

CAN THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF PREJUDICE BLATANT OR SUBTLE, AVERSIVE, REIFICATION, ETC BE APPLIED IN SAUDI ARABIA? ARE THERE ANY OTHER WAYS IN WHICH PREJUDICE IS EXPRESSED, SHOWN IN SAUDI ARABIA

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Abstract

This study examines different forms of prejudice, including blatant, subtle, and aversive racism, and explores how they may be expressed within the Saudi Arabian context. Drawing on social psychological theories, the research analyses how prejudice can appear both explicitly and implicitly across social and institutional settings. The study highlights discrimination toward immigrants, gender-based inequality, and social biases related to cultural and group differences. Findings suggest that while legal and religious frameworks emphasize equality, certain forms of indirect discrimination may still exist in practice. The study contributes to understanding how modern forms of prejudice operate in non-Western societies.

Keywords: *Discrimination, aversive racism, Saudi Arabia, immigrants.*

1. Introduction

Prejudice continues to exist in modern societies despite social norms opposing discrimination. Recent research has shifted focus toward subtle and indirect forms of prejudice, such as modern racism, aversive racism, and symbolic racism (Akrami, Ekehammar, & Araya, 2000; Benokraitis & Feagin, 1986; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Sears, 1988)

These forms are often less visible but can significantly influence attitudes and behaviours toward minority groups.

Researchers such as Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) distinguished between blatant and subtle prejudice. Blatant prejudice is direct and openly expressed, while subtle prejudice is indirect and often difficult to detect. It may involve resentment toward cultural differences, defence of traditional values, and denial of positive intentions toward minority groups.

2. Theoretical background

Prejudice can be categorized into cognitive, affective, and conative forms (Farley, 2000). Cognitive prejudice refers to beliefs about a group, affective prejudice relates to emotional reactions, and conative prejudice involves behavioural tendencies.

Social psychologists have attempted to explain prejudice through several theories. Asch (1951) demonstrated conformity to group opinions, while Milgram (1974) highlighted obedience to authority. Other approaches link prejudice to personality differences or competition over limited resources. Social Identity Theory explains how group identification can lead to in-group favouritism and bias against others (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

3. Forms of racism

Over time, racism has evolved from overt and easily identifiable forms to more subtle and implicit expressions (Dovidio, Kawakami, Smoak, & Gaertner, 2008). Blatant racism involves direct discrimination, while subtle racism operates unconsciously through avoidance or exclusion (Sue, 2005). Because it is harder to recognize, subtle racism may have stronger psychological effects, including negative impacts on self-esteem (Crocker & Major, 1989; Major, Kaiser, & McCoy, 2003; Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003).

Aversive racism represents a modern form of prejudice in which individuals hold conflicting attitudes, supporting equality while acting in discriminatory ways justified by non-racial reasons (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986).

4. Prejudice in Saudi Arabia

One of the severe problems in society today is discrimination. It is not only the West that suffers from it; Saudi Arabia also faces many kinds of discrimination. Islam eliminates discrimination, but in Saudi Arabia, racism is widespread and often targets non-Arabs and sometimes Saudis themselves.

Being a non-Arab in Saudi Arabia is not easy, as people often look down on them. Non-Arabs face limited rights, including restricted access to public hospitals and universities, leaving them to rely on costly private services. Children of non-Arab men can only gain Saudi nationality at eighteen, and this applies only to sons.

Workers from third-world countries, like Bangladesh and Pakistan, often work long hours and face harsh treatment, insults, and even abuse. Westerners are seen as intelligent and upper-class but immoral. Non-Saudi Arabs are often considered thieves and treated badly.

Discrimination also exists among Muslims; Saudis often see other Muslims as following the “wrong” Islam. There is racism among Saudis themselves, especially against Black people. The Shia sect faces discrimination, sometimes being viewed as non-Saudi or non-Muslim.

Most Saudis belong to tribes; those outside are considered non-Saudi and face barriers in marriage, work, and government positions. High-ranking roles are often reserved for Bedouins and tribal Saudis (Verri, G., 2013).

5. Challenges faced by policemen when dealing with immigrants

In Saudi Arabia, prejudice may appear in various social and institutional contexts. Immigrants, particularly from developing countries, may face unequal treatment in employment and access to services. Cultural differences, language barriers, and social perceptions contribute to these challenges.

Gender-based discrimination is another important dimension. Women may face limitations due to guardianship requirements in areas such as education, travel, and employment. Inequality is also reflected in nationality laws, where women cannot transfer citizenship in the same way as men.

Additionally, certain social groups may experience bias based on cultural, religious, or tribal differences. These patterns may reflect subtle or aversive forms of prejudice rather than direct discrimination.

6. Social psychological theories of prejudice

The end of World War II leads humanity to question: How could it have been possible? Social psychologists tried to understand how the holocaust could have occurred. The view of Solomon Asch (1951) was that, even when the truth is apparent, people may deny declaring it in the presence of a group of people who, together, see it as untrue. Another researcher Stanley Milgram (1974) showed that a society that has a hierarchical system will find its people considering themselves as having the right to authority and coincidentally carry out extreme actions. These people go against what they believe in when they are ordered to do so, as well as, when they are freed of the responsibility of their actions.

The first approach of prejudice, regarding the type of personality people have, focuses on why some people are more prejudiced than others, in other words, individual differences. These types of approaches to prejudice have been disapproved of because of the assumption that prejudice is related to personality of character that should, supposedly, be balanced.

The second approach to prejudice assumes that competing over a lack of resources leads to chauvinism and favoritism of groups.

The third approach puts forth an emotionally motivated explanation and originates from the work of Henri Tajfel and his colleagues (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). To begin with their studies were done on experimental groups and pointed to the fact that the existence of emotion of two groups *is* sufficient to cause feelings of chauvinism and favoritism of the majority group.

7. Women discrimination in Saudi Arabia

Among Arab countries, Saudi Arabia is where women may face the most prejudice and humiliation. Women encounter discrimination in marriage, child custody, and divorce. They cannot make major life decisions without a male guardian—husband, father, or even son—who must approve marriage, travel, work, or education.

Women cannot make decisions regarding their children, such as school enrolment or opening bank accounts, without the father's permission. Many fields of study, like politics, architecture, or engineering, are forbidden for women; teaching is one of the few acceptable careers.

Women cannot pass their nationality to their children or husbands if married to a non-Saudi, while men can pass nationality freely, showing clear gender discrimination. Saudi women were allowed identity cards in 2002 but still require guardian approval. Previously, single, divorced, or widowed women needed male support to access state benefits.

The Saudi government must review policies to ensure gender equality and end discrimination, similar to Western countries.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, although different forms of prejudice can be identified in social and institutional contexts, the legal framework in Saudi Arabia is based on Islamic Sharia principles that emphasize justice and non-discrimination. Individuals should not be treated differently based on nationality, culture, or background. However, addressing both explicit and implicit forms of prejudice remains essential to ensuring fairness, equality, and cultural understanding in practice.

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