



Perspectives: Exploring an Indigenous Approach to Psychological Research: Implications for the Arab Gulf Region

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Abstract: Over the past decade, mental health issues became a dominant risk to the health and wellbeing of the world's populations. These issues were exasperated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries in the Arab Gulf region responded to these by a series of governmental regulations, initiatives, and research funding. As the policies on wellbeing and mental health services are still being formulated in this region, there is a demand for research in these areas. Considering that most of psychological constructs in the literature were developed in Western cultural contexts, there is a concern of developing policies based on foreign research evidence. Therefore, it is necessary to validate psychological constructs of the wellbeing domain from an emic perspective before endorsing the evidence in the policymaking process. This paper introduces an indigenous approach to psychological research, which promotes the exploration and examination of knowledge, feelings, experiences, and beliefs stemming from the cultural realities of individuals. Guidelines are provided to identify and incorporate indigenous elements into studies. The significance of this approach is highlighted through a practical example of marital satisfaction in the UAE.

ملخص: خلال العقد الماضي ، أصبحت قضايا الصحة النفسية من المخاطر المهيمنة على الصحة النفسية لسكان العالم. و قد تأججت هذه القضايا بجانحة كورونا. استجابت دول منطقة الخليج العربي لهذه التحديات النفسية من خلال سلسلة من اللوائح والمبادرات الحكومية وتوفير المنح المالية للبحوث. نظراً لأن السياسات المتعلقة بالصحة النفسية لا تزال جديدة و قيد الصياغة في هذه المنطقة ، فهناك طلب على البحث العلمي في هذه المجالات. نظراً إلى أن معظم البناءات النفسية في الأدبيات قد تم تطويرها في سياقات ثقافية غربية ، فهناك قلق من تطوير سياسات تستند إلى أدلة بحثية أجنبية. لذلك ، من الضروري التحقق من مصداقية البناءات النفسية لمجال الصحة النفسية من منظور محلي (emic) قبل اعتماد الأدلة في عملية صنع السياسات. تقدم هذه الورقة المنهجية المحلية (indigenous approach) للبحث النفسي ، والتي تعزز استكشاف وفحص المعتقدات النابعة من الواقع الثقافي للأفراد. هذه الورقة توفر إرشادات لتحديد العناصر المحلية ودمجها في الدراسات باستخدام أداة بحثية مطورة من قبل (Adair et al (1993)، و تناقش الورقة أهمية استكشاف البناءات النفسية من منظور محلي باستخدام مثال عملي ، وتمت مناقشة الملاحظات المذكورة في الأدبيات.

Keywords: wellbeing; indigenous; Arab; culture; research

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Over the past decade, mental health issues have been galvanized as a significant risk to the health and wellbeing of the world's populations (Brown & Triggler, 2018; Kessler et al., 2010; Kovacevic, 2021; Steel et al., 2014). These issues were further catalyzed more recently by the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted a growing global interest and awareness in mental health services (Cullen et al., 2020; Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). Mirroring these trends, the Arab Gulf region has also witnessed a proliferation of government regulations, social campaigns, conferences, and academic publications (Al Yousef, 2020; Basalom, 2021; Bell, 2019; Salama, 2021a). As regional policies on wellbeing and mental health services are still being formulated (Salama, 2021b), there is a corresponding demand for research. Yet, as most wellbeing and/or psychological constructs were developed in Western cultural contexts, i.e., flourishing, subjective wellbeing, life satisfaction, engagement, positive emotion (Diener et al., 2010; Fredrickson, 2006; Hart & Sasso, 2011; Joseph & Wood, 2010), there are concerns around the feasibility of implementing policies based on foreign evidence (Alkhanbashi, 2018). Thus, it is necessary to explore and validate such constructs from an emic perspective before endorsing evidence in the policymaking process.

Accordingly, in this brief paper I introduce the indigenous approach to psychological research. The structure of the paper is as follows. First, I describe the context that propelled the emergence of the indigenous approach to psychological research, and follow this with a description of the indigenous approach and indigenous movement. Next, I discuss the evidence that distinguishes the cultural frame of the Arab Gulf region and the need to bridge social sciences research conducted in the Arab Gulf with indigenous approaches. Finally, I present a practical method to identify indigenous elements within study articles.

Indigenous Research: Setting the Context

In the past decades, the forces of globalization have significantly influenced academic domains. In this globalized context, the hegemonic presence of Western academia has overwhelmed social sciences in many ways. In disciplines like psychology and education, ideologies of individualism, empiricism, and rationality were not compatible with most of the 5000 cultures found around the world (Marsella, 1998; Triandis, 1988). Western psychological research, especially from the United States, remains prevalent in the world, even though it comprises a mere 5% of the world's total population (Arnett, 2008). The contrast between Western cultures and other cultures is not always considered, and it is common to find Western psychological and educational knowledge being indiscriminately applied across ethnic, cultural, and national boundaries, which may lead to misapplications (Berry et al., 1992; Jones, 2010; Strickland, 2000). In fact, it has been acknowledged that psychology and its sub-disciplines like educational psychology are a cultural construction attributed to the culture in which their knowledge was developed (Henrich et al., 2010; Marsella & Pedersen, 2004). Thus, scholars have raised concerns of the limited applicability of Western psychological and educational principles in developing world populations, as well as how psychological constructs of the 'First' and 'Second' worlds are exported to 'Third' worlds with little attention to their validity or appropriateness to target populations (Moghaddam & Taylor, 1986).

Mapping the social sciences disciplines through Western-developed psychological constructs has negative effects in terms of warping realities of other cultures and rendering non-Western constructs as marginal or negligible (Gergen et al., 1996). Academic institutions that rely on culturally



incompatible psychological constructs distort interpretations of behavior, divert attention away from key social factors, crop out facets of constructs that are unique to a culture, and produce research that may not match a country's priorities or social problems (Adair et al., 1993). Such issues however, can also pose opportunities. Kuhn (1970) believed that a new paradigm shift was often preceded by a 'crisis' where scientific knowledge and theories are unable to account for phenomena or data. This may be occurring in the present time, as Western psychological knowledge does not sufficiently explain the behavior of members of non-Western cultures. This confluence of events and incompatibilities has led to the emergence of an indigenous psychology discipline (Allwood & Berry, 2006; Bhawik, 2011; Díaz-Loving, 1999; Gabrenya, 2004; Hwang, 2005; Sinha, 1998).

The Indigenous Approach

Scholars in the social sciences became increasingly aware of the differences in cultural realities and the role of culture in the development of psychological constructs. In the 1970s, a novel approach to conducting *indigenous* psychological research had emerged. Indigenous psychology advocates for the exploration and examination of knowledge, feelings, experiences, and beliefs that members of a culture have about their reality. It adopts a descriptive approach in which the aim of psychological research is to first understand how individuals behave and function in their natural environments, and where emphasis is placed on agency, meaning, intention, and goals. The aim of conducting indigenous psychological research is to develop a knowledge base that is rooted in native values, perceptions, and belief systems of a culture (Kim & Berry, 1993). Psychological constructs of all sorts, e.g., anxiety, life satisfaction, motivation to learn, resilience, etc., are re-examined under the notion that they may manifest differently across cultures and consequently, the means to measure them may also differ.

Scholars from countries like Mexico, Philippines, Taiwan, and India have adopted the indigenous approach to psychological research (Diaz-Guerrero, 1977; Enriquez, 1977; Sinha, 1998; Yang, 1997), and a scholastic movement has gained momentum. It received attention in the Edinburgh Symposium in 1982, and a special issue was published in the *International Journal of Psychology* two years later (Sinha & Holtzman, 1984). Since, realizing the national potential and merit of the approach, many researchers in developing countries contributed towards developing indigenous knowledge bases in the fields of psychology and education. The indigenous psychology movement is still on-going (Adair, 1999; Allwood, 2011; Cheung et al., 2011; Teo, 2013; Sundararajan, 2015), but has received criticism on its distinctiveness from cultural psychology or cross-cultural psychology (Jahoda, 2016).

Indigenous psychology (and indigenous research as a whole) goes somewhat further and acknowledges the need to also develop epistemologies, theories, concepts, and methods that correspond to an indigenous population. The goal here is not to move away from science, objectivity, or the search for universal principles, but to create a knowledge base grounded in a descriptive understanding of a single culture as well as a more rigorous and systematic science that is theoretically and empirically valid in the context in which it was acquired (Kim & Park, 2006). Accordingly, there is a need to approach psychological and educational issues in the Arab Gulf from an indigenous perspective as there are indicators that the cultural milieu of this region does not sufficiently emerge



in the literature (Lambert et al., 2021; Yaaqeib, 2014). Educational reform in the UAE is an area in which a lack of indigenous knowledge has been identified. Ridge (2009) expressed:

“It is this desperate lack of research on conditions in schools, and education in general, in the Gulf that makes reforms even more difficult to conceive and implement. As a result, we see local education systems lurch from reform to reform based on evidence from disparate countries that in many cases is unsuited to local conditions. It should come as no surprise, then, when many of these reforms fail to deliver on promises that have been made (para. 4)”

Freimuth (2014) also attributed the UAE’s native students’ lack of motivation to learn to the incompatibility of their learning materials to their historical and cultural background.

The Arab Gulf Cultural Region

Defining the construct of culture has challenged scholars for generations, as no single definition truly captures the richness of the term (Chiu & Hong, 2013). For the purposes of this paper, culture is defined as the set of beliefs, attitudes, meanings, practices, morals, norms, values and shared ideologies between social groups (Triandis, 2001). It is helpful to contrast it with similar (but not interchangeable) social constructs like society, nationality, race or ethnicity (Hwang & Matsumoto, 2013). Society refers to the patterns of interpersonal relationships among members of a group, whereas culture involves the meanings they share and the values imposed on existing social relations. Nationality refers to an individual’s country of citizenship, a geographical entity bound by political boundaries, which can have a dominant culture, various subcultures, or a culture shared with nearby countries. Ethnicity refers to tribal or geographical origins, which is sometimes accompanied by representations of a developed, independent culture. Other times, ethnicity barely provides insights into the current culture of a social group as cultures change over time. Finally, race is a social construct developed in an attempt to categorize individuals according to physical characteristics. Within a race, one can find multiple nationalities, societies, ethnicities, and cultures. Accordingly, I outline the cultural boundaries of the Arab Gulf states as distinct from other Arab or Muslim countries.

The Arab Gulf States include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. These countries are situated on the Western and Southern coastline of the Arabian Gulf. Together, they are known globally as the ‘oil states’ and are among the world’s wealthiest nations because of their strong oil and gas exports and reserves (Momani, 2008). Oil revenues transformed these societies from relying on subsistence agriculture, nomadic herding, fishing and pearling into modern, industrial, cosmopolitan and consumerist societies in a very short period of time (Al-Khouri, 2010). In the literature, it is common to find the Arab Gulf states grouped with the broader Arab or Muslim world. While the language and religion are shared elements, the historical, political, economic, and societal natures of the Arab Gulf states make them a distinct cultural region (Peterson, 2009; Wiseman, 2010).

This shared sociohistorical narrative was the basis for the formation of the official regional coalition, called the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC, 2021). Much literature demonstrates the



distinctness of the Arab Gulf states' social and cultural milieu from other Arab or Muslim countries (Davidson, 2011; Davidson & Smith, 2008; Foley & Foley, 2010; Gause & Gause, 1994; Metz, 1994; Mohammed, 2017; Momani, 2008; Niblock, 2015; Peck, 2010; Peterson, 1988; Ramady & Kropf, 2015; Torstrick & Faier, 2009; Ulrichsen, 2014; Wiseman, 2010). The evidence from the literature justifies addressing this region as a distinct population; as such, researchers should exercise caution when generalizing findings originating from other Arab or Muslim countries, especially in applying psychological scales. If a psychological scale was validated in an Arab country, the cultural differences outlined warrant further validation before their application on populations from the Arab Gulf states.

The Indigenous Approach: Practical Steps

Here, I present an instrument developed by Adair et al. (1993), who suggested it is possible to gauge the degree of 'indigenization' of research articles and devised an instrument to do so. Researchers can apply the instrument on sections of research articles and identify indigenous elements. Adair (2006) explained:

"I adopted an operational definition of indigenous psychology as reflecting the extent to which the theories, concepts, research problems, hypotheses, methods, and measures emanate from, adequately represent, and for which the results reflect back upon the cultural context in which the behavior is observed rather than coming from and addressing a foreign research literature." (pg. 470)

The instrument's items can also be used as a guide towards incorporating indigenous approaches in the planning and development of studies. Described below (Table 1), the instrument consists of 65 items divided across four major sections.

Table 1

Adair's et al. (1993) instrument to measure indigenous elements within research articles

Section	Main Guidance Question
Section 1 - Introduction	Does the research emanate from culture?
Section 2 - Methodology	Have the measures and methods been appropriately tailored to the culture?
Section 3 - Results and Discussion (Part 1)	Do the authors reflect on the applications of the results on the original culture?
Section 4 - Results and Discussion (Part 2)	Does the research focus on practical cultural issues or abstract universals?

The first section looks at the citation of culturally unique phenomena, personality traits, or social behaviors in the introduction of a study. Cultural references involve mentioning the country,



its customs, norms, values, or behaviors not commonly found in other parts of the world. This section also explores the justification or rationale for the study. A dearth of relative articles on a topic might be indicative of culture-based justifications. References to locally published studies are also indicative of the consideration of local knowledge bases and more references to local research reflect a growing discipline.

The methodology section looks at the language of instructions, surveys, and psychometric tests, as well as the adaptability of chosen research designs for the target population. Generally, the adaptability of a theory refers to the extent of its applications in a setting that is different from the setting in which it was originally developed. In the literature, cultural adaptability is also referred to as the 'cross-cultural comparability' or 'universality' of a theory (Artelt, 2005; Berry, 1969; Chirkov, 2014; Choi et al., 1999; Hui & Triandis, 1985; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). However, it can be interpreted as the adaptability of the theoretical *constructs* (i.e., how similar 'autonomy' is defined, perceived, and valued between two cultures), or the adaptability of its methodological *approaches* (e.g., focus groups) or *instruments* (e.g., psychometric scales) that were developed based on the theory (Van de Vijver & Poortinga, 2005). Thus, studies not specifying the language of administration or the trajectory of theoretical adaptation may indicate a study that is less sensitive to culture. This section also considers whether theories were previously adapted for local use; the presence of psychometric data is used to support the validity of the instruments, and if the sample is representative of the population.

The following section deals with the application of test results and where the discussion sections of articles are evaluated for indigenous contributions. An article contains indigenous contributions if differences between the host country and the West are outlined and identified, as well as the differences between the host country and other non-Western cultures. This section also examines if the interpretation of results is tackled through local conceptual frameworks. A study has indigenous elements if it attempts to solve local problems by either promoting understanding or suggesting changes to local policy makers. Similarly, a study is considered indigenous if it contributes toward the country's national priorities and vision. Finally, the last section concerns results and discussion, and the degree to which the article provides a local context for comparison of its results with broader universal results. The focus of research, whether on practical issues found in the culture or in abstracting universals, is indicative of indigenous elements. This section also assesses the focus of a research study in terms of its macro or micro variables. The inclusion of macro variables denotes a greater focus on cultural aspects.

Adair et al. (1993) suggest that the frequency of indigenous elements described above denote the degree of indigenization of a study. Table 2 offers a more detailed picture of the indigenous-elements instrument, in which I included additional items like the origin of the sample, sampling method, and research topics that the original instrument did not reflect. These items were added to address issues originally not faced by Adair et al. (1993).



Table 2

Adair's et al. (1993) instrument to measure indigenous elements within research articles (with additions)

Section	Detailed Guidance Question
Section 1 - Introduction	<p data-bbox="410 501 886 533">Does the research emanate from culture?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="410 583 1419 894">1) To what extent are culturally unique aspects cited? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="444 648 1390 716">a. Cultural references must be broadly interpreted to include any mention of the country, customs, behaviours, typically not found in other contexts. <li data-bbox="444 751 1419 894">b. A 6-point response rating is employed, ranging from a sole reference to previous literature to an exclusive reference to the culture; points in between reflect the extent which culture is given slight, modest, equivalent or primary reference in the introduction (compared to Western literature). <li data-bbox="410 915 1419 1297">2) Where is the justification/rationale for the research problem coming from? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="444 980 1373 1047">a. Expressions of special needs of culture (such as lack of research in particular area) would characterize special culture-based justifications. <li data-bbox="410 1068 1419 1297">3) Does the research emanate from universalistic or Developed World literature, or alternatively, from religion, cultural traditions, norms, social problems, rapid social change, or public policies of the studied culture? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="444 1207 1135 1234">a. This item elaborates the sources of indigenusness, and <li data-bbox="444 1270 1406 1297">b. measures the extent to which culture/social problems are the basis for research. <li data-bbox="410 1318 1419 1446">4) Does the hypothesis reflect culture specific variables? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="444 1383 1390 1446">a. Normally limited to a single sentence, the hypothesis permits only a scoring of the inclusion of a reference (or not) to the culture. <li data-bbox="410 1467 1419 1640">5) What is the extent to which publications by local Arab Gulf researchers are referenced? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="444 1575 1406 1640">a. A trend of citing locally-published research reflects a growing state of awareness of an increasing pool of local references, both indigenous and general in nature.
Section 2 - Methodology	<p data-bbox="410 1690 1284 1722">Have the measures and methods been appropriately tailored to the culture?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="410 1772 1419 1902">1) What is the language of instructions/surveys/psychometric tests/interviews? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="444 1837 1419 1902">a. Consideration of language across all tools indicates an indigenous approach (i.e., language may influence results)



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- b. Articles not specifying the language of measures used are culturally insensitive.
 - c. Use of locally constructed psychological scales, or other developed in similar cultures, reflects degree of indigenization.
 - d. The degree of adaptation of a psychological test can range from use “without change” to one that is substantially altered (translated items, modified/deleted items to suit culture).
 - e. A translated test should be revalidated and its reliability determined on a local sample. For the Arab Gulf, tests developed in Arab or Muslim countries should be revalidated, considering distinct cultural differences.
 - f. Any methods used to achieve an equivalence of meaning of the Western psychological construct in the indigenous context should be mentioned.
 - g. Other than adaptation of foreign tests, attempts to adopt special methods for persons with low literacy or other culturally unique samples should be recorded. E.g., using oral/visual stimuli of test items instead of written.
 - h. Is the sample representative of the native population? Do participants identify with the local culture or with foreign cultures?
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Section 3 -
Results and
Discussion
(Part 1)

Do the authors reflect on the applications of the results on the original culture?

- 1) Applications to culture
 - a. Degrees of indigenization reflected in discussing cultural considerations more than a universalistic focus.
 - b. Empirical research is considered to increase indigenous contributions if:
 - i. Differences between the Arab Gulf and West are identified
 - ii. Differences within (or between) Arab Gulf states and non-Western cultures are identified
 - iii. Research attempts to explain behaviours observed in local culture are explored
 - iv. Indigenous theory or concept guides the research or interpretation
 - c. Reliability of adapted psychological tests may be discussed alongside:
 - i. Cross-cultural generalizability of psychological constructs
 - ii. Shortcomings in capturing local psychological constructs



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- iii. Need for the development of more compatible tests
 - d. Theoretical articles may be discussed along with:
 - i. Criticizing adaptability of Western concepts or theories, and/or promoting indigenous movements.
 - 2) Social problem contribution
 - a. Did the research contribute towards the amelioration of a local problem in the Arab Gulf? By either promoting understanding or suggesting changes to policy, practices, and/or programs?
 - b. Does the research address issues of primary national concern? The extent to which research matches national priorities may be used as an indicator.
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Section 4 -
Results and
Discussion
(Part 2)

Does the research focus on practical cultural issues or abstract universals?

- 1) To what extent is the research applied rather than basic?
 - a. The study may be located on a continuum from basic to applied research with the points in between as considerations:
 - i. Primarily basic research with slight reference to applications
 - ii. Primarily applied research with only implied applications (author fails to discuss real life settings)
 - iii. Modest applications (slight but explicit recommendations regarding applications)
 - iv. Explicit applications to social situations
- 2) To what extent does the study focus on macro dependent variables, social-
interactional behaviours, or social structural variables rather than micro or paper-
pencil measures of isolated individual processes? This is critical in determining the
applicability of results to the culture in which the study was conducted.
 - a. A modified version of Carlson's (1984) scale of the social nature of research is
utilized to measure the extent a study:
 - i. Samples or compares subjects from defined social groups
 - ii. Includes social structural variables (e.g., socioeconomic status)
 - iii. Observes social influences or psychological functioning
 - iv. Asks or observes subjects' responses to social policies/issues
 - v. Observes subjects in genuine social interactions



- 3) Increasing references to locally produced works that are publicly available may also facilitate indigenization. An increase in references to local journals/books rather than dissertations/government reports or unpublished works is essential.

Another tool devised by Adair (2006) demonstrates an indigenization trajectory that an academic discipline as a whole may undergo. Adair suggested that understanding the progress of indigenization facilitates further development in this direction and proposed four stages toward indigenization. The stages of indigenization (SOI) framework encompass more parameters than research and also include teaching, program development, and institutional support. The fourth stage has an unfamiliar name: according to Adair (2006), “autocthonization” refers to the processes leading to the emergence of a self-perpetuating discipline independent of its imported source, the culmination of the indigenization process” (pg. 472). Table 3 details these stages. Adair’s (2006) SOI offers broad strokes that scholars may apply to cultivate indigenous approaches to research and develop an indigenous knowledge base that is grounded in the local culture, consequently strengthening the accuracy and validity of data provided to policymakers.

Table 3

Stages and activities in the spread of psychology around the world

1. Importation

- a. Discipline introduced to a country;
- b. becomes part of the university curriculum;
- c. scholars are sent abroad to be trained.

2. Implantation

- a. Returning scholars begin functioning as psychologists;
- b. conduct research emulating Western training models;
- c. research topics selected from journals;
- d. use textbook applications to guide research, and
- e. teach discipline as it was taught in graduate school.

3. Indigenization

- a. Scholars criticize Western models and methods as inappropriate;
- b. adapt tests and methods to language and culture;
- c. research topics in the national interest, and
- d. identify culturally unique behaviors/thoughts for study.

4. Autocthonization

- a. Establish graduate training programs to self-perpetuate discipline;
- b. Locally-authored/edited textbooks published and used;
- c. National association promotes journals, discipline, and
- d. standards for research ethics and professional practice;
- e. national funding reliably available for research, and
- f. critical mass of mature, established scholars focus on research problems that are culturally appropriate and nationally important.

Note. Reprinted from Adair, J. G. (2006). Creating indigenous psychologies: Insights from empirical social studies of the science of psychology. In U. Kim, K.-S. Yang, & K.-K. Hwang (Eds.), *Indigenous and cultural psychology: Understanding people in context* (pp. 467-485). Springer Science + Business Media.



Indigenous Approach: Significance for Practice

One example that demonstrates the significance of indigenized psychological constructs is the work of Al-Darmaki et al. (2014). In response to rising divorce levels in the UAE, the authors developed a psychological scale to measure marital satisfaction among UAE nationals called the Emirati Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMSS). The construct of marital satisfaction in the West usually comprises areas like intimacy, gender roles, child rearing, problem-solving communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure, and sexual activity (e.g., Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (MAT), Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS), Quality of Marriage Index (QMI), Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) [see Funk & Rogge, 2007; Graham et al., 2011]). Al-Darmaki et al. (2014) derived a local definition of marital satisfaction through a qualitative study. Their results were the basis of the development of approximately 60 items based on Emirati's perceptions of marital satisfaction. Weak items were pruned out, yielding a 30-item scale. Despite the scale items tackling a variety of marital aspects covering the local perception of marital satisfaction, the factor analysis revealed a single prominent factor, suggesting that Emirati's conceptualization of marriage is not as differentiated compared to Western literature.

Practically speaking, when working with Emirati clients' marital issues, focusing on one area of marriage for improvement might not be feasible, as dissatisfaction in one area dampens marital satisfaction 'across the board' for Emiratis, as they perceive marriage as a 'whole package'. In other words, the psychological construct of marital satisfaction manifests differently among the Emirati population. This may help practitioners in understanding the underlying mechanics of marital satisfaction among Emirati clients.

Additional facets of marital satisfaction did not have a counterpart in the Western literature; namely, the extent to which spouses respect and serve their in-laws. The EMSS included items measuring this aspect and the items loaded highly onto the EMSS' factor structure. This seems to be part of an indigenous conceptualization of marital satisfaction and may offer practitioners an alternate view of how to tackle marital discord among Emirati couples. If Western measures were employed to investigate marital satisfaction across Emirati couples, they might not capture marital satisfaction in a manner that is compatible with how it is understood locally and which may lead to unfavorable outcomes for psychotherapy or couple counseling sessions. From this example, it is possible to extrapolate all the other scenarios where indigenized psychosocial constructs play a significant role is aligning psychological services with the needs of the local population. For example, what if depression manifests in a way that is different in the UAE from the common global conceptualization?

Conclusion

This paper introduced the indigenous approach to conducting psychological research and presented some of the efforts made within the indigenization movement. The Arab Gulf states share cultural elements like language and religion with the broader Arab and Muslim world, but the historical trajectory, social nature, political systems, and economic growth suggest a distinct cultural milieu. In this paper, I advocate for an indigenous approach to research and encourage scholars to consider the evidence distinguishing the Arab Gulf states as a unique cultural region. Researchers interested in psychological constructs of wellbeing (or other psychological domains) should consider



an indigenous approach to ground their research in the cultural context of this region. The tools devised by Adair et al. (1993, 2006) offer a practical platform to identify indigenous elements within research articles and facilitate the incorporation of cultural variables into research projects.

Indigenous psychology advocates for examination of psychological constructs from a local perspective rather than a Western one, with the aim of reaching a self-perpetuating research knowledge that is based on indigenously investigated constructs (i.e., the fourth stage of Adair's indigenization framework). Therefore, any study that examines research problems from a native perspective or accounts for cultural differences is regarded as indigenous.

The indigenous approach is not limited to psychology, it is present in counseling, social work, sociology, the political, as well as other social sciences where psychological constructs have a role. However, it is fair to state that indigenous psychology may not be familiar to many. A suggested explanation is that the premises of the indigenous approach (e.g., scale adaptations, local derivation of research problem, comparisons with other countries) seem to overlap with or subsumed under different nomenclature like 'cultural sensitivity', 'diversity in research', 'plurality', or 'cross-cultural procedures'. There are also issues of representation (Packer & Meneghini, 2007; Uzuner, 2008; Wagner & Wong, 2012) and research visibility (Gibbs, 1995; Marušić et al., 2006; Sibahi, 2015) that may limit indigenous-related studies from appearing in the major scientific publishing databases.

Furthermore, as global academic spheres merge, it is becoming the norm to account for cultural differences in the accuracy and generalizability of empirical findings without resorting to a specific approach. As shown by the instruments developed by Adair et al., studies can apply the indigenous approach without any explicit mention of the word 'indigenous', as long as the research problem is locally formulated, local references are used, measures are adapted to the culture, and the discussion reflects on local issues rather than global and/or Western ones. Therefore, the presence of the keyword 'indigenous psychology' across research databases or study abstracts may not provide an accurate indicator of the health of this approach. Additionally, if we use Adair's framework, as countries move towards the fourth stage in indigenization of their disciplines, it involves publishing in their own language, making a growing number of publications in a country's language an indicator of on-going indigenization. Recent trends in publications across the social sciences indicate rising multilingual publications (Kulczycki et al., 2020; Sivertsen, 2018).

Published works that extensively incorporate indigenous elements into their research frameworks exist in the region (Abdulla, 2010; Al-Darmaki, 2003; Al-Darmaki & Sayed, 2009; Al-Darmaki et al., 2014; Aljanahi & Alsheikh, 2020; AlJassmi et al., 2021; Al-Oraimi & Zayed, 2011; Al-Shamsi & Fulcher, 2005; Al-Teneiji, 2020; Freimuth, 2014; Lambert et al., 2015), but more are needed. The social sciences are becoming more prominent in the Arab Gulf states as a significant partner in the development of social (e.g., happiness and wellbeing) and educational (e.g., educational reform) policies and anchoring that research within indigenous approaches to accurately reflect the local context for relevant and appropriate policy responses is the way forward.

*More resources on indigenous approaches can be found on the APA Division 32 Task Force on Indigenous Psychology webpage (<https://www.indigenousspsych.org/>).



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