

The Scientific Infiltration: Sweetness in the Toxicity of Cultural Domination – A Case Study in Psychology

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Scientific knowledge stands as one of humanity's most profound achievements and a foundational pillar in the edifice of human civilization. Its overarching objective is the elevation and well-being of mankind. The cross-cultural exchange of knowledge and science plays a pivotal role in enhancing the intellectual standing of societies, in addition to fostering the advancement of the sciences themselves. Psychology, as a key discipline within the human sciences, is instrumental in understanding the human psyche, interpreting human behavior, forecasting actions, and regulating behavior. Like other human sciences, psychology emerged within Western society over the past two centuries, evolving under the influence of several Western theorists. This has given rise to a variety of theoretical schools, including Psychoanalysis, Behaviorism, Trait Theory, Needs Theory, and Humanistic Psychology.

These schools present many compelling and logically coherent hypotheses, offering nuanced explanations of human behavior. They have significantly contributed to our understanding of the human mind and have addressed numerous psychological issues faced by contemporary individuals. However, these schools have not been immune to critique, with scholars and researchers striving to refine their methodologies in order to propose scientifically defensible hypotheses and interpretations. Despite the criticisms and theoretical contradictions within the discipline, and the emergence of critical psychology, which offers valuable critiques of hypotheses, psychological theories, research methodologies, result generalizations, and the contextual relevance of these theories, many Iraqi academics continue to treat these theories as irrefutable truths. Some even perceive that anything published in English and in prestigious foreign journals is inherently reliable. For instance, when a graduate student in psychology selects

a thesis or dissertation topic, the academic committee typically requires the use of a foreign term, theory, or scale in English.

This uncritical acceptance of foreign sources as authoritative, without due scrutiny, constitutes a methodological flaw that may lead to the adoption of imprecise or biased information. The mere fact that a source is foreign or published by an esteemed institution does not guarantee the veracity of its content. Research and academic studies are influenced by various factors such as intellectual paradigms, political agendas, and the cultural context of the researchers. Critical thinking and rigorous scientific analysis are indispensable tools to maintain objectivity and ensure the accuracy of information, rather than accepting it solely on the grounds that it comes from foreign sources. This unreserved acceptance of foreign ideas and cultures has become "like honey" — eagerly consumed without discernment!

When considering psychology, since its introduction into the Arab and Islamic world, there has been a noticeable lack of substantial contributions or critical engagement with the field, despite some attempts (such as the writings of Dr. Al-Bustani, and Sayyids Kamal Al-Haidari and Ahmad Al-Qubnaji). The failure of Western theorists to account for the social context of Arab and Islamic societies, and their tendency to generalize their assumptions to all human societies, places Arab and Muslim researchers in psychology in a position of significant ethical responsibility. This responsibility, grounded in academic integrity, demands the development of an Islamic psychology that is informed by the insights and interpretations found within our Islamic heritage to understand and explain human behavior. Moreover, it is the duty of those involved in the design of psychology curricula to shape these concepts and present them as a viable school of thought on human behavior, at the very least, and to allow for specialization in this domain based on actual societal needs.

For example, in developmental and educational psychology, most Western theorists associate certain pedagogical approaches with healthy development and psychological well-being, yet

these approaches often emphasize individualism, a core tenet of capitalist ideology. This view is in direct contrast with the structure of our societies, which are often described as "patriarchal" or "hierarchical," rather than "horizontal," as Western models would suggest. Furthermore, the educational methods passed down through generations in our societies have not led to widespread psychological distress or disorders, as claimed. If we were to classify mental disorders according to the criteria of the American Psychological Association or the World Health Organization, we might find that what is considered a disorder in Western societies is often seen as a normative condition in our own, and may even receive commendation. In general, individuals in societies subjected to prolonged adverse circumstances for over six months may experience psychological challenges or disorders. However, upon examining societies such as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine—where people have endured decades of poverty, conflict, and violence—one finds that these societies have adapted to their circumstances with remarkable resilience. While individual cases of distress exist, the broader trend points to greater acceptance and adaptability.

It is possible that the ongoing cultural and cognitive invasion, alongside the gradual shift toward individualism, will make these foreign theories more applicable in the future. Nonetheless, we retain the right to embrace our identity, values, and distinctive way of understanding life. There is an urgent need to develop a theory of human behavior rooted in Islamic principles and to produce research and scholarly works that explore this. To that end, it is imperative to:

1. Establish a branch of Islamic psychology that draws upon Islamic concepts and heritage to derive psychological hypotheses and to investigate them using tailored research tools and methodologies.
2. Incorporate critical psychology as a key component of the academic curriculum in psychology departments, as it fosters analytical thinking, skepticism, and critical inquiry among students, preventing them from merely absorbing and repeating external knowledge without question.