



BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES NEWS

10TH
ANNIVERSARY

DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES (DBS)
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES, S³H, NUST

MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

I would like to extend my heartiest congratulations to the Department of Behavioral Sciences on its 10th anniversary. The department was created under the prolific of Dr. Salma Siddiqui alongside a team of top professionals. The department was created to address the ever-increasing need for understanding the human process (behavior and thought) within social, ecological, and socio-political settings; to ameliorate the outcomes of decisions and policies at the micro as well as macro levels. Through the decade, the department has achieved a multitude of milestones including the introduction of four intensive degree programs --- a Doctoral program in psychology, an MS in career counseling and education, an MS in clinical psychology, and Bachelors of science in psychology. Furthermore, the department has launched its tele-counseling services. The department's faculty, through multiple research ventures, are also opening new avenues of interdisciplinary learning at both national and international platforms. To be able to achieve such exponential growth in a short amount of time requires unwavering commitment and dedication – that the department's leadership and faculty have embodied consistently. Through its contribution to teaching, training, research, and bringing the “human touch” at multiple forums across the university, the department has become an indispensable asset for NUST. For the next decade, I envision DBS deepening its commitment to quality in teaching and practice while also emerging as a leader in interdisciplinary research at both national and international levels.

I wish the department every success in its future endeavours.

Dr. Ashfaq Hasan Khan
Ph.D. Economics
The Johns Hopkins University, USA.



MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



We all are defined by the choices we make at the crossroads life brings us to, whether it is a personal journey or a professional one. I recall clearly the choices I made when I was invited by former Rector Lt Gen Muhammad Asghar to write a concept note of the Department of Behavioral Sciences and its academic program. I took the road less travelled by, seeing the opportunity in taking the path with great promise; to create a place which can offer competency based academic programs in Psychology, thus I wrote the concept paper and very soon was asked to start the department. It was spring, the second day of April 2012, that I joined NUST, and the same day the Department of Behavioral Sciences (DBS) was founded. We started from one room in the IGIS building (now ICT) and the room buzzed with ideas and energy as faculty hiring started and the pioneering team worked passionately to define vision, and the strategies to work towards that. The energy was invested not only in creating curriculum for both graduate and undergraduate programs but the learning environment as well to support the learning outcomes; the attention was given to designing the space, furniture and developing partnership with the organizations.

We started with a master's program in Clinical Psychology because we thought this is where most course correction is required. The curriculum development involved experts and reviewing international standards to attain required competence through teaching and learning in a context where no regulatory body in the discipline exists to monitor that graduates exit from the program with at least some adequate competency. The responsibility of making that commitment is something that challenges us even today. It is perhaps easy or financially viable to be more expedient and increase the intake as desired by many and not worry about the quality of the graduates; this, however, is the choice we have already made at the first crossroad, to never compromise on quality. Another choice made was to help our students develop into reflective human beings who audit his/her own actions, behavior and professional conduct. The focus on developing an internal supervisor is something, I am still working on, to help both faculty and student to develop; nevertheless, it is still our focus.

Over the years we started our PhD program, Career Counselling and & Education(2017)and BS Psychology (2018). Our 10th year is also a milestone for our undergraduate program as the first batch graduates. Our graduates have been recognized for their work ethics and approach towards the issues they focus on as part of their work. This is not possible without the sheer dedication of the faculty and the various organizations who became our partners to help extend classroom learning to the real context of the field. We have built strong partnership with experts in the field, both here and abroad, held national and international conferences, many seminars and training workshops, started initiatives in community setting, worked on many interdisciplinary projects, policy initiatives, student's wellbeing and so on.

I still recall how many times I was told that what you aspire is not possible in Pakistan; I said, let me try. I am still trying, as the vision must be carried within, to help you steer clear in times of confusion and uncertainty. I am glad that the vision inspires both faculty and students and they often resonate it through their approach to academics and practice. But it is not easy to carry a vision of developing competency based academic program with focus on ethics and self-audit, in a time and setting where this is seen to be compromised so easily.

I am also aware that this orientation is possible only because we are here at NUST, which inspires everyone to never compromise on quality education and give back to the community. I owe a great deal to the academic administration of NUST, both past and present, especially Rector NUST Engr. Javed Mahmood Bukhari, for having confidence in us and encouraging us to take on new challenges. The first decade and what the department has achieved gives me some satisfaction, but a question keeps me intrigued that how the next decade is going to be? Would the vision survive the vagaries of time and the hardship imposed by many realities that we are going through as a nation, or morph into something else because of our desire to be expedient? I am, however, comforted by the fact that our graduates carry the spark in themselves and try to contribute through their work; some of them have joined various departments of NUST and DBS as faculty as well. So, the hope lives on, they carry the torch and I see the vision shine brighter in their eyes. For the next decade, I envision DBS taking a lead in fostering an environment of interdisciplinary research with multi-sectoral collaboration to bridge the gap between knowledge and service. We must broaden our lens to solve the problems that plague our society and hamper our growth both as an individual and society.

My prayers and best wishes would always be with the faculty and students, and I would consider it my privilege to help them in any way I can. Let's carry the zeal and do our best, we owe it to ourselves, and our country!

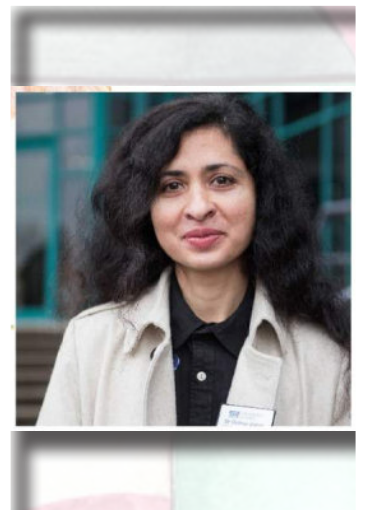
Dr. Salma Siddiqui
Ph.D. Clinical Psychology
Fulbright Fellow

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

It is my immense honour to be leading the department on its 10th anniversary. I have had the opportunity to serve the department in various capacities, from teaching, training, and research, and now as the Head of the Department – a position that has provided me ample opportunities to contribute towards the department's growth and also expand my learning. In the given capacity, I have provided numerous opportunities for the team to learn and grow. One of them was to create a team of young editors for this newsletter and mentor them in an uplifting and empowering manner. So, this issue not only highlights how far the department has come but also a glimpse of where it's headed. In the last decade, the department introduced four-degree programs – from undergraduate to doctorate. During this time, our first undergraduate batch completed their degree, while multiple postgraduate scholars joined the workforce. We successfully conducted two conferences, while both the faculty and students contributed to research through multiple projects. I believe that the department has come a long way. We have reached the next level of teaching and research whereby we evaluate our work, in terms of quality and contributions to society, daily. Every day, we strive to connect our teaching and research, to help create solutions to real-life issues at the community and national levels. Experiential learning approaches fall at the centre of our teaching and learning – something that we strived to continue doing, even during the pandemic. Now, with the same spirit and zeal, we aim to move towards advocacy of mental health in wake of current challenges, and through our efforts, we hope to align education to the societal needs that are well-grounded in theory. We further hope to produce graduates that can provide solutions to emerging problems as behavioural scientists and as a member of multi-disciplinary teams. Through its platform, the department is aiming to contribute through multidisciplinary research, innovation, and competency-based education.

I wish the department the best of luck in all of its future endeavours!

Dr. Gulnaz Zahid
Ph.D. Psychology
Post Doc in Career Guidance



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DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

CELEBRATES ITS

10TH ANNIVERSARY

Since its inception in 2012, the Department of Behavioural Sciences has been working towards the progression of quality research and academics for a decade. We are very proud of the milestones that we have achieved due to the perseverance and dedication of our faculty, staff and especially our students. Therefore, this special issue is dedicated to celebrating the department's decade-long contribution to academics and research.

We congratulate all who are or have contributed to the department's vision and reaffirm our commitment to the continued quest for excellence in teaching, training and research, as we continue to collaborate with various discipline with the aim to find insight solutions to contribute to the wellbeing of society.

LOOKING BACK WITH THE FOUNDING MEMBERS

Department of Behavioural Sciences was established in 2012 under the leadership of Dr. Salma Siddiqui, alongside a team of top professionals that included Dr. Rubeena Kidwai, Dr. Urusa Fahim, Dr. Tamkeen Ashraf and Dr. Sehar-un-Nisa. The journey started with the introduction of MS in Clinical Psychology with the vision to create an evidence-based program that focused on declarative knowledge, procedural skills and a reflective attitude, offering its students a unique opportunity to engage in critical thinking and self-reflection. Thus, fostering a new crop of ethically and culturally sensitive clinical psychology graduates that can contribute meaningfully to creating a mentally health and thriving society.

Throughout the years, Department of Behavioural Sciences has strived to emulate this vision all of its endeavors, as it continued to expand its academic and community offerings. Currently, DBS boasts an intensive Doctoral Program in psychology, alongside MS in career counseling and education and bachelor of science in psychology, while continuing its flagship program of MS in clinical psychology. In addition, the department has also launched its tele-counseling services. The department's faculty, through multiple research ventures, are also opening new avenues of interdisciplinary learning at both national and international platforms. To be able to achieve such exponential growth in a short amount of time, requires a very solid foundation. So, to celebrate the 10-year anniversary, we reached out to our founding members, to learn more about the steps that went into building that foundation, and their vision for department's continued growth in the future.

When asked to elaborate upon the need and vision that prompted the establishment of Department of Behavioural Sciences, Dr. Rubeena Kidwai shared, *"Dr. Salma might be the best position to answer this question as she is the one who initiated the department and contacted me to join her. However, what excited me and prompted me to leave a job offer from the Aga Khan University Hospital and relocate from Karachi to Islamabad, was Dr. Salma's vision of establishing a competency-based program in psychology. I felt that this idea was both exciting, as well as a dire and urgent need for Pakistan"*.

Dr. Urusa Fahim added that *"The vision of DBS, as I understood it, was to provide rigorous training to aspiring Clinical Psychologists. A core aspect of this training was to inculcate strong ethical practice and a deep understanding of the nuances inherent in the practice of clinical psychology"*. Dr. Tamkeen Ashraf

Malik further added that *"The vision was to bring quality education and training in the field of behavioural sciences"*. Reflecting back, Dr. Sehar-un-Nisa Hassan shared that *"Department of Behavioural Sciences (DBS) is a place where faculty, students and administrative staff have always been connected through shared vision, which is as I see it was 'achieving excellence' both in teaching and learning. I read somewhere that 'excellence is never an accident, it is a result of high intention, sincere efforts, intelligent direction, skillful execution, and the vision to see obstacles as opportunities. During my student life, I had felt that training programs in the field of psychology/behavioural sciences within Pakistan were primarily focused on imparting declarative knowledge, while developing clinical/professional skills and professional values was largely ignored. During my initial interactions with Dr. Salma Siddiqui, who is the founding member of DBS and the head of the department at that time, I felt that she was committed to developing and offering degree programs in the field of behavioural sciences that match international standards in all aspects (both in design and delivery of the curriculum). She had already taken on board a few experienced faculty members, and as an early career professional, I found it was a great chance for me to chase my vision as well as contribute to this shared goal and vision"*.

Looking back at the practical steps that they all took, as a team, to bring that vision to life, Dr. Urusa Fahim reflected that *“Bringing together a team with diverse training, experience and perspectives encouraging dialogue during the decision-making process, was pivotal. The team had shared values and beliefs around rigor, instilling the value of ethical practice and developing an understanding of the cultural context within which DBS and the program were housed. An important aspect of the process was creating a vision for the skills and capacities that practitioners would need to offer ethical and relevant services and then to figure out the what and how of the teaching and training that would be provided”*. Dr. Rubeena Kidwai added that

“I believe Dr. Salma joined NUST and established DBS in 2012 and I came to Islamabad in March 2013.

Shortly after that DBS engaged Dr. Patricia Omidian, a medical anthropologist, who had experience in curriculum development in social sciences. Under her guidance, all through Spring and Summer of 2013 the 5-member faculty held day-long intensive meetings for brainstorming, strategizing and course planning starting with the end goal in mind – a competent clinical psychologist working in the context of Pakistan. We referred to curriculums and teaching and training practices of many well reputed foreign universities, as well

APA guidelines for clinical internships. We incorporated these ideas in our own cultural context”.

Dr. Sehar-un-Nisa Hassan reminisced that *“I can still recall, how five of us, used to spend half of our day in a single room, discussing how to set course objectives, adopt teaching methodologies that can be effective to achieve these course objectives and identification of teaching resources. There were back-and-forth discussions, and simultaneously we reviewed and analyzed programs that were being offered by some high-ranked universities in the world. Besides frequently consultations with educationists, mental health experts and other professionals in higher education”*. Sharing her experience Dr. Tamkeen Ashraf said, *“The experience has been tremendously enriching and stimulating and has helped me evolve as an individual. I learned patience, focus and persistence somewhere in the process of teaching and learning. I learned many things from other colleagues especially the value of experiential learning, bringing intellectual challenge and stimulation for students, making efforts to bring refinement in the process of teaching and training. Close collaboration with other colleagues, focusing on competency-based learning played a key role and helped develop the program of clinical psychology on advanced lines”*.

Reflecting on how they ensured that the vision trickled down to the teaching methodology for each course that was taught, Dr. Sehar-un-Nisa Hassan shared, *“We gave attention to the details of each thing ranging from course syllabus to classroom design. This helps us to take insightful decisions and to ensure that the vision carried could trickle down to the teaching methodology for all the courses that will be offered for the curriculum. I was primarily involved with the design and delivery of the Psychological Assessment course as a co-instructor with a senior fellow. We had detailed discussions on each topic that was included in the course syllabus and how that should be instructed, what resources are needed. How to ensure experiential learning for every student in the program, given the fact that we had limited teaching tools at the beginning of the program? We were committed to translating the vision to each student and it was encouraging that our students were equally responsive and demonstrated a sense of responsibility”*. Reflecting upon the process, Dr. Rubeena Kidwai said *“In our staff meetings, we regularly reviewed how each course was being used to deliver content as well as competencies to students. Since the initial faculty were part of the planning process, I think we all spoke the same language so to speak. We ensured that the learning activities, whether role plays, self-reflection papers, assignments, tests, or final exams, all had questions or prompts that promoted critical & analytical thinking, ethical and cultural sensitivity, and conceptual understanding of ideas. We spent a lot of time discussing how to assess these abstract notions. We did formative assessments, i.e., feedback on assignments encouraged students to rethink, their work and they had the opportunity to resubmit their work with improvement. We encouraged meta thinking among students, i.e., shared with them in the initial orientation what the goal of teaching/learning was, encouraged them to assess where they were on these themselves throughout the program”*. Dr. Urusa Fahim added, *“I was part of the first semester and can only speak to my experience during that time. Each faculty member had the freedom to design learning activities according to the particular course and the knowledge and skills that needed to be taught, and their own style of teaching. For instance, my preference was to use experiential activities and expressive arts techniques to go beyond verbal communications to identify ideas, strengthen concepts and create an interest in and specially to demystify qualitative research, the subject I was teaching. I had the freedom to be creative in the design of my classes as long as I ensured the students learned the basic information and developed skills and learned techniques of qualitative research”*.

Reflecting back, Dr. Tamkeen Ashraf added, *“Through developing very comprehensive and elaborate plans for teaching each topic, interactive activities and good focus on thorough assessment process helped us translate the vision in to teaching process. Close and routine conversations with senior colleagues helped me bring more maturity in the teaching process and develop myself better as a teacher and a trainer”.*

We also picked their brains regarding what they envision for DBS for the next decade. We also asked them as what should be the future direction for DBS and other educational institutions charged with the teaching and training of future mental health professionals, in the current mental health landscape in Pakistan and globally. Sharing her dreams for the future Dr. Sehar-un-Nisa said, *“DBS has shown great progress in the last ten years and it is the commitment to the vision which has ensured the institute’s progress. Achieving excellence is one thing and retaining it is even more important, therefore, I see that DBS should strive to maintain it. This is possible by creating more opportunities for connections between alumni and current students. The online means can be a cost-effective and time-efficient way for such interactions. Students should also be prepared and equipped to respond to the psychological consequences of social and political challenges, our country is currently facing and likely to have an impact on various segments of our population. I believe that promoting community mental health by using technology has become the hour of the need. Students can be engaged in collaborative projects within the organization and across institutes to adopt the integrative approach to mental health. Young faculty and students are the best resources to initiate such collaboration which can be strengthened under the guidance of leaders”.* Dr. Rubeena Kidwai added that *“Since Covid the current national and global trend shows relatively better attention to mental health issues than ever before. Compared to before, individuals, organizations and even the federal and provincial governments are more open to talking about mental health, sometimes looking for stakeholders to work with them and have established some programs or pilot projects such as helplines or school mental health programs. While this has led many psychologists and therapists to come forward and offer their services, the incidence of malpractice is also more apparent. The need of the hour is for educational institutions to revisit their programs and make them competence and ethics based with a strong emphasis on professionalism. DBS has always had this vision but maybe it is also isolated in its efforts. Perhaps, DBS can look for likeminded institutions of higher education and have “sister programs”, the emphasis would be not so much the curriculum (HEC curriculums are good enough) but on the notion of competence-based teaching training. DBS can have greater impact if there are partners who share the vision. There might be a bigger pool of faculty open to capacity building programs and funding issues and logistics for training and capacity building may be shared. I would also recommend taking a direction toward programs (e.g., MS or a one-year diploma) focused on either public mental health so the government’s nascent interest in mental health can be reinforced by indigenous research informed policies, and/or community based mental health for establishment of preventive and promotive research and intervention programs will be better received now than ever before. Additionally, I believe that what we did in terms of initial planning for the clinical program was just the first step and there is much room for an in-depth, more informed exercise”.* Sharing her vision for the future of DBS, Dr. Urusa Fahim shared *“My recommendations to DBS are to firstly create a forum where key stakeholders (decision-makers on curriculum, policy-makers, etc.) from institutions training clinical psychologists can come together to dialogue on issues such as ethics, relevant skills and knowledge, etc. The same group could be invited to help regulate therapy practices in Pakistan. For instance, there are several places where a 3-month certification or week-long workshops are being offered under the guise of clinical training. Perhaps working with them to regulate therapy practices in Pakistan could prove fruitful. Additionally, DBS can lay a key-role in offering mentorship to new and up-coming academic programs in clinical psychology. I believe that it will go a long way in raising the standard of training. I would also like to see more partnerships and collaboration with agencies, institutions, etc. I also believe that the department can play a vital role in community outreach by creating a mandate for voluntary work in places and situations of need”.* As a founding member, who is still an active faculty member, Dr. Tamkeen Ashraf Malik reflected, *“I believe that the institute has become bigger and better integrated in a school’s environment. A heavy investment of early years in program development has helped us grow more. The programs of BS and PhD, especially have helped us evolve in different dimensions.”*

A close attention for further improvement and rigorous curriculum revisions shall help improve these programs even more. Difficult this might be but clinical psychology program requires a serious attention especially in a context of available faculty and human resource. Introducing trained faculty (equally competent for research and practice) and an investment on faculty development/continuing professional developments through training and capacity building shall help us improve. An honest effort for faculty's retention in the longer run shall help us develop more on sustainable lines. New masters and PhD programs focusing on areas like public health and child and maternal mental health can also provide us more avenues and opportunities both for research and practice”.



MESSAGES AND REFLECTIONS FROM THE FACULTY

In celebrating the 10-year anniversary, the current faculty members also shared reflections from their time at the Department of Behavioural Sciences, while also expanding upon their vision for its future:

“I have had a lot of opportunity to learn from the productive environment in DBS. We are surrounded by skillful and professional people with varied expertise. Working alongside them has been a great learning experience. I envision that the department in the coming future will introduce new interdisciplinary streams such as public health. I believe that we will benefit greatly from international collaborations especially in terms of internship opportunities for our students.”

(Dr. Sumbal Nawaz)

“The department has provided its faculty with multiple opportunities for growth. Dr. Gulnaz’s vision for the department has facilitated this growth very well. In future, the department should encourage open case conferences to enlighten all who are interested in clinical psychology and its applications. It may also start new research-based programs especially in the domain of public health, in order to encourage multidisciplinary research. It may also be encouraged to enhance faculty knowledge and skills through training programs.”

(Dr. Sumara Masood-ul-Hassan)

“Teaching at DBS has been an enlightening experience for me. Engaging with students of our department has been a happy journey and an adventure. I have taught undergrad and grad students in both strains and students have been a factor that continues to encourage me. I believe that we have the platform here to establish a mental health society at national level. The department should start working towards service provision along with the academic concentrations. We could introduce services or projects that offer services.”

(Dr. Henna Atif Qureshi)

“With regards to my experience in the department so far, I would say that it has been a great learning opportunity. I have had the chance to polish my research skills a lot while collaborating with my colleagues. We should, as a department work towards the growth of networks in academia as well as industry. We can also focus more on international collaborations. It is of great importance that we start working towards the introduction of services that work to enhance the mental health and wellbeing of both faculty and students.”

(Ms. Nadia Jahan)

“I chose DBS because of its association with NUST. I wanted to be part of a faculty that was visionary and honest with their work. My hopes for the DBS faculty were surpassed when I got the chance to collaborate with my colleagues. I have found them to have great calibre. I am happy to polish my research skills in such a conducive research environment. I believe that as a department that trains future clinicians DBS could start providing mental health services which would result in prolonged exposure to patient interaction. The department may also introduce CBT and other such specialization-based diplomas and also a PhD in Clinical Psychology with higher credit load. I believe that all institutes that train future clinicians can improve the quality of their graduates through the introduction of these changes.”

(Dr. Zainab Khan)

“As a fresh graduate I wanted to become a part of an environment in which I could hone my research skills. I chose DBS for this reason. The faculty here has been very accommodating and hardly a day goes by without my learning something new about the academic profession. I am grateful to the pioneers and the team that joined the department through its 10-year journey. I consider them all my mentors and I can safely expect that the department will reach new potentials in the future as the current team publishes the vibrant research being conducted in different fields of psychology and career counselling. I believe that contextualized understanding and study of mental health issues is of paramount importance. We would really benefit from such studies in terms of understanding the culturally different representations of mental health problems.”

(Ms. Khudaija Ashfaq Ahmed)

“During my tenure at DBS, I received many opportunities to explore myself and learn from the seniors, experts in the field and practitioners. For instance, I have organized a conference named as International

Conference on Wellbeing, where I interact with different NUST schools and invited international scholars and collaborators specially Michigan State University to contribute. In addition to this, I have been invited as a keynote speaker in conferences, resource person in workshops and seminars. I am also collaborating with trauma center and University Of Suxsses and University of Sabacean for research work. I am aspiring to work with same spirit and contribute to the development and betterment of DBS.”

(Dr. Siddrah Irfan)



Departmental Highlights --- through the Decade

Throughout the years, Department of Behavioral Sciences has strived to emulate the core vision in all of its endeavours --- a common thread that wove through the seminars, workshops, conferences and outreach programs that the department has offered in its decade-long existence. From “Safar-e-Khud Shinaasi” (the department’s first seminar), flagship conferences, department’s telecounseling services, to Nardban (an initiative with the intention is to provide a safe space to all those willing to talk about their struggles and challenges, to NUST community), DBS has always strived to become a torch-bearer in quality teaching, training and research whilst offering solutions to human problems that address the community or society’s needs. Some of the highlights of such endeavours are shared here:



Safar-e-khud Shinasi -- A journey into ourselves
facilitated by Dr. Patricia
Omidian



Role of social sciences in developing
communities facilitated by Dr. Bruce
Friedman



EMDR -I Workshop
facilitated by Brig. Dr. Rashid Qayyum



Workshop on “Focusing as a Therapeutic
Tool” facilitated by Dr. Patricia Omidian



Workshop on Relational DBT by Ms. Saima Wales



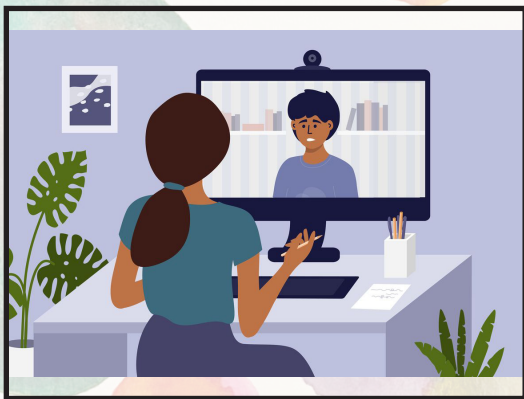
Department of Behavioral Sciences hosted the 2nd International conference on Wellbeing in collaboration with the Department of Psychiatry, Michigan State University, US. The key objectives of the conference were to examine influence of socio-cultural, organizational and geo-political factors on health and wellbeing and to explore integrated and sustainable solutions for human well-being.



National Conference on Qualitative Psychology was first of its kind in Pakistan to showcase qualitative research geared towards integrated solutions considering Sustainable Development Goals. The event provided opportunity to 150 researchers, scholars and academicians across the country to promote interdisciplinary qualitative research to find evidence-based and contextualized solutions of the social issues (such as health, hygiene, quality of education, social harmony etc). Eminent professionals in the field of social sciences attended the conference, and appreciated the platform provided by Department of Behavioral Sciences (NUST) in finding real time solutions to psychosocial and societal problems.



NARDBAN is a talk-series that was initiated by the Department of Behavioral Sciences in 2019. The intention was to provide a safe space to all those willing to talk about their struggles and challenges. So that together we can create the intelligence and resource which helps us thrive despite adversity. We believe that we are the beacon of change and when the conditions do not change, we can shift ourselves to overcome and rise above. Since its launch, various faculty members and invited speakers have led the sessions.



Responding to the need of quality counseling services, Department of Behavioral Sciences launched its tele-counseling services in 2020, which can be accessed from anywhere in Pakistan, offering remote mental health support to all.

Despite very limited dissemination, 97 people from the community reached out to DBS telecounseling service among whom 89 people were from Pakistan majorly from Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Karachi, Lahore, Bahawalpur, Gujranwala, Quetta, Mustang etc. where 6 people reached out from outside Pakistan from Saudia Arabia, UK and Hungary.



Over the last 10 years, DBS has also made critical contributions to bringing “human touch” at multiple forums across university. Few of these include:

1. Establishment of NUST disability redressal policy, with Dr. Salma Siddiqui as the chair of the committee. The objective was to make NUST policies and infrastructure inclusive and accommodative of people with disabilities.
2. Sensitization trainings for the administrative staff and faculty
3. Contribution to curriculum development for various schools at NUST

PROGRAMS AT DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES

The Department of Behavioural Sciences has grown exponentially in a span of only one decade. What started off as a dedicated program to train future clinical psychologists (MS Clinical Psychology), has now evolved into a unique seat of learning for both undergraduate and postgraduate scholars with multiple robust programs --- BS in Psychology, MS in Career Counseling and Education, and PhD in Psychology.

MS in Clinical Psychology

In response to a need for supervised training programs in Clinical Psychology in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, The Department of Behavioural Sciences initiated the post graduate program in Clinical Psychology with an aspiration to enhance expertise of the existing and future psychologist by offering a curriculum that integrates scientific knowledge with professional skills and attitudes necessary to function both in academic and applied setting. The program focuses on both specialized individual care and community approach to equip the graduating trainees in both clinical and community settings. The rationale of the program is to bridge the gap between academia and services by offering training in Clinical Psychology to produce professionals who can work with the spirit of innovation and creativity to implement the evidence-based practices in mental health domain. Over years, the MS clinical psychology program has produced professionals that have gone on to make an impact in clinical, community and developmental sector.

Sumbal Gilani, who is currently serving as a “Child protection officer” at UNICEF says:

“DBS has been a major stepping stone in my personal as well as professional growth. It cracked the shell of conventionality that I existed in and it appears that through this unconditional acceptance of my shortcomings and inadequacy of my knowledge, DBS inculcated a never-ending thirst for learning. For that I shall forever be grateful.”

MS in Career Counseling and Education

MS Career Counseling and Education program was developed with the assistance of Warwick University and the British Council to meet the need of developing qualified and professional career counselors /guidance practitioners in Pakistan. Since its inception in 2013, the program has produced many scholars that are now changing the career guidance landscape within Pakistan

Ahmer Khan, who is currently the CEO, Coaching & Training Pakistan Foundation (CTPF) says, “*MS Career Counseling & Education (CC&E) Program is one of the finest degree programs being offered for career development & guidance all over Pakistan. I believe, this program is much more than just a master’s degree. It prepares students to work as a career practitioner in different settings from career education to testing & assessment, and individual counseling. It also provides critical theoretical knowledge and research skills that the career development industry of Pakistan currently needs. While studying, I went through several transformational experiences that were life-changing. I wholeheartedly believe that joining this program was a tipping point in my own career and one of the best decisions I ever made.*”

BS in Psychology

With the success of its MS programs, which specifically focuses on teaching, and training of clinical psychologists and career counselors; the Department of Behavioural Sciences began to receive immense demand for introducing an undergraduate program in the field of Psychology. DBS curated its undergraduate program to offer training for future psychologists, that would sufficiently build their conceptual knowledge, and skills as per international standards of under-graduate level of education. The program also introduces the graduates to various concentrations in the sub disciplines including Education, Counseling, community, in order to prepare them for future professional training and better employability.

Tooba Kashif, who is currently working as MTO-HR at Fauji Foundation Head Office says, *“BS Psychology at NUST was a program which prepared it’s students not just as psychologists, but also as flexible workers that could adapt to any kind of work environment. Instead of focusing on just clinical training, the program was diverse and touched upon topics such as human resources, public health, prevention science, and research methods. In the job market, having this kind of background turned out to be very valuable. As a management trainee officer at the HR department of Fauji Foundation, I often find myself implementing the principles of HR and psychology which I picked up during my studies at nust. The clinical skills of empathy and active listening help me in every aspect of my life, including corporate management, off-work socialization, and relationship building. My sound knowledge of research methodology and the experience from my FYP give me competitive edge over other candidates.”*

PhD Psychology

The Department of Behavioural Sciences also offers a doctoral program in Psychology with an aspiration to enhance expertise of existing and future psychologist through a curriculum that integrates scientific knowledge with professional skills and attitudes necessary to function both in academic and applied setting.

Anum Sarfraz, from the poineer batch and currently in last stages of her doctorate says, *“Pursuing my Ph.D. at the Department of Behavioural Sciences has been a life-altering experience. The freedom to explore the frontiers of knowledge, the courage to think differently, the space to thrive, and the prowess to critique are the attributes this phenomenal institute provided me. For doctoral candidates, these are like gems for creating their own stories. My story has begun, and I’m proud to say that DBS is where I got to work on a Mindfulness-based intervention for students’ well-being!”*

FACULTY PROJECTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

In a short period of time since its inception, faculty at Department of Behavioral Sciences, has spearheaded various research ventures, showcasing its commitment to interdisciplinary learning at both national and international platforms, with the aim to find insight solutions to contribute to the wellbeing of the society.

HEC Funded Research Project on **“Risk and Protective Factors for Self-Harm in Children and Adolescents - Finding Basis and Prevent Self-harm in Children and Adolescents”**

(Dr. Salma Siddiqui)

HEC Funded Research Project on **“Childhood Behavior Problems in School Children of Islamabad Metropolitan Area”**

(Dr. Tamkeen Ashraf Malik)

HEC Funded Research Project on **“School Based Mental Health Intervention Building Competence and Capacity of School Teachers”**

(Dr. Tamkeen Ashraf Malik)

HEC Funded Research Project on **“Predictors of Children’s Behavior Problems: Role of Maternal Mind-Mindedness”**

(Dr. Sumbal Nawaz)

HEC Funded Research Project on **“Structuring career guidance services for the secondary schools’ students through career choice/pathways assessment tool”**

(Dr. Gulnaz Zahid)

HEC Funded Research Project on **“Implementation of School based universal preventive Intervention: Prevention of disruptive Behavior in Children”**

(Dr. Sumbal Nawaz)

HEC Funded Research Project on “**Research-based participatory approach for handling/teaching students with disability at the National University of Sciences and Technology**”
(Dr. Gulnaz Zahid)

To the utmost pride of the Department of Behavioral Sciences, two of its faculty members, Dr. Saeeda Khanum and Dr. Tamkeen Ashraf Malik were accepted at **Harvard University** for **Fulbright postdoctoral Fellowship**. They have both since completed the fellowship and are currently contributing to the department as full-time faculty members.

Dr Sumara Masood Ul Hassan is currently working as a social scientist in an international project titled “**Quantifying the Transmission Routes of Gastroenteritis in Pakistan and Developing Targeted Interventions**” approved by the Medical Research Council, UK. The project aims to develop an interdisciplinary approach; combining social science, molecular biology, microbial ecology, bioinformatics, epidemiology, and environmental engineering, to both quantify the importance of different transmission routes for non-viral gastro-enteric pathogens at multiple locations in Pakistan. Dr Sumara’s focus in this project is to quantitatively and qualitatively determine the socio-demographic context in influencing transmission of gastroenteritis. The project also intends to develop targeted interventions that would help to create awareness of the identification, management, and prevention of gastroenteritis in the community.

“**The FRIENDS resilience program**” -- an Australian-based program, that uses Cognitive Behavioural Techniques for the prevention, management, and intervention of mental health concerns like anxiety was initially developed by Dr. Paula Barrett and her team. Since then, it has been adapted/translated for different countries. Dr. Tamkeen Ashraf Malik has made a continued effort since 2016, to adapt and introduce the program in Pakistan. With continued efforts, up till now, she and her team at DBS has achieved the approval of training and licensing of training for five NUST faculty members, three Ph.D. students, eleven MS students, and five educationists from the Federal Directorate of Education, Islamabad.

As of now, the early development of Urdu version of almost all the manuals have been completed, while further refinement is being planned as part of implementation of the program in the field.

Additionally three Masters students are currently researching implementation of FRIENDS program with various populations under Dr. Tamkeen Ashraf Malik’s supervision (implementation of the Adult Resilience Program (ARP) among low-income employees, adaptation and implementation of my FRIENDS youth among Pakistani adolescents living in foster care and use of Adult Resilience Program in improving the psychological well-being and work engagement of early-career workers in Pakistan)

Departmental News --- for 2022



The Department of Behavioural Sciences celebrated World Mental Health Day 2022, which was organized and executed by BS PSY 2k21. They advocated this year's theme **"Make mental health and wellbeing a global priority for all"**, through various activities.

To the department's great pride, the undergraduate students showed their commitment to the theme, by using the platform to raise a high sum of sixty-eight thousand rupees for flood relief activities within Pakistan. Additionally, the BS PSY 2k19 also raised an additional twenty-five thousand rupees.

The overall amount was donated to NUST flood-relief fund.



Graduation of pioneer batch of BS in Psychology

Department of Behavioural Sciences recently celebrated an important milestone as its pioneer batch for BS in Psychology graduated early in 2022 after completing their degree requirements, including final year projects. The students chose variety of areas of research for their FYPs, under close supervision of esteemed faculty members, showcasing the diversity of their interest areas.



Collaboration with HR NUST

Department of Behavioural Sciences, under the guidance of Dr. Salma Siddiqui and Dr. Sumara Masood-ul-Hassan is currently engaged with HR NUST to help develop psychometric measures that would help assess several domains of skill and behaviour such as ethics, values, emotions, and general attitude towards work. The measure will be beneficial in identifying suitable candidates that complement the standard of NUST, understanding an employee's style of working and matching him with the best available job post and employing improved recruitment strategies, and reducing employee turnover.

Conference Participation by MSCCE scholars

During the month of May, Ms. Laraib Asif (MS CC&E 2K19) got the privilege to present an abstract on the topic 'Post-retirement career: Issues and challenges of retirees planning to work after retirement at the **1st National Conference on 'Emerging trends in Social Sciences** organized by Bahria university Karachi Campus. She also presented her research on 'Retirement and Counseling: Issues and challenges of retirees planning post-retirement employment' at the **3rd International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities** organized by Kinnaird College for Women Lahore. She was also accompanied by Saliha Ishaque (MS CC&E 2k20) and Damiya Sabir (MS CC&E 2K20), who also presented their research papers. Ammal Shehwar Zaman (MS CC&E 2K19) presented her work at the **AUSOM International research conference** held at Air University, Islamabad. Her research was titled "Personal Branding for Entrepreneurs: An Exploratory Study".

Asia Pacific Career Development Association Conference and Student Scholarships

The Asia Pacific Career Development Association (APCDA) was created to assist in dealing with these prevalent issues and aims to promote collaboration among career practitioners throughout the Asia Pacific region. Between May 16th – May 27th, the 2022 Asia Pacific Career Development Association (APCDA) and International Association for Educational and Vocation Guidance virtual conference was held which gave the MS CC&E students at NUST the opportunity to meet career service providers in neighboring countries, and gain a global perspective to enhance their learning and practice. Through her leadership, Dr Gulnaz (selected representative from Pakistan) facilitated 17 MS CC&E students in receiving the Martha Russell Student Scholarship, which helped cover all registration-related expenses for graduate scholars or recent graduates to participate online. The participating students described the experience as "immersive, educational and deeply insightful with expansive networking opportunities".

High Achievers Scholarship Distribution Mentoring Session

On the 26th of April 2022 the Human Development Foundation (HDF) invited MS Career Counselling and Education (CC&E) faculty and students to the auspicious event, 'High Achievers Scholarship Distribution & Mentoring Session' at the Institute of Regional Studies located at Main Ataturk Avenue, Islamabad. Assistant Professor, Ms. Nadia Jahan from DBS and career counsellor, Ms. Sidra Azhar from C³A conducted group career counselling informational talks and sessions for secondary school and intermediate students including those from grades 8th, 9th, and 10th. Mr. Suhail Awan, the CEO of HDF, expressed his vote of thanks to the representatives of NUST for providing career counselling to their aspiring young students. He appreciated the fact that students were made aware about the variety of growing careers in their local settings to make wide decisions about their future fields. HDF organizers thanked the NUST team for its enthusiastic efforts to conduct these group career counselling sessions for the fruitful career progression of their students.

Career Guide Expo 2022

Between the 11th and 13th March, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training held the Career Guide Expo 2022 at the Pak China Centre. Ms. Nadia Jahan and the students from the MSCC&E 2K19 and 2k21 batch represented S³H at the Expo. The expo provided the students with a chance to promote the concept of career guidance among Federal Ministry professionals, academia experts, organizational personnels and parents. Additional Secretary and Director Academics of FDE were also present. After interacting with the faculty and students, representatives from FDE expressed the need for a more closer collaboration between DBS and the FDE, whereby DBS can help provide a blueprint for establishing career guidance services for FG schools and colleges. Furthermore, it would provide MS CC&E students' with experiential leaning and placements opportunities.

Guest Lecture On Effective Engagement of Parents In The Better Schooling of their Children: Role of School Counselors

On the 11th of March, DBS hosted a guest lecture which focused on the topic, “Effective engagement of parents in the better schooling of their children: Role of school counselors”. The lecture was hosted by Mr. Shakir Hussain Shakir who is the head of department of student affairs and global engagement at Pak-Turk Maarif International Schools and Colleges in Islamabad. The objectives of the lecture were to explore the process of effective parental engagement in the social, emotional, psychological, academic, professional and personal development of their children and to understand the barriers against effective engagement of parents. Through this lecture, students gained deeper understanding of the importance of having a collaborative relationship between parents, schools, and teachers in order for children to achieve optimal development and academic success.

Career And Character Education Training Programme

Between the 31st of January to 1st February, DBS conducted the “Careers and Character Education Training Programme”. It was a two-day training program for thirty-seven primary and secondary level teachers and career guidance professionals. Experts from different disciplines joined hands with S³H to conduct the training under the guidance of lead trainer Dr. Gulnaz Zahid. Other contributors include Ms. Nadia Jahan, Ms. Katherine Usman, Ms. Aqsa Syeda, Ms. Rehman Rabab, Ms. Maimuna Akram and Mr. Haider Baig.

The training sessions focused on lessons planning strategies for careers education, internationally developed career education frameworks, the importance of careers in curriculum, the need to explore how careers in curriculum can enhance student learning engagement, motivation and attendance within a Pakistani context, the existing career education strategies and the career education intervention models suitable to the needs of Pakistan. The best practices from the UK, Australia and US were shared with the participants through extensive information packs. The sessions also focused on ways to incorporate career education into the curriculum either through subject approach or whole school programme approach. The training offered accountable information on how to offer careers education at schools through the review of the Association for Careers Education and Guidance (ACEG) framework. The framework also facilitated participants in realising how they can offer comprehensive school-based approaches to career guidance.

Sports Psychology And Exercise Sciences Webinar

On Friday 11th March 2022, DBS hosted a webinar titled, ‘Sports Psychology and Exercise Sciences’. The webinar was conducted by Miss Katherine Usman, Lecturer DBS, in collaboration with Bangor University, UK and was led by Dr. Stuart Beattie who is the course director of performance psychology at Bangor University. The students in attendance learnt about the effectiveness of helping athletes by utilising psychological principles to achieve optimal mental health and to improve performance (referred to as performance enhancement). Another important focus of the webinar was informing the students of potential career pathways and benefits of becoming a sports psychologist.

A Departmental Take on SDGs

Ms. Khudaija Ashfaq Ahmed
Lecturer

Department of Behavioral Sciences, NUST

The sustainable development agenda for 2030 includes a set of shared goals that the members of the UN adopted and had aimed to achieve by the year 2030. The SDGs aim to provide the modern world with a shared blueprint for prosperity. At the heart of the agenda for 2030 are the 17 goals that act as an urgent call for action toward a global partnership against the recognition and eradication of modern world problems. Each goal targets one overarching problem that, if solved, can improve the living standard of the less privileged. Figure 01, listing the 17 SDGs, showcases the diversity of the issue that the agenda for sustainable development 2030 targets.

Many of the 17 SDGs can be linked to social sciences, especially Psychology- for instance, no poverty, ending hunger, improvement of health and wellbeing, provision of quality education, enhancing gender equality, better labour market, and economy, lowering inequalities, building peace, and most importantly strengthening partnerships to quality of life throughout the world since the espousal of the SDGs psychologists all round the world have conducted extensive research contributing substantively to our understanding of the relevant goals especially that of Health and Wellbeing (Antonucci, Bial, Cox, Finkelstein, & Machado, 2019; Carr & Meyer, 2018). Likewise, the academic institutions that are involved in the training of future psychologists have also taken up arms to develop expertise in their trainees that will enable them to attain these goals.

The Department of Behavioural Sciences (DBS), like its peers that train future psychologists and career counsellors, has been working since 2015 on the development of routes toward the SDGs. DBS, as an academic institution, not only trains the students towards goal attainment it is also involved with activities that target the SDGs relevant to the fields of psychology and career counselling. In this article, we discuss the different ways in which DBS ensures effective attainment and addressing of relevant SDGs adopted by Pakistan and the rest of the UN members.

DBS's road to the SDGs

DBS is first and foremost an academic institution that provides its students with an environment that promotes the nurturing of their skills. We have two major concentrations that we specialize in namely Clinical Psychology and Career Counselling and Education. We also provide an undergraduate degree in Applied Psychology. In these endeavours, we have adopted customs that ensure high-quality education for all our students. Our endeavours are well-aligned with the requirements of SDG-04 of Quality Education.

We have regular curriculum revisions to incorporate the new findings that are being made through extensive research within the department as well as outside the academic world at large. We encourage student feedback on teaching practices and ensure a student-centered experience within the classroom. We also provide students with expert faculty who have been trained internationally. DBS also provides students with research and internship opportunities, to ensure that they can grasp the applied nature of their fields. Recently, we also collaborated with NUST Creative Learning School on a project involving on-site observations and recommendations for children with learning difficulties.

We also work in collaboration with other partners for the enhancement of our Career Counseling and Education program. We appreciate the importance of addressing the SDG-08 of Decent Work and Economic Growth. In the current economically turbulent times, it is necessary to bring awareness regarding the need for better placements within the labour market. Our program on Career Counselling and Education views placing the right person for the right job as a hallmark of its pursuits. We provide expert training to the students in this program and ensure their practical skills through the provision of suitable placements. Students are highly encouraged to immerse themselves in such hands-on experiences as are accessible in the field. Such services are also provided within the university to students to help them in pursuing their careers so that they can become an effective part of the economy without any dangers to their mental health.

Along with our Career Counselling and Education program that specifically targets both SDG-08 of Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG-03 of Good Health and Wellbeing, we also offer a Psychology program. Both our programs really emphasize the importance of mental health for a healthy work and professional environment. In our Psychology program, we train both practical and research skills of students pursuing the profession of psychology. Students are provided experiential learning opportunities to ascertain the polishing of their skills under the expert guidance of highly trained faculty and lab staff.

Since the department itself trains future clinicians and counsellors, we give great emphasis on the mental health and well-being of our students and faculty. Recently under the supervision of Dr. Salma Siddiqui and Dr. Siddrah Irfan, the department organized its first international flagship conference based on the SDG of Good Health and Wellbeing. The conference discussed the works of contemporary researchers that targeted this SDG and elaborated on its significance. The conference concluded with a series of discussions on the importance of addressing mental health issues and ensuring a healthy environment for individual growth in all institutions. These discussions have been incorporated into all our departmental activities as we aim to provide our students and faculty with a safe and healthy environment. For instance, DBS, under the supervision of Ms. Maheen and Ms. Gulmeena, provides the community with tele-counselling services that can be availed with complete anonymity. We are also involved in a project named Rawan, in which we inaugurated a behavioural desk at Dhok Hassu for the provision of psychological support to its people.

Within our academic activities, DBS promotes a healthy and safe environment inside and outside the classroom through feedback sessions. To promote well-being DBS also encourages its students to indulge in extracurricular activities and take part in clubs to indulge in their hobbies such as community service and robotics etc. We organize career fairs to give our students the equal opportunity (SDG-05 Gender Equality) in getting a job that best fits their career goals. Furthermore, to target the SDG-10 of Reduced Inequality, the Head of DBS Dr. Gulnaz Zahid was able to procure the Martha Russell Scholarship of APCDA for the 2022 Conference for 17 students of MS Career Counselling and Education. Such scholarships provide the students with opportunities that they might not be able to avail themselves of while living in an economically less privileged state. DBS also encourages its students to do research that helps uplift people from far-flung areas in order to bridge the inequality in opportunities provided to students in different areas. Recently, our MS student worked on the nature of career guidance provided to students in rural areas. Her work shows the compromised level of career exploration in these students which happens due to the dearth of career opportunities.

DBS encourages both the faculty and students to get international exposure and collaborate with partners outside of NUST. Therefore, our faculty have actively become engaged in collaborations with other institutions to minimize the risk of mental health issues in society at large. It is necessary for all institutions, academic or otherwise, to form partnerships with each other to ensure the achievement of the SDGs. DBS realizes the need for such partnerships acutely and has embarked on projects and collaborations to strengthen its ties with other institutions.

For instance, the Friends Resilience Organization and other collaborators from Australia and North America have shown DBS faculty great support in research projects of mutual interest. DBS faculty Dr. Tamkeen has been working with Friends Resilience on a project focused on Training/Licensing and Capacity Building. Furthermore, Dr. Sumara Masood ul Hassan is involved in a project funded by the Medical Research Counsel, which focuses on social scientists working on Quantifying the transmission routes of gastroenteritis in Pakistan and developing targeted interventions. Dr. Sumara's work targets not only SDG-03 but also SDG-06 of Clean Water and Sanitation.

DBS is very proud of the continuous efforts that our faculty makes to ensure collaborations and partnerships for the attainment of mutual goals. Our department believes in the necessity of realizing the SDGs to ensure the prosperity of our country and the world in general. We are committed to these ideals and look forward to a future with even more possibilities for progress for our department and our students.

