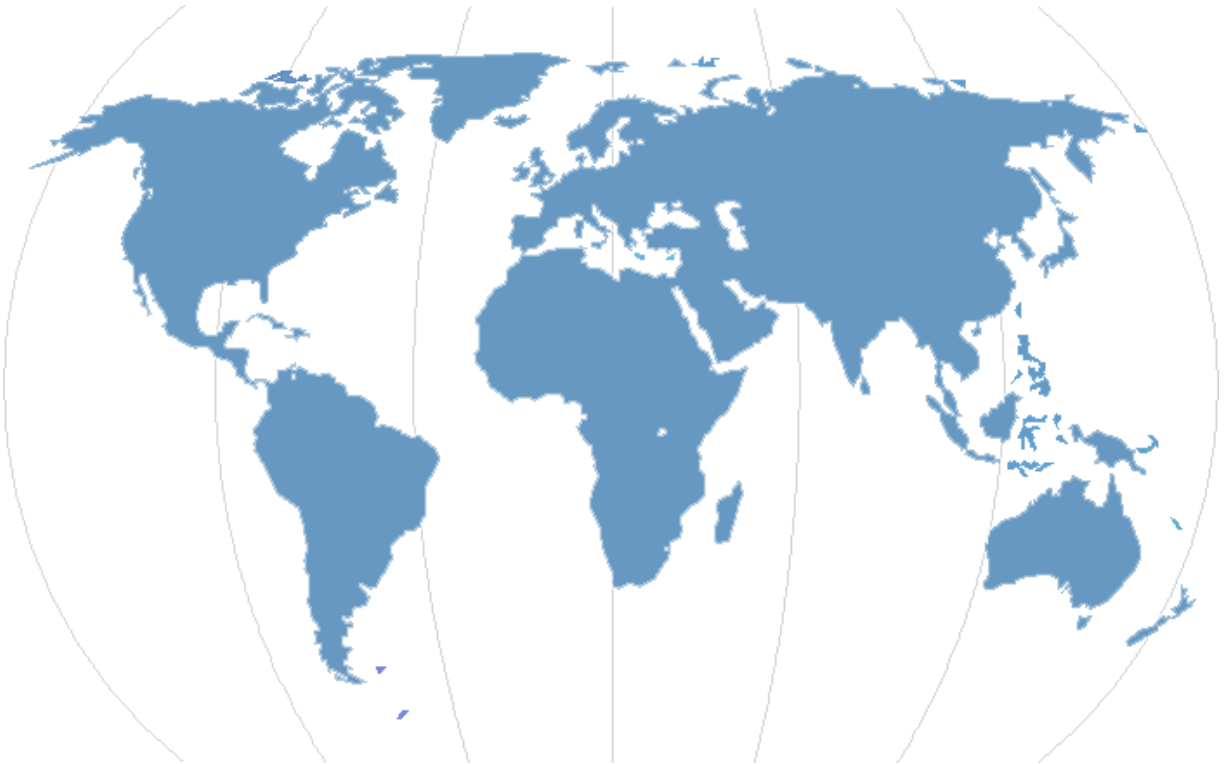




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## Psychology and Psychologists in Egypt: Emphasis on Cultural Psychology Research and Its Growth

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"How has psychology developed in Egypt?" This question has become timely in the wake of the Arab Spring that swept through the Middle East between the years 2010 through 2012. This three-part report reviews: (1) how psychology in Egypt has been shaped by two forces--educational reform and exposure to western psychology. (2) some current themes, and (3) some future directions..

**Key words:** International psychology, cultural psychology in Egypt, modern psychology, clinical psychology across cultures, Western influences and inception of modern psychology

The history of psychology in Egypt was heavily shaped by two universities: Cairo University and Ain Shams University.

Cairo University was established in 1908, as part of a broad sociopolitical movement ignited by Egyptian national feelings against foreign domination (e.g., Ottoman domination, and later British occupation). As early as 1911, cross-cultural interests became available to students in both Schools of Education, and Arts. It is difficult to account for the development of cross-cultural research in Egypt, and how it started, without understanding these earlier events (Berry, 2002; Ibrahim, 2012, ; 2013; King, 1984; Soueif & Ahmed, 2001; Stevens & Wedding, 2004; Valsiner, 2000). Psychology courses were initially taught under the umbrella of philosophy, but by 1940 teaching psychology became the responsibility of psychologists—marking a new stage in the progress of full independence in Egypt.

The establishment of Ain Shams University in 1950 further progressed psychology training in a few ways--gaining recognition among Egyptian academicians and Arab students studying in Egyptian universities. The number of qualified psychologists increased significantly. Ain Shams University's division of psychology was in the department of Psychological and Sociological Studies at the Faculty of Arts. This was the first recognized sub-department for psychology in Egypt, and became a model to promote psychological stud-

ies in Egypt and later in the entire Arab region. In fact, all branches of psychology witnessed their utmost years of growth within that newly established division, particularly cultural psychology; psychological research methods; learning theories; clinical, personality, developmental psychology, and physiological psychology; psychoanalysis; and history of psychology. .

Several reasons can be suggested here to explain why the Ain-Shams' psychology division was, at that time, so influential in Egypt. First of all, the majority of the faculty were psychologists who returned to Egypt after earning Ph.D. or other degrees in European or Anglo-American universities--including the University of London, Sorbonne of France, Stanford, and Yale. Several European and American textbooks were either translated into Arabic or used in teaching without translation, such as those authored by Anne Anastasi, Hans Jurgen Eysenck, Sigmund Freud, Joy Paul Guilford, Ernest Hilgard in addition to Arabic textbooks in almost all branches authored by Egyptian professors and scholars such as Yousef Murad, Abdel-Moneim Elmiligi, Louis Kamil Meleika, Mohamed Othman Nagati, Mustapha Ismail Soueif, Mohamed El-Sayyed Khairi, and Ahmed Fayeck. This was probably the most radiant stage in the history of modern psychology in both Egypt and neighboring Arab countries.

Overall, psychology in Egypt was shaped by two powerful forces: Educational reform in Egypt in the 1950s and exposure to Western psychological and behavioral sciences.

**Educational reform** led to establishment of independent departments of psychology in both Cairo and Ain Shams universities. This modernization encouraged an influx of Western academicians to teach in Egypt and send Egyptian graduates abroad to England, France, and later to the United States, to become qualified as future faculty members.

**Exposure to Western research** activities and practices represent the second most influential factor on the growth of cultural psychology. This stage witnessed the beginnings of the Egyptian scholars to model Anglo-American psychological approaches in research, teaching, and practice.

Most of the historians describe this stage as the second most influential factor on the progress of cultural psychology to its position as we see it today (Gielen, Adler, & Milgram, 1992; Ibrahim, 2013; Soueif & Ahmed, 2001). Social scientists use the concept *tanweer* (translated in English as enlightenment, illumination or uprising) to describe this stage of secular knowledge resources, including university education. This stage was the inception of modern psychology as a scientific discipline and career in the early decades of the 20th century, sending great numbers of university graduates and scholars to Europe and later to USA, as well as the return of great numbers of Egyptians who studied on scholarships in Europe and USA to Egypt. I encourage more research on this historic era to better understand the development of psychology in Egypt. In my view, the growth of clinical psychology in Egypt and other Arab cultures in the last five decades owes its flourishing to also another psychosocial factor,

namely, the modernization process following the oil boom. The accompanying educational reform encouraged many Egyptian scholars and professors in psychology and psychiatry to return from the west to practice and teach in neighboring Arab Gulf areas such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. As a direct observer and contributor in this process, I offer two observations to support this view:

First, disciplines of psychotherapy such as that of behavioral/cognitive psychotherapy would not have been known or practiced in that culture without psychologists and psychiatrists coming from USA, and England. Some examples are Abel-Azeez Dukhayyil and Abdulla Alnafie from Saudi Arabia, Abdel-Sattar Ibrahim, Radwa Ibrahim (Egyptian American), and psychiatrist Mohamed Albuckli (Egyptian British).

Second, we see some close cooperation between Arab psychologists and psychiatrists. Two examples are (a) stress and stress-related problems underlying psychophysiological disorders, including the scientific neurological recognition of the role of psychological health practices; and (b) for the first time the establishment of a health psychology division in the Psychiatry Department of Faisal University in Saudi Arabia in 1999 (and later in other Egyptian universities and private psychological and psychiatric clinics). These activities could not have been achieved without cooperation with at least two psychiatrists: the Egyptian/British Psychiatrist, Mohamed Albuckli (the former Chairman of the Psychiatry Department of King Faisal University), and the Tunisian psychiatrist Jamal Turkey (the founder of Arabpsynet), with his active participation in publicizing the active achievements in both psychology and psychiatry.

Below are some existing research activities in modern Egypt:

### Cultural Research

Psychologists in Egypt have been conducting work on cultural implications since the 1950s. Researchers have been publishing their work, including books, theoretical and empirical studies in Egyptian and other Arab periodicals as well as in a few British, European, American, and Indian journals. Most commonly used design is correlational study along with a few experimental studies. Researchers have covered many areas, some of which have received more emphasis than others, such as clinical diagnosis and psychotherapy, psychological testing and measurement, creativity, authoritarian personality, dogmatism, psychosomatic disorders, and more recently, political and psychological implications of the Egyptian Spring Revolution between 2010-2012. These areas are examined below.

**Clinical diagnosis and psychotherapy.** Programs of research on cross-cultural studies have been initiated in many clinical psychology areas. For example, Ibrahim and colleagues (e.g., Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2000) initiated a comprehensive program of research about cognitive behavioral therapies covering both assessment and behavioral/cognitive approaches among Egyptian and Arabian individuals. Ibrahim and colleagues (e.g. Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2000; Ibrahim, Du-

khayyil & Ibrahim, 1993) theorized that Egyptian patients, as in any other culture, are forced into different life experiences, and, therefore, many different and unique cultural values and perspectives have to be considered in the Egyptianization process in both clinical assessment tools and cognitive-behavioral approaches of therapy. The following five common social and personality/ behavioral modalities that were found relevant for better understanding of Arab/Egyptian patients: (a) Religious orientation; (b) Orientation toward kinship and communal attachments; (c) Reserved attitudes and behaviors toward matters involving sex; (d) ambivalent attitudes toward authority; and (e) external locus of control (Ibrahim, & Ibrahim, 2000).

Within the last decade, research and clinical writings on children and adolescents have attracted strong interest among clinicians and psychotherapists using cognitive and behavioral therapy approaches. For example, Ibrahim (2012a, 2012b, 2013); Ibrahim and Ibrahim (1993, 2000, 2003); and Ibrahim, Dukhayyil, and Ibrahim (1993, 1994, 1999) have published and presented several research papers in psychology conferences in the USA, Egypt, Holland, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Abudhabi. Ibrahim and colleagues (Ibrahim, Dukhayyil, & Ibrahim, 1999) also co-authored a textbook, explaining the details of their program, that consist of three divisions discussing the role of psychological and psychodiagnoses/clinical tools, techniques of therapy, and a number of case studies of Egyptian children and adolescents.

**Personality.** By using translated and standardized tests of authoritarianism, fascism, dogmatism, prejudice, and other measures designed for use in Egypt (Ibrahim, 1991), several research papers were published in this area in the USA (Ibrahim, 1977a, 1977b, 1979, 1989, 1991). Other personality research flourished in Egypt, as well, including the factorial structure of the 16 personality factors (Abdul-Khalik, Ibrahim, & Budick, 1986), social reinforcement as a personality style (Ibrahim, 1985), the factorial structure of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, EPQ (Ibrahim, 1982), social reinforcement as a personality dimension (Ibrahim, 1980), extraversion and neuroticism in cross-cultural perspective (Ibrahim, 1979), presidential preferences of psychotics and normals (Ibrahim and Frumkin, 1977), containment and exclusiveness-- measurement and correlates (Ibrahim, 1977a), dogmatism and personality factors among Egyptians (Ibrahim, 1977b).

**Cross-cultural application of psychotherapy.** Dwairy and Van Sickle (1996) focused on the state of cross-cultural psychology in Arab countries including Egypt, and asserted that Western psychotherapy can help alleviate internal conflicts among Arabic clients, but it could often result in greater conflict between the individual and his/her society due to the fact that most of the basic techniques of psychotherapy are at odds with core beliefs of Arab culture. Other reviews of psychological, psychiatric, and anthropological research were carried out in Arab countries (e.g., Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya) by Ibrahim (1993). He concluded that the emerging psychopathological patterns in Arabian cultures were similar to those usually noted in the West. Large propor-

tions of mental health problems in all Arab countries, however, receive inadequate psychological care (Ibrahim, 2000).

**Psychological tests.** Since the 1940s, Egyptians have been translating and standardizing psychological tests into Arabic. These adaptations are growing vigorously to keep pace with the increasing number of psychology researchers, practitioners, and educators across the Arab world, starting early at Ain Shams university in Egypt thanks to the late Louis Kamel Meleika (who was among those who returned to Egypt after earning his Ph.D. at Stanford University). Many psychological tests initially created by Western scholars have been translated into Arabic with various degrees of standardization including the Stanford-Binet, Wechsler Bellevue Intelligence Scale, Wechsler Bellevue Intelligence Scale for Children, Minnesota Multiphasic Inventory (MMPI), Progressive Matrices Scale. All are translated and there have been some attempts at standardization (see Ibrahim, 2012, 2013).

**Creativity:** Measurement and applications. Creativity research programs were initiated by A-S Ibrahim (Ibrahim, 2004), Soueif and his colleagues (Soueif & Ahmed, 2001) at the University of Cairo starting in 1970. The University of Cairo Creativity Program aimed to design, translate, and standardize a group of American creativity tests. Ibrahim (2004, 1976) Soueif & others (Soueif & Ahmed, 2001) translated and standardized some major American creativity batteries, such as those pioneered by Joy Paul Guilford, Paul Torrance, and Frank Barron (Ibrahim, 2004; 1976; Soueif & Ahmed, 2001). Tests were translated into Egyptian and administered to over 500 university students (Ibrahim, 1976). The results were reported in Psychological Reports in the 1970s. Also, two books were published on creativity by the Anglo Egyptian Bookstore in 1989 (Ibrahim, 2002a, 2002b, 2008). More recently, another comprehensive Creativity and Artistic Appreciation program of research, translation, and writings was developed by Shakir Soliman Abdel-Hameed at the Egyptian Academy of Arts (Abdel-Hameed, 2012). Abdel-Hameed's program is considered another promising example of a sustained research program that also has been pursued by many other researchers in the field (for details, see Ibrahim, 2012, 2013).

**Cognitive and positive psychology.** Ibrahim, Dukhayil and Ibrahim (2008), for example have undertaken research to (a) develop assessment techniques to adapt two measures: The Dysfunctional-Irrational thoughts Scale and the Positive Cognitive Thoughts and Behavior Scale among Arab patients; (b) integrate cognitive therapy and positive psychology principles into assessment and treatment processes; (c) incorporate cultural values into the treatment process; and (d) offer well-defined psychological strategies to help cross-cultural practitioners achieve more effective therapeutic outcomes.

**Arab Spring.** Since January 2012, several analyses of the Egyptian Spring have been made by historians, sociologists, and journalists, but not by psychologists. By using content analysis and individual case study designs, the current writer has been conducting such research, aiming for the first

comprehensive psychological review of positive and negative aspects of the January, 2011 Egyptian Spring revolution.

These findings are reported in a new Arab volume published by the High Supreme Cultural Council of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture.

**Support for research.** Growth of research is usually facilitated by availability of supportive factors such as periodicals, associations, conventions, seminars, and academic or non-academic psychological centers. The three major psychological journals are *Derasat Nafsiyya* (English translation: *Psychological Studies*), published by the Egyptian Psychologists Association; the government supported association of the Egyptian Society of Mental Health, also publishes its quarterly *Egyptian Journal of Psychology*; and *The Journal of Clinical Psychology* published by the Society of Clinical Psychology. More recently, the Egyptian Psychological Union (EPU) announced two new periodicals; *Psychological Review* and *The Egyptian Psychologist*; the chief editor of both journals is Abdel-Sattar Ibrahim. The Editorial Board consists of psychology professors, senior psychologists and consultants from Egypt, Arab countries, and USA (such as David Baker, Harold Takooshian, U. Gilien, Ken Keith, ShakirAbdel-Hameed). Both journals will be published in English and Arabic beginning in 2015.

**Societies, Associations and Unions.** The first association established in Egypt was the Egyptian Association of Psychological Studies. Other organizations have been established, including the Egyptian Psychoanalytical Society, Egyptian Society of Clinical Psychology, and the Egyptian Global Association for Psychological Consultation and Services (EGAP).

EGAP aims to provide consultation and psychological services to individuals and institutions in Cairo and neighboring areas. EGAP also aims to connect with other Anglo-American psychological and behavioral institutions to cooperate in research, writing, and translation activities.

The Egyptian Psychological Union (EPU), founded on April 5, 2012, is open to all psychological specialists in Egypt who hold B.A. in Psychology or a higher degree as well as to Arab psychologists and all other foreign psychologists. The current president of the EPU is Abdel-Sattar Ibrahim along with administrative board members including Sayyed Sharkawi, Radwa Ibrahim, William Kamal Ibrahim, Amal Kamal, and Salah ElSirsi. The EPU offers all types of psychological services to its members.

The Egyptian National Translation Center (NTC) was established by the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, Egypt. The NTC has translated over 1,000 books and periodicals in different areas. The psychological books translated are dated and limited in number. More recently, however, Abdel-Sattar Ibrahim has been assigned by the NTC to chair two working groups of experienced Egyptian and non-Egyptian professors to translate two major APA and Oxford University Press publications that are *The APA Dictionary of Psychology* (Vanden Bos, 2007) and *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Psychology: International Perspectives* (Baker, 2012). In recent years, there has also been an increase in number of Arabic

language psychology textbooks, tests, and centers offering psychological services in this specialty.

**Private Centers.** Several private agencies are launching new health and pseudo positive human resources psychology centers; to profit from a primary health care system designed to cope with increased psychological and socio-medical problems. Many of these new health centers are businesses staffed by some unlicensed primary care physicians, religious clergy, or untrained psychologists, to provide specialized medical, psychiatric, psychological and human resources services to many types of complaints that range from personal and family problems to severe mental illnesses (e.g., schizophrenia, depression, addiction, and psychophysiological chronic diseases). Such companies claim to offer positive psychology counseling services, and are proliferating. This leaves the whole psychology field in Egypt open to the public accusation of selling over-priced services.

**Concluding Remarks: Points of concern.** After more than 50 years since its inception as a behavioral science, profession and career, psychology in Egypt continues to face limited opportunities of growth and still lacks societal and governmental recognition. These concerns are noted below.

Generally, all psychology departments are, in fact, lacking infrastructure, equipment and human resources, including insufficient laboratory equipment, libraries, new books, journals, educational films, and under-developed psychological and cross-cultural research capability especially linkages to the national innovation system.

There is also lack of communication among Egyptian psychologists and their colleagues across cultures. It is believed that encouraging scientific interactions, availability of periodicals, shared research projects will definitely offer some effective working solutions for communication problems among Egyptian psychologists themselves and with their colleagues across the world.

The public image of this discipline is also of concern. Psychology continues to face lack of recognition from the media, the public, medical practitioners (e.g., psychiatrists), and psychologists themselves. Its role in social reform discussions is very limited. Psychologists play minimal role in societal planning and development, including health services. Psychologists lack training and their chances to be licensed to practice their profession is almost blocked due to bureaucracy and conflict of interest. Therefore, jobs are scarce for all psychologists--from junior ranks to full professors and senior psychologists. Psychologists are sadly struggling to afford living expenses, although some psychologists are working in education as school teachers and special education specialists.

Television and Internet have become powerful sources of information in Egypt, creating a new arena for discussion and dissemination of information for those who seek psychological advice. This new medium provides opportunity for clergy, quasi-mental health specialists, and non-licensed psychologists to take commercial advantage of people with a variety of personal, family, and mental health problems. The risk here is high.

If psychology in Egypt continues to represent a secular Western perspective, in the future it may conflict with traditional Islamic theology. It is the responsibility of the leading groups of senior psychologists to be prepared for such challenges facing the future of psychology in Egypt. Department heads should be ready to call for some positive integration without sacrificing the values that made psychology among the top areas of help for individuals and groups to flourish.

**Brighter Notes.** On a brighter note, psychologists have become recognized for their role in mental health services, education, and writing for the public. The field is poised to contribute to sociocultural transformation in such areas as health promotion, educational reform, human rights, democratic reform, and decision-making. Young psychologists continue to grow in numbers and to bring their skills, knowledge, scientific studies and devotion to positive change. Egyptian psychologists will eventually find themselves in situations ripe for consensus-building and meaningful change.

Another bright note is that the number and roles of women in psychology have increased dramatically worldwide and somewhat in Egypt.

Lastly, the current pro-democracy atmosphere in almost all Arab countries including Egypt could prove of some positive value (Ibrahim, 2012b). The only research done about psychological aspects of this area is probably the research done by the present researcher (Ibrahim, 2012b) on positive and negative psychological aspects of the Egyptian uprising of January 2011 in Egypt. The study was carried out in the heart of the liberation square, known as medan al-tahreer among Egyptians, where the uprising started, during the 18 days of uprising preceding the fall of the 30 years old regime of Mubarak and his government. Naturally, both timing and place were extremely risky, tense, and in many ways impossible for controlled research. It is beyond the limits of this report to elaborate on how these challenges were met. This study was published in a 500-page volume by the Egyptian High Cultural Supreme of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture. It is in Arabic and has, to our knowledge, no English translation (although, it is hoped to find time or some other translations facility to do so). One basic future goal of this study was to establish a road map for behavioral scientists who seek to assess and provide help for the victims of similar trauma. Field observations, content analysis, and individual case study methodologies were used to reveal several findings.

The good news is that such uprisings are pioneered by a young generation of activists: the most optimistic and open to change. That may, in itself, warrant inception of young leading forces that are devoted to knowledge, science oriented, and catalysts for positive change. The recent uprising actions to build political consensus on those critical issues of concern for reform appear to hopefully create a climate that is ripe for positive change and calculated optimism (Ibrahim, 2012b).

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