been taught and practiced in the Arab World for a good period of time. Historical records report that some psychology courses were introduced in many Arab universities in late 1800s and early 1900s such as those in Egypt and Lebanon (Ahmed, 1992; Ahmed, 2012; Amer et al., 2015; Khoury & Tabbarah, 2012). However, independent departments of psychology within these universities did not see light in the Arab Middle East until 1950s, such as the one created at Ain Shams University, Egypt in 1950 (Ahmed, 2012) and a similar one at Lebanon's American University of Beirut 1 year after (Khoury & Tabbarah, 2012). It may also be relevant to note that many of the pioneering university professors received their training in Western countries.

Among the leaders in this field in Egypt, one finds Moustapha Soueif (born in 1924). He headed the Psychology Department at Cairo University during the 1970s and supervised research and published extensively in this area. Amongst his famous books: *الأسس النفسية للتكامل الاجتماعي: دراسة ارتقائية تحليلية* (*Psychological Foundations of Social Integration: A Developmental Analytical Study*; 1960); *نحن والعلوم الإنسانية* (*Social Sciences and Us*; 1969), both published by the Anglo-Egyptian Library of Cairo (Psychology Committee, 2015). A second example is that of Kamilia Abdelfettah who took her B.A. in psychology from the University of Ain Chams in 1954, her master's degree in psychology from the same university in 1961, and her Ph.D. in 1967 in Egypt (Psychology Committee, 2015). Finally, Ibrahim Abdel-Sattar, who was selected Outstanding International Psychologist by APA for 2014, took his B.A. in Psychology from Ain Shams University in 1962, and his M.A. and Ph. D. from the University of Cairo, Egypt, in 1974–1976 (Psychology Committee, 2015). Abdel-Sattar followed his postdoctoral studies in clinical research and practice at the University of Michigan, USA in 1974 (Psychology Committee, 2015).

Many of this generation of leading scholars were behind the spreading of Psychology in other Arab countries, mainly to the Arab Gulf states. In these latter countries, the first major independent Department of Psychology was established in 1957 in Ryadh University, Saudi Arabia. However, it is by 1970s that almost all major Saudi universities instituted their psychology departments (e.g., Ibrahim, 2012). It is also around this period that the UAE established an undergraduate program in psychology within the United Arab Emirates University, and the Emirates Psychological Association (EPA) was founded in 2003 in Dubai by the Ministry of Social Affairs (Al-Darmaki & Yaaqeb, 2015). Oman, Yemen, Bahrain, and neighboring Arab states also followed this trend and presently a large number of students prepare degrees mainly in the educational and clinical fields of psychology.

In the Arab Maghreb which was subjected to French colonization, with Algeria being the first colony in 1830, psychology teaching and research was deeply influenced by the trajectories of French Psychology in its teaching, theoretical quests and its practical techniques. Psychology courses designed for teachers were known very early—by the middle of 1800s. Psychological approaches accompanied the

work of earlier ethnographers who sought to ‘understand local populations’ cultures and ways of life in order to assist in the ‘assimilationist’ mission of the French coloniser (Tiliouine, 2014c).

However, many psychologists condemned these segregationist and racist intentions and put themselves in the forefront of combat of colonial oppression. One of the most known figures is Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist who fought colonial stereotypes and policies in Algeria. Despite that he died at the young age of 36 (in 1961), his books (such as, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 1952; *Les damnés de la terre*, 1961) founded a revolutionary thinking within psychology. On this path emerged Mahfoud Boucebc, an Algerian psychiatrist who led initiatives towards strengthening human rights, scientific analyses and combating stereotypes. He was assassinated in 2003 at the age of 66 by Islamic extremists at the height of the Algerian security crisis of the 1990s. Boucebc left behind many monographs: *Psychiatrie, société et développement* (1979), *Maladie mentale et handicap mental* (1984), *La Psychiatrie tourmentée* and *L’effet Dagma* (1990), which continue to inspire psychologists in the Arab region.

In the neighboring Tunisia and despite that the Tunisian Society of Psychology was founded in the fifth of September, 1957, the first full Department of Psychology was not instituted until 1970s, and in the beginning psychology was also taught in relation to educational fields. Morocco also opened its first Department of Psychology in the 1970s.

However, because the arrival of psychology in the Arab World was accompanied by the European colonial expansion and has been deeply influenced by Western conceptualizations and paradigms, this young science was and continues to be looked at with some suspicion in the Arab region (Amer et al., 2015). Psychology teaching and research clashed with the long standing local cultures, religious beliefs and local realities. This suspicion and resentment have been in part shared with many other psychologists from third world countries or simply developing countries. Many of them looked at psychology, as formulated, as an individualistic science which since the very beginning did not fit the existing social order issued from a collectivistic cultural model. The international movement calling for ‘the indigenisation of psychology’ has therefore gained many supporters in the Arab World (e.g., Allwood & Berry, 2006). For instance, the distinguished Sudanese psychologist Omar Khaleefa has been influential in this area. Since the 1990s, he has published in both Arabic and English on the need for an indigenised psychology in the Arab World. In his paper, ‘The Imperialism of Euro-American Psychology in a Non-Western Culture: An Attempt Toward an Ummatic Psychology’, Khaleefa (1997) discussed extensively the need for an *Islamic Psychology* which he called “*Ummatic Psychology*” (p. 45), from the Arabic word *Ummah* or Nation of Muslims. It seems that these ideas continue to echo amongst Arab psychologists with many reprints being published by psychology associations, such as Arabpsynet (www.arabpsynet.com/).

Countries’ ideological choices have always impacted the way science is constructed and practiced. Moghaddam (as cited in Allwood & Berry, 2006) explained that when the Shah was ousted from Iran after the Iranian Islamic

revolution led by Khomeini in 1978: ‘The attack on the Shah was associated with an attack on Western world-views, particularly in psychology and economics’ (p. 257). Pressure has been put on psychologists to find an alternative to the traditional culturally insensitive Western models. More adapted theoretical frameworks, mainly in terms of religion were needed. Hence, the movement called ‘the *Islamisation of Psychology*’ continues to grow not only in Iran, but also in the Arab World and other Islamic countries, such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, etc. (e.g., issues of the *Journal of Islam in Asia*).

Resentment towards a typically ‘Westernised Psychology’ was further accentuated by other reasons in the Arab World. Most important ones are feelings of defeat felt by Arab masses after the creation of the state of Israel, backed by major Western powers, its continuous expansion in Arab land and the recurrent wars in the region since 1948 (Tiliouine & Meziane, 2017). Moreover, as Amer et al. (2015) explained, another obstacle to the growth of psychology in general has been the dominance of the medical model. Legitimacy is gained only by offering clinical services such as psychological testing and counselling within the psychiatric context. Nevertheless, the volatile contexts of many Arab countries require more than ever before the commitment of psychologists to the yearnings of the Arab populace.

Regarding this point, Farah (2012), the Jordanian counseling psychologist insisted at the height of the Arab Spring that these dramatic changes required that Arab psychologists should come out from their isolation and reconsider a new role at the academic and professional levels as a response to these mandatory changes. Their new possible role includes making psychology more relevant to daily life and to empower people for positive change (Farah, 2012). This is true if we consider the huge number of marginalised, displaced and refugee populations. Cases of Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, Yemenites and Libyans are striking examples. The situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic has also brought to surface new needs for an increasingly committed psychological science to help children, families and people in general lead a healthier and a safer way of life.

Positive Psychological Quests in the Arabo-Islamic Tradition

Many references discussing the historical roots of modern PP mention Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) as a main founder of PP (e.g., Compton & Hoffman, 2012). Indeed, the contributions of this brilliant scholar have been numerous. Maimonides attracted scientists’ attention to the impact of both positive and negative emotions on people’s health. He specifically put stress on the destructive consequence of chronic anger and sadness. He also pointed out to the benefits of aesthetic experiences to improve human well-being. Moreover, he advocated that mindfulness through staying focused on the present moment rather than remaining preoccupied with past events or future worries maintained good health. Maimonides is also considered among the first scholars to call for the development of character strengths, which modern PP has expanded (Compton & Hoffman, 2012). Although

Maimonides belongs to the Jewish faith, he lived all his life in the Islamic region (died in Cairo) where he was a highly respected intellectual. For many Arab intellectuals, Maimonides is a good representative of the intellectual fervour which characterised the Islamic Golden Age (Renima et al., 2016), and the scholarly advances made in Arabic language. His famous book *Dalalt al-Ha'irin* (Guide to the Perplexed) was originally written in Arabic (Goodman, 1998). In accordance with this, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2014) recommended that Maimonides' writings should be understood within their 12th–thirteenth century Islamicate context. This encyclopedia entry presented evidence of the deep influences on this scholar by the writings of al-Farabi (ca. 870–950), Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 980–1037), al-Ghazali (1058–1111), and Averroes (Ibn Rushd, 1126–1198). In turn, these leading figures who continue to greatly impact later generations of Muslim scholars, benefitted from ideas and views on man, society and ethical issues discussed by early Greek philosophers. Arabs translated many Greeks' works starting from the ninth century, preserved, commented and shared them all over the three continents where Muslims ruled.

Considering the impact of these seminal scholars, it is curious to see that the treatise of al-Farabi or Alpharabius (870–950) entitled “*The Attainment of Happiness*”, which discussed lengthily how individuals and nations could reach happiness, acquired new readership and has been reprinted many times and is made freely accessible on the internet in recent years. al-Farabi was deeply inspired by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. With regard to happiness, a major topic of modern PP, he discussed four kinds of happiness: Theoretical virtues (knowledge naturally embedded in humans and those acquired through meditation, investigation and inference, instruction and study), deliberated virtues, moral virtues, and practical arts. al-Farabi's view of happiness is only one of the many Muslim scholars' views on how happiness should be constructed and pursued. For instance, when looking at the Islamic voluminous intellectual productions, Tiliouine (2014a) distinguished between philosophers' views of happiness, those of Sufists', and those of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). While the latter insist on applying *Sharia* law as a way to attain societal well-being, Sufists prefer a more personalised approach through cultivating and purifying one's soul. However, philosophers prefer to see happiness in using the intellect or simply ‘reason’ in one's life. These views seem to coexist until today (Tiliouine, 2014a). Similarly, the Islamic scholar al-Ghazali of the eleventh century wrote an important book, entitled: ‘*The Alchemy of Happiness*’. This work influenced many later scholars who borrowed even the title for their published works, such as Husein Ahmed Amin (1998) with his book titled “*The Book of the Alchemy of Happiness*”.

Amongst the other topics which were already present in the Islamic legacy can be found in works of al-Balkhi who was the first scholar to distinguish between psychological and mental illness, or in modern times neurosis and psychosis (Ibrahim, 2012). For al-Balkhi, neurosis can be classified in four emotional disorders: Fear and anxiety, anger and aggression, sadness and depression, and obsessions. He proposed healing techniques which were much in advance compared to what was practiced at his time.

Ibrahim (2012) further indicated that Arab scholars presented detailed analyses of positive constructs such as happiness, hope, helping, and optimism many centuries ago. However, today's Arab positive psychologists are urged to equip themselves with modern research methods to explore in detail this highly rich and enlightening legacy of psychological ideas and practices. Some more discussions of the historic roots of PP in Arabic writings are needed to further enroot this discipline within the local contexts.

Positive Psychology in the Arab World: An Overview

Positive Psychology as a nascent psychological discipline cannot divorce itself from the pressures and challenges facing the mother discipline. However, as mentioned earlier, there are many indications that PP is relatively less subject to categorical rejection, as was the case at least with the Freudian psychological model. Some reasons can be found in the following points:

1. Many Muslim intellectuals find in it a confirmation of principles strongly embedded in the Islamic teachings since the outset.
2. PP recognises the role of spirituality amongst its list of human strengths (e.g., Peterson, 2006). In an Islamic context, 'spirituality' has been simply equated to 'religiosity'. Therefore, the Islamic religious institution as a whole is at ease with the new conceptualisation.
3. Moreover, in times of recurrent violent conflicts, Arab intellectuals have found PP as a science aiming to advance positivity, resilience and hope, and an opportunity to reconcile with their peoples' yearnings to democracy, justice and a brighter future.

Some of these points will be further discussed in the next sections of this chapter.

Let us start with one remark. Many religious think-tanks (e.g., Sheikh *Muhammedal-Ghazali's influential book: Renew your life*), media programs, and also policies (such as the case of UAE mentioned in the beginning of this chapter) are making use of some of the central concepts which have been coined out or reformulated and invigorated by PP movement. The list of virtues and strengths proposed in this movement (e.g., Peterson & Seligman, 2004) is frequently quoted by intellectuals with a traditional religious background. For them, having recognized spirituality or religiosity amongst the list of human strengths is there to attest that the interpretations of Freudian and Marxist psychologies of religion are wrong.

However, many users of PP concepts frequently do not seem to draw any demarcation line between results issued from scientific enquiries on the one hand, and pseudoscience on the other. To illustrate, Neuro-Linguistic programming (NLP) and some other practices which were born in 'Personal Development' propositions have been confused with PP. NLP, as an approach to communication, personal development, and psychotherapy, developed in the US during the 1970s and has been highly contested scientifically in the West (Witkowski, 2010). Nevertheless,

such pseudosciences seem not to lose their appeal in the Arab World. Many magazines are posting on the internet presenting NLP as a 'new science' which is able to study personal experience to improve the ability of a person to maximize his potentials. Furthermore, many Arab institutions, including universities, along with media, blogs, and YouTube entries frequently post calls for participation in seminars and workshops for diverse fields of businesses, parenting, education etc. under the combined heading of NLP and PP.

One of the leading advocates of NLP in the whole Arab World was the Egyptian Ibrahim Elfiky (1950–2012) who published at least 8 books in few years. Unfortunately, some of the NLP advocates, such as Elfiky, associate PP to their plea. A lot of work remains to be done by positive psychologists in order to inform and convince the Arab public for the confusion that is reigning between science and pseudoscience.

Regarding the current situation of PP research, many reviews and diagnoses have been published in peer reviewed journals. As early as 2008, Eloff from South Africa, Mustapha Achoui from Algeria and their colleagues from some other African countries (Eloff et al., 2008) conducted an exploratory research to examine the state of PP in six African countries. They recruited 37 psychologists, mostly university lecturers, in African universities from Algeria ($n = 15$), Lesotho ($n = 1$), Malawi ($n = 1$), Nigeria ($n = 3$), Uganda ($n = 10$) and Zimbabwe ($n = 7$). The objective was to assess the status of and prospects for positive psychology in their respective countries. They concluded that the practice of PP was only emerging and currently limited in Africa and that such practice remains implicit, rather than explicit and much linked to indigenous knowledge systems. They ended up with an optimistic note on the future of PP in the continent of Africa as a whole.

Furthermore, in the first issue of the *Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology* Rao et al. (2015) found no more than 53 articles which were explicitly linked to the PP movement from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region during the period from 1999 to 2013. This represents less than 4% out of a total of 1336 articles found in the international publications list they identified from the electronic databases of Academic SearchTM Premier, Business Source Premier®, ERIC®, PsycINFO®, and PsycARTICLES®. Out of the 53 articles, 46 were empirical studies, while seven were conceptual ones, and 33 used quantitative methods, while eight used qualitative methods, and five used mixed methods approaches.

According to Rao et al. (2015) the country with the most authors publishing PP research was Israel followed by Iran, then Turkey. These results, however, are based exclusively on publications written in English language, while the Arabic language is the main tool of research and teaching in the largest part of the Arab world. French also is an important vehicle for teaching and research in many parts of the Arab World, mainly the Maghreb countries (Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia). So, despite the fact that the largest part of these publications are not included in international databases, they constitute the prime source for teaching and research in the region and therefore should not be ignored as a good indicator of scientific achievements.

In the same issue of the same journal *Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology*, Salama-Younes (2015) entitled his paper: ‘*Positive Psychology: Applications, Concepts and Future Perspectives in Arab Countries*’. The author avoided going into an extensive examination of the current state of PP in the region. Rather, he preferred to sketch out his own projects of future multi-country studies. He briefly cited a few founding Arab psychologists, such as Abdel Khalek and Al Ansari in the area of adapting international measurement tools or the design and construction of researches in the diverse areas of psychology including PP. Of importance, he noted that Arab researchers’ efforts in reproducing international PP measures has been encouraged by the fact that most of these tools are short measures with a small number of items and frequently using 5-point to 10-point response scale.

It is worth noting that the task of reviewing Arabic works related to PP is complicated. One major reason is the lack of specialized libraries that collect, store and easily retrieve published items to make them available to reviewers. The authors of this chapter approached libraries of psychology of three major Algerian universities (Algiers, Constantine, and Sétif). They searched amongst peer-reviewed journals of human sciences for papers with particular resonance the field of PP. We could count a minimum of 89 published papers during the period between 2000 till the end of 2006 (see the extensive bibliographic list attached to this chapter, *in Arabic*). At least, this number is far larger than the 53 papers published in English in peer reviewed journals which Rao et al. (2015) identified in all MENA countries including Turkey, Iran and Israel.

An initial examination of these 89 papers indicates that they fall into the following categories: 42 papers focusing either on measurement tools development, translation and or adaptation, 23 papers reporting empirical studies of PP constructs and positive aspects in individuals and institutions, and 24 papers presenting some literature review and introducing PP mainly assembled and translated from the published works in English. Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient elements to rely on to conduct a systematic study for the time being because many issues of each journal were missing. However, the available information will constitute the main sources for our description of the state of PP and its main trends in Arab nations in subsequent sections.

Major Topics in Arab PP

In the following part of this chapter we review some of the major research themes which have attracted the attention of Arab positive psychologists.

Positivity: On the general concept of positivity, a wide range of publications are found, varying from those devoted to the large public of readers to the more specialized works. For instance, amongst the books aimed to the large public, one finds ‘*A Call to Positivity with the Self and Others*’ دعوة للإيجابية by Mohamed Fethi (2011).

The Egyptian psychologist Salah Mekheimer (1922–1988) founded a strong tradition in the Arab World in studying positivity. This amazing humanist psychologist, viewed positivity as the essence of human life. For him, positivity enables humans to pursue their lives and without it, humans become helpless and unproductive (from Mekhaimar's book: *مفهوم جديد للتوافق: A new conceptualization of adjustment* (The Anglo-Egyptian Library, 1978: 10–11).

Building on concepts developed by Mekheimer and subsequent discussions, many researchers focused on studying aspects they attributed to positivity, such as emotional stability, ego power, self-assertiveness, self-efficiency, creativity and self-esteem. For instance, Samia el- Kettan (1981) argued in her study of 'Assertiveness' *إدري طلبة وطالبات المرحلتين الثانوية والجامعة دراسة لمستوي التوكيدية* that positivity should be represented in three levels. The first one is the sense of balance which is fundamental to all human beings. The second one is productive positivity which may enable people to become creative. Amongst the indicators in this level are self-confidence, sense of initiative, productivity and self-actualisation. The third level is creative positivity which involves a strong motivation to experience challenge and seek novelty in one's life.

Following this line of discussion, many empirical works were conducted to explore positivity in Arab samples, being mostly university students. For instance, Fera (2006) conducted a field work to identify the main elements of positivity *(الطلبة الجامعيين في الجامعات الفلسطينية بقطاع غزة. دراسة لمستوي الايجابية لدى)* in Palestinian students of the Gaza Strip (N = 684). He confirmed the factorial structure of positivity as creativity, self-esteem, assertiveness, emotional stability and transcendence. Moreover, he found no statistical differences between males and females in creativity and assertiveness, but found significant statistical differences between genders in self-esteem. These were in favour of females, while emotional stability and transcendence were in favour of males.

Using a sample of 247 students of different genders, Alouane and Nawadjha (2016) *(الذكاء الوجداني وعلاقته بالإيجابية لدى طلبة جامعة الأقصى بمحافظات غزة 2016)* explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and positivity among the students of Al-Aqsa University. They constructed a scale of positivity and also borrowed the Emotional Intelligence Scale designed by Othmann and Abed Elsameea (1998). The study revealed a statistically significant correlation between emotional intelligence and positivity. Additionally, there were statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence and positivity attributable to gender in favour of females; and similarly strong differences attributable to specialisation in favour of students from scientific majors over those from humanities majors. Finally, results of the case studies showed that the low level of positivity for some individuals was associated with wrong parental education practices and the economic, social and cultural status of families.

Undoubtedly, the tragic events known as the Arab Spring has stimulated reconsidering positivity, again as a central concept to bring about individual and societal renewal. For instance, the renowned Egyptian psychologist Abdel-Sattar Ibrahim published his book titled *Positivity and the making of optimism: Psychological perspective on 'the Egyptian Spring Revolution'*. Ibrahim basically reported

on a field study completed during the 18 days before the Fall of Mubarak political regime. He used content analysis and individual case study methodologies. He asserted that this study was probably the first comprehensive study done in Egypt aiming to understand positive and negative psychological aspects of the Egyptian Spring Revolution of January, 2011. This research is a good example to follow in the future and to produce comprehensive reviews of what has been achieved so far by Arab positive psychologists to build future advances on more solid grounds.

Happiness research:

Happiness constitutes one of the central themes to which Arab psychologists have devoted many efforts. Aided with a long tradition in studying this subject, a growing interest in the media (social media included), self-development programmes and the movement of PP, a great number of postgraduate students prefer to prepare their university works on this topic. These factors have encouraged the revival of interest of publishers in this area as well. Hence, many ancient books on this theme were reprinted and apparently are acquiring readership as they are freely accessible on the internet. New happiness publications range from large volumes to short empirical research reports. Empirical studies have involved different population segments and have been fairly diverse in terms of research tools and analysis techniques.

Within this trend, the classical book of Michael Argyle: *The Psychology of Happiness* (Methuen, 1987) was translated into Arabic as early as 1993. The translation was achieved by Youssef Abdelkader, lecturer of Psychology at Cairo University and published by the National Council of Culture and Arts and Literature, Kuwait. Moreover, there is no doubt that the translation of the seminal book 'Authentic Happiness' (Seligman, 2002), less than 3 years after its publication in 2005 by Safa Al-Assar inspired in the empirical study of happiness. This trend in translation studies continued, with for instance the translation of the book of Verra Peiffer (*Inner Happiness*, 2002) was conducted in 2004 by Jarir Bookstore in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Original Arab books devoted to happiness and psychological health are also numerous. Amongst the classical ones is 'Happiness and the improvement of mental health: The responsibility of individuals in Islam and psychology' by Morsi (2000). The book discussed at length mental health and the role of happiness in improving it from an Islamic point of view. It should be noted that books are available at university bookshelves without any distinction between those aimed to popular self-development and those having a rigorous scientific nature.

Arabic empirical studies with diverse country samples, social backgrounds and age have been regularly appearing in the broad social sciences peer-reviewed journals, even before the official recognition of PP as a discipline in the USA. For instance, Nayyel and Khamis (1995) studied a sample of 60 elderly, equally divided on the basis of gender. They proposed a measure of happiness and tried to link responses to feelings of anxiety, depression and types of personality as measured by Eysenck (1965). Amongst the important findings were that elderly men felt happier and less depressed than elderly women. Such an issue deserves explanation in future research.

Also among the leading researchers, we find Abdel-Khalek and his associates. He first published a paper titled 'Happiness and personality: Correlations and predictors'

(Abdel-Khalek & Mourad, 2001), then co-authored a paper on levels of happiness in Kuwaiti samples in 2003 (both papers published in Arabic in the journal *Psychological Studies*, Cairo). At the international level, Abdel-Khalek published extensively on topics related to happiness. One of his widely quoted articles was published in 2006. It explored the accuracy of measuring happiness by a single item (*Do you feel happy in general?*). Because of a high temporal stability, high correlations with both the Oxford Happiness Inventory (Hills & Argyle, 2002) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), its good convergent validity (a high and positive correlation with optimism, hope, self-esteem, positive affect, extraversion, and self-ratings of both physical and mental health), and an adequate divergent validity (significant and negative correlations with anxiety, pessimism, negative affect, and insomnia), Abdel-Khalek concluded that measuring happiness by a single item was reliable, valid, and viable in community surveys as well as in cross-cultural comparisons. The cited scales were all translated into Arabic by Abdel-Khalek (2006) and were made available to Arab students and researchers who subsequently produced a big number of works in Arabic.

Abdel-Khalek has continued in the same line of exploring happiness and associated concepts in Arab samples for many years. More recently, he collaborated with Lester (Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2017) to explore associations between religiosity, generalised self-efficacy, mental health, and happiness in Arab college students ($N = 702$). They found high correlations between the studied constructs and concluded that male students have significantly higher mean total scores on self-efficacy and mental health than their female counterparts did. They commented that participants who saw themselves as religious tended to see themselves as self-efficient and having greater levels of mental health and happiness.

The Omani based researchers Rizvi and Hossain (2016) reviewed research which examined the relationship between religious belief and happiness. They quoted 21 works in which Abdel-Khalek was either the single or the first author, between 2006 and 2015 in this area. Rizvi and Hossain concluded that regardless of the type of religion, gender, nationality or race the association between religion and happiness proved strong and that the most religious Muslims were found to be the happiest ones.

Happiness was also explored with relation to a variety of other topics in different samples. For instance, Jan (2008) explored links between happiness (as measured by the Oxford List of Happiness of Argyle, 2001), religiosity, social support, and marital adjustment in 764 Saudi women. She found positive associations between happiness, religiosity, social support, marital adjustment, economic status and state of health of respondents. However, the most important predictor of happiness in this study was the level of religiosity, followed by social support and marital adjustment, respectively.

It seems that because of the renewal of interest in religiosity worldwide as a consequence of the spread of PP, as well as the issue of Islamic religiosity having been recently at the heart of discussions on extremism and terrorism, Arab psychologists started early to explore the topic in some depth. But again, comprehensive

reviews are needed to weigh the findings in a systematic way, mainly of studies published in Arabic language.

Quality of Life and Subjective Well-being: Happiness and religiosity have been extensively studied with relation to the general theme of quality of life (QOL). At first glance, it is apparent that the translation of the World Health Organization (WHO) measure of quality of life, known as WHOQOL-BREF (Whoqol Group, 1998) into Arabic motivated a good number of researchers to develop works on this line. Abdel-Khalek for instance translated and used it during the 1980s. However, no systematic review of the results has been published so far in this area.

Furthermore, the study of subjective well-being (SWB) has also proliferated. Some relied on translations of international works, such as those of Ed Diener (see Chap. 2). However, it should be noted that this research is much fragmented. One reason is that in Arabic, there is no single concept which straightforwardly translates SWB into this language. For some researchers, it is equated to 'psychological welfare' الرفاه, 'good life' الحياة الطيبة, 'pleasant life' الحياة الممتعة or simply 'state of rest' الارتياح, or even psychological quality of life 'جودة الحياة النفسية'. Nevertheless, SWB was studied with relation to a variety of constructs such as resilience, hope, academic achievement, violent behaviours, self-esteem, affects, and life orientation. These research studies were mostly based on self-report questionnaires in student samples.

Large-scale surveys of general populations' well-being in the Arab World are scarce. However, amongst the few published works in the region starting from 2003 and aided with members of the research unit Laboratory of Educational Processes & Social Context (Labo-PECS) of the University of Oran, Algeria, Tiliouine made the first attempt to measure subjective well-being of the Algerian population using, among other measures, the Personal Well-being Index (PWI; Tiliouine et al., 2006). The PWI score has been computed from the average satisfaction ratings across seven domains; standard of living, personal health, achievements in life, personal relationships, personal safety, community connectedness, and future security. A new eighth domain, concerning satisfaction with religiosity/spirituality, was added in a following study by Tiliouine (2009).

Later the same measure was used in a series of six general population surveys that took place in an equal time interval of 18 months. The results indicated that since 2005 the population's PWI mean scores have been remarkably stable (Tiliouine, 2014b). This result was linked to the improving economic prospects and the stability in the country following the official steps of '*National Reconciliation*' after the armed struggle of the 1990s which killed around 200,000 people and caused billions of damage. The results support the vulnerability of populations' well-being when social turmoil dominates people's lives, as has been the case of Egypt and Tunisia where positive affect was low, and feelings of despair were amplifying (Tiliouine, 2014b). The results indicated also that many other factors determine SWB. Religious practice and satisfaction with Islamic religiosity/spirituality were found to be closely linked with high well-being scores, mainly in the middle aged participants (Tiliouine, 2009; Tiliouine et al., 2009). Additionally, state of health was not found to mediate such a strong relationship (Tiliouine et al., 2009). Religiosity had

a buffering effect not only on subjective well-being, but also on psychological well-being or eudaemonic well-being. In a sample of university students, Tiliouine and Belgoumidi (2009) found that the importance of religion resided in the fact that it provided its followers with a meaning in life, a frame of reference, or a philosophy in life.

Furthermore, Tiliouine (2012) investigated the relationship between subjective well-being, satisfaction with life, personal well-being (by PWI), positive and negative affect, psychological needs (autonomy, competence and relatedness), meaning in life and Islamic religious practice in the Algerian population. He examined the distributions of these constructs in a large sample of 3173 subjects who participated in the fourth Algerian Well-being Survey and estimated to what extent these constructs were affected by household incomes. He also estimated the mediating effect of demographic variables (gender, age, education and location) in the contribution of the studied constructs on each other. The results indicated that these constructs were significantly inter-correlated and almost similarly distributed in the studied population. The results also showed that the demographic variables were all negatively affected by low incomes and proved that generally and beyond demographic factors, SWB measures predicted better needs satisfaction, meaning in life and religiosity than the opposite direction (Tiliouine, 2012). When normative ranges of PWI in Algeria were calculated and compared to their counterpart normative ranges in Australia, as an example, the domain of community connectedness showed a similar trend; health was very close, but achievements in life and future security were much lower. Meanwhile, safety and personal relationships seemed to have a much larger magnitude in the Algerian case. It has been concluded that the sense of community belongingness remains similarly high in both countries, but problems linked to underdevelopment impinge on Algerians' perceptions of their future has a cost on their personal relationships. However, the presence of a cultural bias effect, leading people to differ in their response style to survey questionnaires should not be excluded. For instance, the Chinese PWI normative range was 61.2–67.1, which is much lower than in Australia (73.7–76.7). The Algerian range lies between those, but is narrower (66.4–68.8) (Tiliouine, 2014b).

Further research on subjective quality of life should attract more attention on the part of Arab social scientists. Its results would help gain solid knowledge on the dynamics of these societies and would certainly give a way to much adapted strategies and policies to the real needs and aspirations of the people of this region.

In Lebanon, Ayyash-Abdo (an Associate Professor of Counseling Psychology in the Lebanese American University of Beirut, with particular interests in PP, developmental counseling, and cross-cultural psychology) and Alamuddin (2007) examined the predictors of SWB in college youth. The authors explored personality constructs of self-esteem, optimism, and positive affect in relation to SWB in 689 college youth, using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWB: Diener et al., 1985), the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS: Watson et al., 1988), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R: Scheier et al., 1994). One of the findings was the high correlations between SWB and the studied constructs in the desired direction. Moreover, men

had higher scores on positive affect than did women. The authors concluded that demographic variables predicted satisfaction with life less than the internal personality constructs did. From the same country of Lebanon, Mayssah El Nayal (Psychology Department, Beirut Arab University) collaborated on many papers exploring life satisfaction in Arab populations and self-esteem among young adults.

Moreover, recently, Kharnoub (2016) from Syria published a paper on psychological well-being, emotional intelligence and optimism in a sample of 147 university students in *مجلة اتحاد الجامعات العربية* 'Review of Arab University Union'. She translated and used Ryff's Psychological Well Being (PWB) Scale—MIDUS-II version. She found a significant positive relationship between the different components of PWB Scale and the remaining factors. She also proved that emotional intelligence and optimism were the most important predictors of PWB.

Palestinian psychologists are particularly active in this area of research with many publications online concerning resilience, hope, positivity, emotional intelligence, well-being, feelings of safety, self-enhancement and neighbouring constructs. Palestinian researchers often justify their interest in this area by the situation of insecurity and hardship imposed on their population by the colonisation of their territories by Israel. PP concepts are called in to help to understand and alleviate these difficult situations.

Within this same line, some new breakthroughs are registered by positive psychologists in the UAE. Notable are joint works published by Lambert D'raven and her team. Views of happiness were found in Arab samples to surpass the individualistic and selfish discourses to more of a collective state enhanced through relationships with family and social groups. Religion and the adequacy of governance issues were brought in by the respondents in defining their perspectives of happiness (D'raven, & Pasha-Zaidi 2015). There are some equally interesting findings in subsequent papers. D'raven, and Pasha-Zaidi (2016) found that the PERMA model (involving: Pleasant life, Engaged life, Meaningful life, Positive relationships and Achievements as basic pathways towards pursuing happiness by individuals) overlapped in a consistent manner with the local Emirati culture. Furthermore, efforts such as those of Lambert et al. (2015) on the way to develop more adequate frameworks towards an Indigenous Positive Psychology would help enroot PP in Arab contexts and may attract the attention of Arab scholars and professionals in the field of PP.

A lot of information can be gained by positive psychologists about well-being, satisfaction with life, happiness and affects of Arab populations from internationally led studies, such as those conducted by the Arab Barometer (<http://www.arabbarometer.org/>), and Gallup Polls (www.gallup.com) (e.g., Tiliouine, 2014a). However, local research capacities should be further developed and implicated to strengthen decision making processes based on scientific evidence. An example of an early rare large scale survey of well-being is the Moroccan survey of well-being which was conducted by the governmental agency, *Haut Commissariat au Plan (High Commission for Planning)* in 2012 which involved a sample of 3200 subjects who were above the age of 15. Expectedly, the largest number of Moroccans link life satisfaction to acquiring an appropriate residence, well-equipped house, and having

adequate social services close to where they live in this a yet developing country (Souidi, 2012). Our impression is that Moroccan economists are the most involved, compared to other social scientists, in studying well-being determinants in their country (e.g., Zeidan, 2012/3).

To illustrate further the variety of Arab contexts in which PP concepts are called in, we end up by citing a recent paper by Slemon (2015) from Syria. Slemon in a paper for the Tchrine University reviewed PP concepts, such as resilience, meaning in life and flow and questioned their applicability on the Syrian army personnel who were fighting against the 'terrorist' insurgency in the Syrian land. She recommended that PP concepts should be extended to such situations of turmoil to help for boosting combat capacities of the national armed forces.

Though our account on the development of PP in the Arab world has been very brief, our illustrations show that PP constructs have attracted the attention of Arab individual researchers as well as some academic institutions and some policy oriented agencies. Research topics, sample characteristics and measurement tools also vary greatly. No doubt, the acquired knowledge is having repercussions not only in local but also in larger international contexts. Nevertheless, there are many shortcomings which should be seriously addressed to benefit from the advantages of this young science. The future of PP should not rely only on the voluntary and personal initiatives of researchers. Arab official academic and policy making institutions engagement is much needed to finance, monitor and apply the evidence to be gained from these efforts.

Major Positive Psychologists of the Arab World

In the following sections, we introduce some of the Arab psychologists who enriched the field of PP either through translating international works or producing completely new materials in Arabic language to give the reader a sense of how this discipline is evolving in this region. However, we do not intend in any way to classify these researchers and works with regard to their importance, the quality of the contents, or even the extent of their readership. Unfortunately, no records are made available by any credible Arab institutions or organization with relation to these matters.

Reyad N. Alaasemy

Brief Biography of the Researcher

Alaasemy earned a B.A., then a Master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Damascus University. He took his Ph.D. in the same discipline from Cairo

University in 1998. He has held a teaching position in the University of Damascus continuously since 1999.

Positive Psychology Contributions

Alaasemy published more than 20 books in the field of Psychology and psychological therapies. The following books are specifically devoted to PP: *The positive psychological health*, *Applications of Positive Psychology in psychological counseling and therapy* and *Scales of Positive Psychology*. He also supervised many master's and Ph.D. theses in PP.

Ahmed Abdel-Khalek

Brief Biography of the Researcher

The Egyptian researcher Ahmed Abdel-Khalek graduated from Alexandria University, Egypt. He took his B.A in Psychology. in 1963, then his M.A. degree in 1970 on the objective assessment of personality. His PhD thesis analyzed personality traits. Abdel-Khalek started a teaching profession of Psychology in 1975 in this same university, until he moved in the nineties to Kuwait. He is one of the most productive Arab psychologists, with 369 listed published papers, 23 authored books and 4 edited books in the area of psychology (from 1979 to 2012). His interests started in the areas of personality assessments, death anxiety research and clinical applications in which he contributed many books and journal papers.

Positive Psychology Contributions

Abdel Khalek turned to PP by the beginning of the year 2000. Since, he contributed in international discussions and cross-cultural research. His paper about measuring happiness by a single item (Do you feel happy in general?) (Abdel-Khalek, 2006) attracted the attention of researchers internationally and is widely cited. Abdel Khalek's publications and cross-cultural research cover among other topics: Subjective well-being, optimism, Islamic religiosity, mental health, happiness, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and affects. Abdel-Khalek is currently working on a new scale which he calls: The love of life scale.

Mustapha Achoui

Brief Biography of the Researcher

Mustafa Achoui graduated from Psychology in 1977 from Algiers University, and then earned his Ph.D. in Organisational Communication from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York in 1983. He is currently the Vice Dean of Planning, Research and Development in the Arab Open University, Kuwait.

Positive Psychology Contributions

Achoui authored many Arabic introductory works of Psychology and its disciplines, including PP. He has important contributions in the areas of Islam and Psychology, management sciences, and happiness and satisfaction with life research. He collaborated in many PP cross-cultural studies.

Mohamed Said Abu Halawa

Brief Biography of the Researcher

Abu Halawa is an Egyptian psychologist. He graduated from the University of Alexandria. Abu Halawa is an active member of the Arab Psychologists Network (<http://arabpsynet.com/>), with specific interests in promoting PP works. He currently teaches Psychology in Egyptian universities.

Positive Psychology Contributions

Abu Halawa authored numerous monographs introducing the PP science and its concepts, mainly the concepts of resilience, optimism and flow. Abu Halawa, published in 2014 his monograph: *علم النفس الإيجابي: ماهيته ومنطلقاته النظرية وأفاقه المستقبلية* (*Positive psychology: Its meaning, theoretical requirements and future horizons*). In this book, he briefly introduced the history and scope of PP, positivity, positive emotions and traits, flow, human strengths and self-actualization and discussed the future of PP. In another monograph, published online in 2013, he devoted efforts to the notion of flow. In this monograph, he traced back the history of the concept and its relevance to advance creativity, happiness, and psychological resilience. He concluded by presenting works of the famous psychologist *Mihály Csikszentmihályi* from 1990 to 2004.

Safaa El Asar

Brief Biography of the Researcher

Safaa El Asar belongs to the early generation of Egyptian psychologists who played an important role in advancing the discipline through her teaching and research not only in her home country Egypt (since 1960), but also Qatar University from 1973 to 1983. She earned her B.A. in Psychology in 1959, and her Ph.D. in 1968 from Ain Shams University. Her Ph.D. was entitled ‘An experimental study on decreasing anxiety in a sample of secondary school girls’ (Psychology Committee, 2015).

Positive Psychology Contributions

Amongst the books which seem to have an enduring effect on the advancement of PP notions to Arab readers, one can find the translation of a whole series of volumes by El Asar and her team. These books include Martin Seligman’s ‘*Authentic Happiness*’ (2002); Lisa Aspinwall and Ursula standing’s ‘*A Psychology of Human Strengths: Fundamental Questions and Future Directions for a Positive Psychology*’ (2003); Sam Goldstein and Robert Brooks’ ‘*Raising Resilient Children: Fostering Strength, Hope, and Optimism in Your Child*’ (2002); Shane Lopez and Charles Richard Snyder’s edited book: ‘*Positive Psychological Assessment: A Handbook of Models and Measures*’ (2003).

Said M. Farhati

Brief Biography of the Researcher

Farhati earned his Ph.D. in Educational Assessment and Evaluation from the University of Mansoura, Egypt. Since 1995, he started a teaching and a research career, mainly in the National Center For Examination & Educational Evaluation (Egypt), the University of Mansoura and Ain Shams University. His earlier interests were in educational evaluation, preschool education, and learned helplessness in children.

Positive Psychology Contributions

Farhati shifted to PP issues through translating works of the leading American psychologist Martin Seligman in 2009. In 2012, he published his book: العجز - تقدير الذات الأيمن النفسي - الثقة بالنفس - المهارات الاجتماعية تعلم : علم النفس الإيجابي للطفل (*Positive Psychology of the child: Learned helplessness, self- valuing, psychological safety, self-confidence, social skills*). Child PP seems yet an area which has not attracted many book writers in the Arab World. In 2016, Farhati

co-edited with Mohamed Rashidi a book titled: *Positive Psychology* and collaborated on a translation of Carr's book (2004) *Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness and Human Strengths*.

Also published in the area of the psychology of optimism, and the psychology of flourishing. He supervised a big number of theses in the area of PP.

Mostepha Higazi

Brief Biography of the Researcher

Mostepha Higazi is one of the most influential intellectuals in the Arab World. He was born in Cairo, and holds a Ph.D. in engineering and strategic management of crises from the University of Southern California. He taught management and strategic thought and institutional development at the University of Southern California. He is a renowned international expert in every field of strategic consulting, economic and social entities, corporate governance, investment management, institutional psychological and sustainable development and a member of the Advisory Committee of the World Bank. In the domain of psychology, he is known for his translation into Arabic of Freud's book "*Interpretation of Dreams*". Higazi published also the following books: "*Speech or Death*" and "*The Problems of the Contemporary Arab Thought*." (Wikipedia, 2017).

Positive Psychology Contributions

Higazi published in 2012 a book entitled: إطلاق طاقات الحياة: قراءات في علم النفس الإيجابي (*Freeing Life Energies: Readings in Positive Psychology*, 2012) in which he presents the foundations of PP. He called for freeing Arab human energies that have been wasted and repressed, whether in adult or youth. He points out the harm that autocratic systems of governance are doing, as they do not care much about enhancing productivity and competitiveness to meet the needs of their populations. The author finds in PP theses a huge step forward towards these goals. In the remaining chapters he warned against negative thinking and its destructive effects. Then, he discussed optimism and hope and that people should be trained to combat widespread feelings of pessimism and helplessness. One of the chapters was devoted to motivation and human strengths, then he moved on to the problematic topic of leadership from a positive perspective. The last part discussed positive emotions and positive thinking and their role in physical and mental health.

Abdel-Sattar Ibrahim

Brief Biography of the Researcher

Abdel-Sattar Ibrahim earned his B.A. Psychology degree from Ain Shams University, Egypt in 1968, and then moved to Cairo University where he took both his Master's and PhD degrees. He taught Psychology in Egypt, USA and many Gulf States' universities.

Positive Psychology Contributions

Ibrahim wrote more than 12 books in Arabic and English languages. His books in English include *Foundations of Human Behaviour in Health & Illness* and *Cultural Considerations in Mental Health Practices: An Arab Experience* (both with Dr. Radwa Ibrahim in 1996) (Arabpsynet, n.d.). He is among the Arab psychologists who opt to extend PP principles to therapy. For instance, he published in 2011 his book: دليل المعالج النفسي: للعلاج المعرفي الإيجابي عين العقل: دليل المعالج النفسي (A guide to users of cognitive positive psychological therapy).

Bachir Maamaria

Brief Biography of the Researcher

Maamaria graduated from the University of Oran, Algeria with a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology. He led a teaching career in the University of Batna, Algeria.

Positive Psychology Contributions

Maamaria's prominent research in PP has been focused on introducing this science to Arab readers and the psychometric verification of numerous translated PP measures in Algerian samples, such as measures of hope, happiness, meaning in life and emotional intelligence.

His monograph علم النفس الايجابي اتجاه جديد لدراسة القوى والفضائل الإنسانية (Positive Psychology: A New Field to Study Human Strengths and Virtues, 2015) was reprinted and made available to the large public through Arabpsynet (<http://arabpsynet.com/>) and is freely accessible on the internet.

Salah Mekhaimar

Brief Biography of the Researcher

Mekhaimer began his life as an army officer. He took part in the World War II and lost his sight in the battlefield. After leaving the military, he graduated from Ain Shams University as a psychologist, and then prepared his Ph.D. of Psychology in Sorbonne University, France. He returned to Egypt to teach psychology in Ain Shams University. His legacy counts about 40 books in diverse fields of psychology.

Positive Psychology Contribution

Mekhaimer specifically devoted four of his books to the concept of positivity, all published by the Anglo-Egyptian Library of Cairo:

- مفهوم جديد للتوافق (*A new concept of adjustment*, 1978).
- في إيجابية التوافق (*On positivity and adjustment*, 1981).
- الإيجابية كمعيار وحيد وأكد تشخيص التوافق عند الراشدين (*Positivity as the sole and sure criterion in the diagnosis of adult's adjustment*, 1981).
- الإيجابية كمعيار وحيد و أكد للصحة النفسية (*Positivity as the sole and sure indicator of psychological health*, 1984).

Habib Tiliouine

Brief Biography of the Researcher

Tiliouine graduated from the University of Oran where he earned a B.A. in Counseling Psychology. He then prepared an M.A. (Education) in the Psychology of Education in Leicester University, Great Britain (1986). He then returned to teach in the University of Oran, and prepared his Ph.D in the area of Teacher Education. His subsequent research and publications covered many areas: Quality of life in Islamic societies, well-being research, child development and well-being, educational reforms and management. He created in 2001 the research unit known as: *Laboratoire Processus Educatifs et Context Social (Labo-PECS)*.

Positive Psychology Contributions

Tiliouine conducted seven large scale surveys on the well-being of the Algerian adult population, and five large works on children's well-being (age 8–14). Some of these latter were the result of an international collaboration with Children's Worlds (iscweb.org). He also co-edited (with Richard Estes from Pennsylvania University)

a large volume on *'The State of Social Progress of Islamic Societies'* (Springer, 2016) and collaborated in the preparation of World Happiness Report of 2017 (Helliwell et al., 2017). He is currently co-editing the 'Handbook on children's risk, vulnerability and quality of life' for Springer Publishers (2021). Tiliouine received the 2015 Research Fellow Award of The International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS) for his international contributions.

Moreï Salama-Younes

Brief Biography of the Researcher

Moreï Salama-Younes is an associate professor in Psychology, Sociology and Evaluation Department, Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt. He is also associate member in the research centre: *Centre de Recherche sur l'Éducation les Apprentissages et la Didactique* of the Occidental University of Bretagne, Rennes, France. In France, from 2001 to 2011, he qualified as an associate professor at French universities many years and for different domains. Moreover, he earned two Ph.D. degrees from this university, one in Sport Psychology titled 'Adaptation and Validation of French Children's Attributional Style Questionnaire and its Prediction on Sport and School Performances' and the second in Social Psychology, titled 'Socio-Cognitive Studies for Fundamental Needs'.

Positive Psychology Contributions

Younes enriched the Arab library with many PP introductory manuals. In 2011, he titled his book: علم النفس الايجابي للجميع (*Positive Psychology for All, 2011*), published in Cairo. He claims that this is the first PP book in the Arab World. Next to the theoretical foundations and a review of foundational literature of the discipline, the author discussed positive psychological interventions such as the study of human strengths and virtues and the concept of training in PP in the academic and professional areas. From 2002 to 2013, he prepared many research articles/papers, chapters and communications in Arabic, English and French languages on Positive and Exercise Psychology. Currently, he is more interested in the effect of practicing different activities (such as sports, music, arts, etc.) that may enable a person to use his/her own strengths and virtues to improve feelings of well-being and health.

Future of Positive Psychology in the Arab World

Looking back at the history of the implementation of psychology within the academic arena in Arab countries, one would safely conclude that the early generation of Arab psychologists, despite the limited resources they had, succeeded in laying down strong foundations of the science in major areas of modern health care, education, industry and so forth. They relied not only on translations of ready-made international tools and measurement techniques, but also on finding the links between these areas of study and the long legacy of earliest Muslim scholarship. Maybe the issue of the indigenisation of psychology which they raised has not been resolved yet, and we do not expect that it will be resolved soon. However, this should not in any way halt new generations armed with new technological advances, new life views and challenges, to move forward foreseeing the future and adapting themselves to its requirements. The use of universal scientific enquiry to examine life issues is the only guarantee towards an everlasting change in the desired direction. The idea that science is Western is false, some of its techniques indeed adopt Western built frameworks but scientific enquiry is universal, and is the common heritage of all the human species.

The good opportunity that Arab PP should seize is that PP is less exposed to societal resistance as have been some earlier psychology tendencies, such as the Freudian model. As explained earlier, PP was brought in times when the Arab World has been going through an unprecedented volatility. Nevertheless, and despite the apparent overlap with some pseudo-sciences, such as NLP, which they should lift, positive psychologists should vary their techniques and conduct genuine research projects. These latter should extend over many years, instead of the one shot empirical studies which characterise Arab PP works in present times. Long term cross-sectional and follow up studies are very rare. So are those using new techniques such as online large surveys, techniques based on careful observation and recording, in-depth interviews and focus groups, new techniques such Experience Sampling Method and Day Reconstruction Methods.

These research themes of PP should be prioritised according to Arab populations' struggles for justice, an improved quality of education, universal health care, understanding extremist behaviour, violence, recurrent cases of suicide, drug addictions, towards all that lead to an open and developed society. Combating the effects of the new pandemics and ways of improving healthy personal and community lifestyles are currently of extreme importance. Similarly, development studies which create experimental situations and test new programs should be encouraged. Of course, the institutional implication is needed to finance this type of research and also to disseminate the results. The Arab World has immense resources, a part of which should be devoted to exploring new scientific horizons. The strategic value of knowledge production and dissemination in modern societies is beyond contest.

The volume of research that has been produced in the Arab World in Arabic language is immense, though underestimated as it remains fragmented, scattered and unexploited. As a first step, credible databases should be created in order to allow

students and researchers to conduct systematic reviews of these works. The rich legacy of earlier Arab and Muslim scholars should not be excluded from these efforts. Positive approaches have existed long before the existence of the modern discipline of PP in this region.

Some other recommendations are enlisted below:

1. Specialised databases should be devoted to measurement tools of PP which should be carefully indexed and made available to users.
2. Translating international works should be conducted by competent people and institutions and with tight respect of copyright regulations.
3. Specialised dictionaries should be devoted to PP concepts.
4. Specialised peer reviewed journals should be created in order to communicate research results and theoretical papers.
5. Conceptual and theoretical efforts should be given some priority and more visibility.
6. Specialised research agendas are needed to help young researchers to posit their works within the field and help them advance their research to the yet unexplored areas.
7. Empirical studies should diversify their analytical tools, such as the use of advanced statistical inferential techniques. So far the large majority of studies are descriptive, correlational and explorative in nature.
8. Arab researchers should cooperate further among each other and with international colleagues in cross-national studies to gain experience, acquire international visibility and improve credibility of the results.
9. Samples should be diversified as up to now most research is done with students' samples.

However, it should be reiterated that this chapter has reviewed just a small part of scientific works which were conducted in the Arab World for the sake of illustration. Despite this, we can safely conclude that PP has attracted the attention of researchers and practitioners in the Arab World since its beginnings. More important is that there is room to further enrich this trend and diversify the scope of this new science in a region where scientific enquiries are much needed in order to develop more positive frameworks of human development.

Resource Page for Readers

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