

Psychology of Woman in Arab  
Countries, A Review of Related  
Literature

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## Abstract

In recent years increased emphasis has been devoted to studying the psychology of woman all over the world. There are numerous books, bookchapters, researches, reports, and audio and video cassette tapes that have been produced on the psychology of woman.

This research describes the review of the literature related to the psychology of woman in the Arab countries during the last 10 years. This 10-year period was selected to allow for a comprehensive and recent review on one hand, and for a study of new trends in the published materials on the other.

This review of related literature from 1978 to 1988 included a discussion of: (1) a study of the card catalogue of the Graduate Library at the University of Michigan, the library at the University of Detroit, and the libraries at Kuwait University; (2) a computerized study of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) system, a computerized study of Psychological Abstracts (Psyc LIT) system; and (3) a study of the card catalogue of the researcher's own library, including a great number of books, bookchapters, and periodicals issued by several psychological associations.

The findings of this research show that a great number of publications in English were published on female psychology, generally, and a few number of publications in English and Arabic on the psychology of Arab woman.

On the basis of the integrative results of this research, it is evident that a huge volume of research should be investigated, conducted, and published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries especially in English, by academic and professional western periodicals. In addition, comparative research concerned with the differences between the personality traits of Arab woman and western woman may be conducted and investigated empirically.

In recent years increased emphasis has been placed on studying the psychology of woman all over the world. There are numerous books (e.g. D'emilio & Freedman, 1988; James, 1988; Sagan, 1988; Josselon, 1987; Williams, 1987; Cox, 1981; Coles & Coles, 1980; Ellis, 1979; Newland, 1979; Friez & Others, 1978); bookchapters (e.g. Omar, 1988; Brude, 1988; Omar, 1987; Lowe & Hubbard, 1986; Williams, 1985; Showalter, 1985); a great number of published researches and reports (Omar, 1988; Omar, 1987; Soueif, 1983; Omar, 1982; and Soueif, 1975); besides, audio and video cassette tapes have been produced on psychology of woman (Popkin, 1987; Dinkmeyer, 1987; and, Steele, 1987). Accordingly, a review of the related literature showed that a great number of academic, scientific and professional productions concerning the psychology of woman has been reported, in the last 10 years.

This research embraces a review of literature related to the psychology of woman in the Arab countries in the last 10 years. The research questions to be addressed are:

- (1) Are there books and/or bookchapters published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries in the last 10 years?
- (2) Are there special researches published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries in the last 10 years?
- (3) Is there a great number of books, bookchapters, and researches published on the psychology of Arab woman in English in the last 10 years?

Accordingly, the objectives of this research can be stated as:

- (1) to investigate whether there are books and/or bookchapters published on the psychology of the Arab woman in the last 10 years,
- (2) to investigate whether there are researches published on the psychology of Arab woman in the last 10 years,
- (3) to investigate whether there are numerous books and/or bookchapters, and researches on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries published in English.

Null hypotheses discussed in this research, according to its problem, questions, and objectives may be stated as:

- (1) There are numerous books and/or bookchapters published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries in the last 10 years.
- (2) There are numerous researches published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries in the last 10 years.
- (3) There is a large number of books and/or bookchapters published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries in the last 10 years.
- (4) There are numerous researches published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries in the last 10 years.
- (5) There is a large number of books and/or bookchapters, and researches published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries in English in the last 10 years

## Method

The review of related literature from 1978 to 1988 will include a discussion of the following: (1) a study of the card catalogue of the Graduate Library at the University of Michigan, the library at the University of Detroit, and the libraries at Kuwait University; (2) a computerized study of Psychological Abstracts (Psyc LIT) system; and (3) a study of the card catalogue of the researcher's own library, including a great number of books, bookchapters, and periodicals issued by several psychological associations. This 10-year period was selected to allow for a comprehensive and recent review while also allowing for a study of new trends in the published materials.

All of the available books and bookchapters published from 1978 to 1988 were reviewed, according to such topics related to "psychology of woman, female psychology, personality of woman, female traits, characteristics of woman, woman's nature, women power, women of crisis, women and sex roles, women literature theory, counseling women, The sisterhood of man, women and achievement, women in the work force, women in divorce, women and violence, Asian women in transition, women in Islam, women in the Arab world, psychology of woman in Egypt, the Moslem woman, psychology of working woman, women's natures in Islam, the status of woman in Kuwait and Arabian Gulf, readings in social psychology in Arab society..., and the like.

Most researches concerning the psychology of woman and female psychology, published from 1978 to 1988 were reviewed, according to a computerized study of the ERIC and the PsycLIT. Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a nationwide educational information system in the United States of America. ERIC acquired selections from 750 professional journals in the following areas: (1) helping services, (2) counselor training, development and evaluation; (3) student characteristics and environments; (4) family relationships; (5) career planning; (6) drug education and abuse; and (7) special populations such as women, youth, dropouts, aged, incarcerated, widowed and divorced. Psychological Abstracts and Psychological Information Database acquired documents, selected from 1400 professional journals, published in 29 Languages in 54 countries. Other related researches, published in several psychological journals by some professional associations were reviewed intensively.

## Results and Discussion

To investigate the first research question: "Are there books and/or bookchapters published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries for the last 10 years?" Certain content analyses of all the available books and bookchapters published on the psychology of woman in both English and Arabic were conducted. Accordingly, the results may be discussed in regard to the first hypothesis of this research, as follows:

Most of the books and bookchapters published on the psychology of woman in English may be classified into several categories such as: (1) social and sex roles; (2) individual differences between males and females (3) motivation and achievement; (4) motherhood; (5) dating and mating; (6) sexuality and abortion; (7) workforce; (8) conflicts

of being feminine or masculine; (9) biosocial aspects of women's characteristics; (10) politics and power; (11) prejudice and discrimination; (12) women's abuse and rape; and (13) counseling and psychotherapies.

In addition to the western categories of woman's psychology in English, most of the books and bookchapters published on the psychology of woman in Arabic may be classified according to several factors such as: (1) religious aspects; (2) traditional norms; (3) geographical terms; (4) legal rights; (5) historical events; (6) social changes of women's status; and (7) relationships with the opposite sex. It should be considered that most of these publications were written in the frame of the Islamic religion and the Arabic traditions. A great number of them were concentrated on women's nature and their personality traits as revealed in the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of the prophet Muhammad.

For the purpose of this research, some of these publications may be presented, as examples. A book entitled, "Women in Islam: Tradition and Transition in the Middle East," was published in English. It includes chapters on women in early Islam; women in the Arab Caliphates; Women in the Ottoman Era; women's liberation; childhood, growing up in a traditional society; love, sex, and marriage; motherhood, polygamy and divorce; divorcees, widows and old women (Minai, 1981).

A book entitled, "Psychology of Woman" was published in Arabic in Egypt (Ramzi, 1983). It includes chapters on woman and brain function from a psychological point of view; methodological problems related to researches on sex differences; personal traits of the creative woman; socialization and female stereotype; creativity and female cultural environment; behavioural dimensions of woman as presented by the stories of female journalism; and our folklore as a new field for behavioural studies, using woman as a model for study.

A chapter on female psychology was presented under the title: "A male and a female: What are they and why?" in a book in Arabic published in Egypt bearing the title: "Marriage and family relationships". This chapter includes topics of different attitudes taken by both sexes; some individual differences between them; reasons of sex differences; men and women and the equality issue; and both sexes being integrated. Some personality traits of women were presented separately in the other chapters of this book such as: (1) understanding of personality and behaviour; (2) some aspects of behaviour; (3) dominance; (4) fears; (5) absolute dependency; (6) tension, and (7) adolescence characteristics (Al Khouly, 1983).

Accordingly, it seems that there are numerous books and bookchapters published on the psychology of woman in general. On the other hand, there have been a few publications on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries for last 10 years.

To investigate the second research question: "Are there special researches published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries in last 10 years?" "Certain content analysis of all the available published researches on the psychology of woman in both English and Arabic was conducted, utilizing the Educational Resources

Information Center System; psychological abstracts; psychological database; and the researcher's own personal periodicals.

The researcher examined all the researches published on the psychology of woman between 1978 and 1988 in the English literature and stored by the Educational Resources Information Center, psychological abstracts and psychological database systems, under the general topics of female psychology; female personality; female characteristics; female traits; female nature; psychology of woman (women); personality of woman (women); characteristics of woman (women); traits of woman (women); and nature of woman (women).

In addition, the researcher examined the published and stored researches under the specific topics of the psychology of Arab woman (women); personality of Arab woman (women); characteristics of Arab woman (women). More defined and specified topics were examined such as: psychology of Moslem female(s); personality of Moslem female(s); characteristics of Moslem female(s); traits of Moslem female(s); and nature of Moslem female(s).

In this 10-year period, 20445 researches were published on woman (women) and 50868 researches were published on female(s) in general. It was found that 39238 of all the published researches focused on psychology; 2840 of them focused on personality, 14888 of them focused on characteristics; and 1891 of them focused on traits. In addition, it was found that only 134 researches were published on Arab(s) and only 59 researches were published on Moslem(s), in general. These researches included published and stored researches on the general topics of psychology of woman (women); personality of woman (women), characteristics of woman (women); traits of woman (women); psychology of female(s); personality of female(s), characteristics of female(s); and traits of female(s). The review of this literature showed that no researches were published on the nature of of woman (women), nor on the nature of female(s). On the other hand, no researches were published on the psychology of woman in Arab countries.

Table 1 presents the topics of the researches examined quantitatively, published as a function of the focus of the study on the psychology of woman. The highest attention related to these researches was focused on the psychology of woman (women) and psychology of female(s), (n = 141 & 60) respectively, which ranked first; and the least was focused on traits of woman (women) and traits of female(s), (n = 7 & 20) respectively, which ranked fourth. Characteristics of woman (women) and characteristics of female(s) (n = 47 & 29) respectively, ranked second. Finally, personality of woman (women) and personality of female(s); (n = 26 & 28) respectively, ranked third.



Table 1

The Focus of the Study on the Psychology of Woman

| Topics of Research               | N.R.T. | Rank order |
|----------------------------------|--------|------------|
| Psychology of woman (women)      | 141    | 1          |
| Characteristics of woman (women) | 47     | 2          |
| Personality of woman (women)     | 26     | 3          |
| Traits of woman (women)          | 7      | 4          |
| Psychology of female(s)          | 60     | 1          |
| Characteristics of female(s)     | 29     | 2          |
| Personality of female(s)         | 28     | 3          |
| Traits of female(s)              | 20     | 4          |

Note: N.R.T. = Number of Research Topics.

The review of related English periodicals owned by the researcher (n = 11) showed that several researches were published on the area of female psychology, but none of them was published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries. Exceptionally, The Personnel and Guidance Journal (Journal of Counseling and Development) published an article on Counseling Iranians from the Islamic point of view (Shahmirzadi, 1983).

It published several articles on female psychology in its volumes between volume 60, 1982 and volume 66, 1988 (Heins, Hendrick & Martindale, 1982; McGraw, 1982, Gerson & Lee, 1982; Beamish & Marinelli, 1983; Orzek, 1983; Daniluk & Al Herman, 1983; Gainni & Weitz, 1986; Joy, 1987; Haring-Hidore, 1987; Coley & Beckett, 1988; and Mohny & Anderson 1988). The Journal of American Psychologist published articles on the psychology of women in volume 43, numbers 8&11 (Rodeheaver & Datan, 1988; and Mays & D.S., 1988). Journal of Counseling Psychology published articles on the psychology of woman in volume 35, numbers 2, 3 & 4 (McLaughlin, Cormier & Cormier, 1988; Johnson & Holloway 1988; and Mintz & Betz, 1988). Journal of Counselor Education and Supervision published an article on counseling women in volume 21, number 3 (Nickerson, Espin & Gawlelk, 1982) AMHCA Journal (Journal of Mental Health Counseling) published articles on treating women in volume 8, numbers 3 & 4 (Robinson & Skarie, 1986; and Hotelling 1986). In addition, Nyang (1987) published a review of a book entitled "The Arabs and Africa", which was included in the contents of the American Journal of Islamic Social Science.

Table 2 presents a list of the periodicals owned by the researcher that might publish researches on female psychology. These are issued by several academic and professional American associations. Names and general description of these periodicals are included in the table.

**Table 2**  
**Periodicals That Might Publish Researches**  
**On Female Psychology**

| Name of Periodical   | General Description   |
|--|---|
| (1) Journal of Counseling and Development (The Personnel & Guidance Journal) | It is Published 10 times a year, monthly from September to June, by the American Association for Counseling and Development, AACD. (formerly American Personnel and Guidance Association, APGA)   |
| (2) Journal of Mental Health Counseling (AMHCA Journal)                      | It is published four times a years, in January, April, July, and October by the American Mental Health Counselors Association, a division of the AACD. It publishes articles on all aspects of practice, theory, and research related to mental health counseling.  |
| (3) Journal of Counseling and Values, ARVIC                                  | It is published thrice yearly, in October, January, and April, by the Association for Religious and Value Issues in Counseling, a division of the AACD. It publishes articles on all aspects of practice, theory, research, and informed opinion concerned with the relationships among psychology, philosophy, religion, social values and counseling.     |
| (4) Journal of Counselor Education and supervision.                          | It is published quarterly in September, December, March, and June by the Association for Counseling Education & Supervision, a division of the AACD. It publishes articles on all aspects of practice, theory, research, or program applications related to counselor education and supervision.  |
| (5) The Journal for Specialists in Group Work                                | It is published quarterly in March, May, September, and November by the Association for Specialists in Group Work, a division of the AACD. It publishes articles on all aspects of practice, theory, and research directed toward the interests of educators with productive implementation of group counseling in both educational and community settings. |

| Name of Periodical   | General Description  |
|--|--|
| (6) Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development      | It is published four times a year in January, April, July, and October, by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development, a division of the AACD. It is concerned with research, theory, or program applications pertinent to multicultural and ethnic minority interests in all areas of counseling and human development. |
| (7) Journal of American Psychologist                         | It is published monthly by the American Psychological Association, APA. It publishes articles on current issues in psychology as well as empirical, theoretical, and practical articles on broad aspects of psychology.  |
| (8) Journal of Counseling Psychology                         | It is published quarterly (beginning in January) by the APA. It publishes articles on counseling of interest to psychologists and counselors. It is concerned with theoretical and empirical researches about counseling processes and interventions in different settings.  |
| (9) Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama & Sociometry | It is published quarterly by Heldre & Publications, a division of the Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation. It is dedicated to the development of the fields of group psychotherapy, psychodrama, sociodrama, and sociometry.  |
| (10) Journal of Reality Therapy                              | It is published semi-annually in Fall and spring. It is concerned with research, theory development, or specific descriptions of successful application of reality therapy principles in field settings.   |
| (11) Journal of The Arts in psychotherapy                    | It is published quarterly. It is an international multi-disciplinary journal for professionals and students in all areas of psychotherapy, mental health and education. It is published for reflecting advances in theory, research and practice for psychiatrists and psychologists.  |

It should be taken into consideration that special periodicals are published in English or Arabic. Some researches on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries may be presented in them such as the article written by Soliman (1987) entitled, "The Socialization of the Arab Woman". A list of some of these periodicals that might have published researches on Arab female psychology and issued by several academic and professional organizations is shown in table 3. It includes names and general description of these periodicals. Unpublished researches on the psychology of Arab woman were presented by the researcher.

Table 3

Some Periodicals That Focus on Arab and Moslem Studies

| Names of the Periodicals                            | General Discription   |
|---|---|
| (1) The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences | It is published in volumes of two issues per year by the Association of Moslem Social Scientists and the International Institute of Islamic Thought in the U.S.A. It has been trying to initiate such changes in the social and individual behavior by Islamizing knowledge, including research, theory and practice on Moslem studies. |
| (2) Journal of Islamic Studies                      | It is published quarterly by the Islamic Research Institute in Pakistan. It publishes articles in English on Islamic history, philosophy, religion, science, literature, economics, sociology, political science, culture, law, and psychology.   |
| (3) Muslim Education Quarterly                      | It is published quarterly in autumn, winter, spring and summer, by the Islamic Academy in United Kingdom. It publishes articles in English reviewing Moslem education, morality and culture.  |
| (4) Journal of Muslim World                         | It is published by The Duncan Black Macdonald Center at Hartford Seminary in the U.S.A. It is devoted to the study of Islam and Christian-Muslim relationship in past and present. It offers a variety of articles on Islamic Theology, literature, philosophy, and history.  |
| (5) Arab Journal for the Humanities                 | It is Published quarterly by Kuwait University. It publishes articles in English and Arabic on related fields of the humanities such as psychology, history, literature, philosophy, and applied linguistics.   |
| (6) The Arab Journal of the Social Sciences         | It is published quarterly by Kuwait University. It publishes articles, research papers in the various fields of social sciences in English and Arabic.  |
| (7) Annals of The Faculty of Arts                   | It is published by the Faculty of Arts at Kuwait University. It is a refereed scientific periodical that publishes monographs on topics of the various departments in the Faculty of Arts, Kuwait University.   |

On the other hand, a review of the related Arabic literature concerned with researches and reports on female psychology in Arab countries showed several articles

presented in Arabic periodicals, Arabic books, and Arabic bookchapters. For example, Omar (1989) presented the role of woman in drama therapy; discussion on the changing world of woman was presented by Omar (1988); the relationship between woman and alcoholic behaviour was reported by Omar (1988); the attitudes of mothers toward their exceptional children was discussed by Omar (1987). Meleika (1985) presented a chapter on the psychology of woman in his book entitled, "Readings on Social Psychology in Arab Society". Soueif (1983) conducted a research on "the Image of Woman as presented by Mass Media"; a research on changing the social status of woman in modern Egypt was conducted by Soueif (1974); and studies on the status of woman in Kuwait and Arabian Gulf were conducted by several persons, and published by female social and cultural association (1975).

Accordingly, the results showed that there are numerous researches and studies published on female psychology in English generally, but there is not any research published on the psychology of Arab woman particularly in the last 10 years. On the other hand, there are few researches published on the psychology of woman in Arab and Moslem countries in English by special periodicals related to the Arabic and Islamic studies. In addition, there are several researches on the psychology of Arab woman published in Arabic in Arabic periodicals, books and bookchapters in the last 10 years.

To investigate the third research question: "Is there a large number of books, bookchapters and researches in English in the last 10 years?", certain content analysis was conducted on all the result findings of this research which may be discussed, as follows:

A review of the result findings related to the first two research questions showed that there are few researches on the psychology of Arab woman, published in English by special periodicals related to the Arabic and Islamic studies. On the other hand, there is no research published on the psychology of Arab woman in the general English literature. It should be taken in consideration that there are some books and bookchapters published in English (Abbasi, 1981; Abdul Ghani, 1978; Al-Hatimy, 1979; Imran, 1979; and Siddiqi, 1979). In addition, there are unpublished studies conducted by the researchers on the psychology of Arab woman in English (Omar, 1982).

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This research presents an evidential database against the saying that there are numerous publications on the psychology of woman in Arab countries both in Arabic and English. The result findings of this research show that a great number of publications in English were published on female psychology, generally, and a small number of publications in English and Arabic was published on the psychology of Arab woman. The evidence of this research shows that there are no publications on the psychology of Arab woman shown in the English literature presented by the western periodicals, books and bookchapters.

On the basis of the integrative results of this research, great attention should be paid to the virgin area of female psychology in the Arab countries. It is evident that

numerous books, bookchapters, and researches should be authenticated, investigated, conducted, studied, and published on the psychology of woman in the Arab countries, especially in English, by academic and professional western periodicals. Psychology of woman in Arab countries should be known by western people as the Arabs know about the psychology of western women. Comparative researches concerning the differences between the characteristics of Arab woman and those of western woman should be conducted and investigated empirically.

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