

Main Characteristics of Psychology in Egypt

To construct a meaningful picture of psychology as it is practiced in Egypt, the following features may be emphasized:

1. The manner in which Egyptian psychology emerged and has been growing over the years has earned it a solid base for a promising future. In this context, most important is the fact that the discipline made its first appearance in 1911 as part of establishing and operating the first secular university and that the discipline's growth was in synchrony with that of the host institution (Cairo University, 1983, p. 31). Growth in this career enabled Egyptian psychology to have a share in all the strengths the host university has been cherishing. After all, the university was initially founded as a nongovernmental institution and was considered by Egyptian nationals as an investment to help actualize national aspirations for a progressive future. It continues to exist as a prestigious symbol of those aspirations in spite of some adverse events.
2. By the same token, the discipline has been affected by all the major difficulties under which Egyptian universities have been laboring. Such difficulties include the ever-increasing economic hardships encountered by all sectors of the Egyptian society, heavy-handedness of the bureaucracy in managing academic affairs, the ever-worsening ratio of the number of students to the number of instructors, etc. (Reid, 1990, p. 174). With all these factors adversely affecting the academic climate, it is no wonder that the quality of the academic end products, psychology included, comes out less than satisfactory.
3. The fact that university departments of psychology in Egypt form part of faculties of arts imposes serious limitations on the normal development of the discipline. Moreover, it harms (though in an oblique way) the professional image of the discipline, since it remains in a grey area lying somewhere between literary studies (supposedly of an armchair and speculative nature) and scientific disciplines proper.
4. Some sort of chronic conflict has been going on since the early 1940s between two camps of psychologist, one comprising graduates of the institutes (now name faculties) of education, and another including those who graduate from faculties of arts. Over the years, gross manifestations of this conflict have been dissipating, only to be replaced by subtle maneuvers; e.g., there exist two different Egyptian psychological associations, one presided over and managed by educators (The Egyptian Society for Psychological Studies), and another chaired and managed by faculties of arts psychologists (The Association of Egyptian Psychologists). The end result is a psychology with a blurred public image and a split identity.
5. Research activities are mostly fragmented, noncumulative, and more or less repetitive (i.e., noncreative). Research problems and tools of investigation are, more often than not, imported in ready-made form from the West. The only added freshness in these cases would be that the data are elicited from Egyptian respondents on the basis of the imported (Arabized) tools. Consequently, the end product looks like an addendum to the publication by a foreign colleague. It has no roots in locally ongoing research and usually minimal bearing, if any, on colleagues' future efforts.

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

It is a fact that Arab countries were first introduced to modern psychological conceptions during the opening years of the twentieth century. Exposure was weak and sporadic in Egypt and Lebanon until the third decade, but grew more extensive in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It was at that point that psychology, as a distinct and intrinsically coherent system of knowledge, made its appearance in some academic curricula. Later, around the mid-1970s, progress accelerated when completely independent departments of psychology were established. This sequence of events was determined by the interplay of a plethora of political and sociocultural factors that shaped the main features of the discipline as it stands at present, and that will, probably, define the way the discipline will grow in the foreseeable future. In the remaining parts of the present article, an attempt is made to present an overview of the way the progression of the discipline took place in different parts of the Arab countries. Additionally, we will attempt to define the main characteristics the discipline has been developing (differentially) in the course of that progression. We will conclude by underlining growth trends expected to flourish in the near future, highlighting at the same time conditions that would be congenial to a sound growth of the discipline.

Modern Psychology in Egypt

Egypt was the main gateway through which modern psychology was introduced and practiced in the Arab countries. This occurred around the beginning of the twentieth century and was accompanied by the establishment of the first secular university in 1908 (then named The Egyptian University) (Rizk, 1998). The founding of the university was itself part of a broad sociopolitical movement ignited by an uprising of national feelings (lasting from 1882 through 1954) against the Ottoman hegemony and British military occupation (Reid, 1990, p. 27; Rizk, 1998). Moreover, the founding of the university meant to a broad sectors of the Egyptian intelligentsia that there would be a continuation of the process of modernization of the country that was initiated around the 1820s (Reid, 1990, p. 31). This historical context provided a sociocultural climate that, for some time, welcomed the invitation and employment of Western academicians to deliver lectures to the university students. By the same token, this kind of climate encouraged the sending of national graduates abroad to become qualified as future faculty members (Reid, 1990, p. 63). Modern psychological conceptions were first presented in 1911 and were embedded in lectures addressing the psychology of women (Cairo University, 1983, p. 31). In 1913, lectures were given on the psychology of mental disorders and related topics to students studying the penal law. Without proper appraisal of this course of events, it would be difficult to account for the specifics of the development of the discipline in Egypt, viz. how it got initiated and the way it was cultivated. In 1925, the Egyptian University was officially recognized by the Ministry of Education, which began to supply it with the necessary budget. This event triggered a number of decisions pertaining to its administrative organization. One such decision stipulated that the Faculty of Arts be divided into a number of departments, one of which would be devoted to philosophical studies (Cairo University, 1983, p. 59). Psychology was apportioned some lectures under the umbrella of this department and was, therefore, to be taught by instructors of philosophy (who, incidentally, were mostly French). In 1940, however, the teaching of psychology became the responsibility of an Egyptian psychologist, Y. Mourad, who had just returned from France after qualifying as "docteur des lettres" in experimental psychology under H. Pieron and H. Delacroix. This event marked the beginning of a new stage in the progression of the discipline in the Egyptian academia.

The late 1920s, however, witnessed an event that had a significant effect on the course of development of the discipline. In 1929, the Egyptian government had invited the Swiss educator Claparède as a temporary adviser. The mandate was to review the national system of (pre-university) education and to submit recommendations for improvement (Ali, 1995, p. 167). The method Claparède followed in fulfilling his duty was instructive. He began by administering a number of psychological tests of intellectual abilities to a large sample of Egyptian schoolboys. This required translating the Stanford-Binet test of intelligence and other tests into Arabic. The job required, also, training some Egyptian assistants to administer the tests. This approach was quite instructive to all nationals who participated in carrying out the task (e.g., Al-Quabbani and Al-Koussi). The report submitted by Claparède was also of educative value permitting significant numbers of Egyptians to

gain exposure to modern psychological concepts, e.g., intelligence, intellectual development, individual differences, purposive behavior, the curve of mental development, incentives that activate the mind, etc. Following are some meaningful points that were emphasized by the report:

1. It was made clear that discipline in the schools was over-emphasized at the expense of freedom. Such a trend would, probably, influence many pupils to perceive schools as prison-like.
2. When investigated objectively, many students showed above average intelligence until they reached the age of 12 years. Their level of performance, however, regressed sharply afterwards. This deterioration could be ascribed to adverse socioeducational conditions, e.g., archaic methods of teaching that neither stimulate thinking nor foster personality development, and adverse family environments marked by mostly illiterate or semiliterate parents.
3. Even when there were parents who might be reasonably educated, children did not find accessible reading materials that suited their age-linked stage of development.

Over and above these remarks Claparède submitted the following recommendations:

1. The system of education should prove functional by targeting the satisfaction of some basic needs of the child.
2. Children are innately geared to play. It is their way to gain a good deal of psychological benefits. It is, therefore, recommended that all school curricula, ranging from kindergarten through secondary school, should be enriched with play activities.
3. Purposefulness is one of the main characteristics of human behavior. Students should feel that what they learn serves a valuable purpose uncovering a meaningful relationship to some of their concerns.
4. Freedom is the main road to cultivation of feelings of responsibility.
5. Methods of teaching should take into account individual differences among students.

Most significant was a strategic recommendation made by Claparède to the effect that an advanced institute of higher education should be established to train candidates for secondary school teaching. This counsel was soon implemented, a step which was to have a meaningful impact on the future of psychology in the country (Ali, 1995, p. 167). Three components have been active vehicles for such influence to be exerted: (a) curricula pertinent to educational psychology and to mental health were presented at the institute, (b) a clinic, presumably, for remedial teaching was established under the umbrella of the institute, (c) distinguished graduates were sent abroad to obtain Ph.D. degrees in educational psychology.

Around the late 1940s and early 1950s, Egyptian psychology had gained a reasonable level of visibility among Egyptian academicians. In 1945, a quarterly publication entitled *Egyptian Journal of Psychology* began to be published. At the same time the Association of Integrative Psychology was founded. By the 1950s, the number of qualified psychologists (up to the Ph.D. level) had increased remarkably. Noteworthy here is the fact that in addition to the Egyptian University (now named Fouad 1st University) two more universities were established, Alexandria University (then named Farouk 1st University) and Ain-Shams University (then named Ibrahim University). These newly established universities soon became instrumental in increasing the number of qualified psychologist. In addition, more psychologists returned home from earning higher degrees from foreign universities in England, France, and the USA. Side by side with this quantitative growth a process of qualitative change began to take place. Thus, two subdepartments of psychology were instituted respectively at Ain-Shams University and (a few years later) at Cairo University; a law was passed in 1956 defining the legal status of psychotherapists; a postgraduate diploma of applied psychology was installed at Cairo University in 1959-1960; and in 1967, the Ministry of Health decreed that psychologists could be appointed as members of the psychiatric teams established at state-run psychiatric hospitals and clinics. In addition, M.I. Soueif was appointed adviser to the Ministry to address professional problems encountered in establishing clinical psychological service in this new context (Soueif, 1998). With all these quantitative and qualitative changes taking place, it seemed quite natural to start pressing for the establishment of totally independent university departments of academic psychology. In July 1974, the first such department was installed at Cairo University. A few months later, other universities began to follow suit. At present, there are total of 16 fully independent departments of psychology, all under the umbrella of the faculties of arts. Moreover, there exist 44 departments of educational psychology and mental health, all annexed to faculties of education. In 1992, the total number of young people who graduated with BA degrees in psychology since 1958 was estimated at about 20,000 (Abou-Hatab, 1992). Of these, at least 5% are thought to have earned a Ph.D. degree.

Research Interests

Numerous small-scale research articles are published either by Egyptian journals of psychology or journals of social studies. These works cover a broad variety of topics. The area that has been capturing most of our researchers' interests is that of "Egyptianizing" and/or restandardizing Western psychometric tools. Probably the activity that follows, in terms of saliency, is the replication of some Western studies carried out with the help of newly constructed tools. In this case, the explicitly stated aim would be the making of transcultural comparisons. In additions, a few cases of long-term projects addressing significant research problems (which were not imported as ready-made researchable questions from abroad) have to be mentioned. Since 1966, M.I. Soueif and associates have been conducting a series of field investigations on drug use and abuse under the sponsorship of the National Center for Social and Criminological Research in Cairo (Soueif, 1985a). Another long-term project carried out by the same principal investigator and colleagues focused on creativity, personality, and psychiatric disorders (Badr, 1988; Darweesh, 1978; Elwan, 1980; Ghobashi, 1980; Soueif, 1959). A third elaborate research project was conducted by Soueif and assistants on extreme response sets (Farrag, 1965; Hannourah, 1967, cited in Soueif, 1968; Soueif, 1958, 1968; Yunis, 1976).