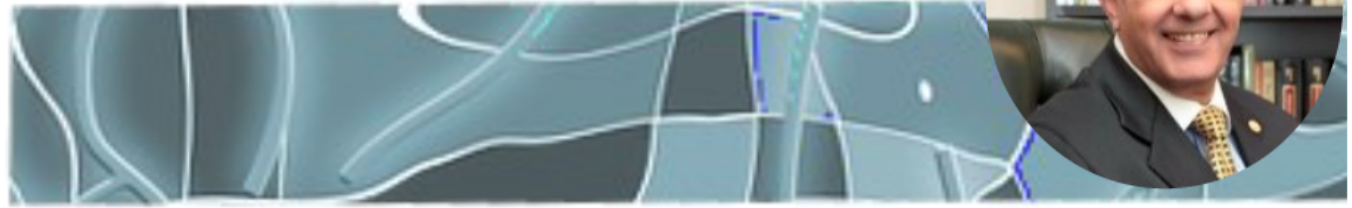


# UAE AND THE HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING: A TEST OF VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

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Since 1990, there was a marked increase of psychologists and professional services in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). One psychologist was already working with the major airlines in human resources and recruitment in particular. Entering the private sector, this author became the second licensed psychologist by Dubai Department of Health (DOH). As pioneers of psychology in the UAE, we had little support for psychology and no resources for a practice.

Ethically speaking, expertise was self-governed yet monitored by Dubai DOH and the UAE Ministry of Health. Basically, there was no rules until you broke one. And you did not want to break any rules, professionally nor socially. Eyes were on the new professionals who represented the new provisions of psychology in this new nation.

Supplying support and resources was via the criteria and guidelines of the American Psychological Association and The Psychological Corporation (TPS) [division of Harcourt Brace Publishing]. Administering tests to young students and adults from various nationalities was a challenge; a test of validity and reliability. Such a challenge was not only testing non-Americans with USA standardized instruments, but also testing Americans who had little or no exposure to life in the USA. Recognized standards for expatriates were not available at that time.

Meetings with TPC psychologists in San Antonio, Texas was the primary support and resource of excellence needed to work within a scope of practice for testing. When addressing the cross-cultural concerns and culture free testing, the heads of the standardization division indicated that a minimum of 100 responses to any variation of test items can be measured for normalizing the test statement or item. The recording of these was then the responsibility of the professional and to reviewed at TPS.

History of psychological testing in the Middle East at large was scattered throughout North Africa, Levant, and the Gulf States over the last century. Instruments for industry was noted, then clinical psychologists sought developing intelligence tests in Arabic. One forerunner was Dr. Naeem Atiyah, Lebanon's father of Psychology. He was a student of Carl Rogers and developed a Wechsler-like instrument for elementary aged children.

Other experts attempted the same in Egypt, Kuwait, and Iraq to name a few known by nation. Unfortunately the analysis may have been weak if little or no cooperation

came from funding and peer support.

More currently, *“Psychological knowledge transmitted by universities in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates is presented and some historical-cultural roots identified ... Research is primarily directed towards educational-psychological issues. Psychological tests are widely used but lack adequate standardization.”* [THE TRANSFER OF PSYCHOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE TO THE THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES AND ITS IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF FIVE ARAB GULF OIL-PRODUCING STATES, International Journal of Psychology 12 February 1984]

## Present and Future

The community of psychology professionals, academic and practice, can foster test construction with:

- A united psychology organization that houses all qualified professionals practicing in the UAE can sustain the development of culture free tests with validity and reliability;
- Discovery through empirical based practice, the statements and question items for the region and culture that measure knowledge and application;
- Emphasis interpretation [understanding of cultural concepts] not translation [literal, wish may lack the correct notion];
- Normalization for the expatriate community, such as student born in UAE and never resided, or had little exposure, in their country of origin;
- University based graduate level courses and supervised training in psychological testing and interpretive integration for advanced assessment and analysis;
- Promote professional responsibility to contribute to the practice of psychology in the UAE at large.

The practice of psychology is more than a financial career option; it is a contributory mandate to advance the field in the UAE and globally.

The UAE is a haven for cross cultural studies to enhance diversity and enrich inclusion.

