ACADEMIC OPINION

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On a dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD)

Doctoral Programme in General Psychology
Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar"

Doctoral Candidate: LULU BALUOS

Dissertation Title: THE INFLUENCE OF STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES ON WOMEN'S ASPIRATIONS AND STATUS IN ARAB SOCIETY

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1. Relevance and Significance of the Research Problem Addressed in the Dissertation

The dissertation entitled *"The Influence of Stereotypes and Prejudices on Women's Aspirations and Status in Arab Society"* addresses a research topic of unquestionable relevance from theoretical, social, and applied perspectives. The research problem lies at the intersection of several significant areas of contemporary psychology, including stereotyping and prejudice, social categorization, intergroup relations, gender roles, and social inequalities. The distinctive nature of the study stems from its examination of these processes within the specific sociocultural context of Arab women in Israel. The doctoral candidate conceptualizes their position as situated at the intersection of three partially overlapping systems of social categorization—gender, ethnic minority status, and cultural tradition—whose combined influence gives rise to complex forms of social constraint.

The relevance of the research also has a clearly defined practical dimension. The doctoral candidate substantiates the need for educational, social, and policy interventions to be grounded in an understanding of the underlying mechanisms of stereotyping rather than focusing exclusively on their observable consequences, such as women's low participation in the labour market. Of particular significance is the argument that interventions addressing

gender equality or the circumstances of ethnic minorities in isolation may prove insufficiently effective unless they take into account the combined effects of these two dimensions.

The relevance and significance of the dissertation topic are convincingly substantiated. They derive not only from the social importance of the position of Arab women in Israel but, more importantly, from the attempt to provide a psychological explanation of the contradiction between expanding objective opportunities for education and professional advancement, on the one hand, and the persistence of social, cultural, and psychological constraints, on the other. Particular merit lies in the conceptualization of stereotypes and prejudices not as isolated attitudes but as interconnected cognitive, interpersonal, and institutional mechanisms operating within the context of intersecting gender, ethnic, and cultural positions. It is precisely this multidimensional perspective that lends contemporary scientific significance to the selected research problem and establishes the potential for the findings to make both theoretical and practical cont

2. General Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation

The dissertation is of an appropriate length and is structured into an introduction, four main theoretical and analytical chapters, a methodological and empirical section, a discussion, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices. The text includes three tables and three figures, while the bibliography comprises 97 references in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. The structure of the dissertation follows a logical progression from the general social psychological mechanisms of stereotyping to their specific manifestations within Arab society in Israel, and subsequently to their particular effects on women's social and professional status.

The literature review and theoretical analysis can be assessed as comprehensive, focused, and effectively aligned with the central research problem. An important strength of this analysis is that it goes beyond the sequential presentation of individual theoretical concepts and scholars. Instead, it is organized in a manner that progressively establishes the theoretical framework necessary for the interpretation of the empirical findings.

The doctoral candidate's attempt to integrate different theoretical perspectives also deserves positive recognition. Particularly illustrative in this respect is the connection established between attributional typology and the Stereotype Content Model, and subsequently between these general theoretical models and the analysis of paternalistic attitudes and benevolent sexism. This approach establishes a relatively coherent theoretical progression from

the general mechanisms of social cognition to the specific manifestations of gender stereotyping.

Another significant achievement is the effective integration of the literature review with the research methodology. The theoretical analysis serves not merely a descriptive or review function but leads to the conclusion that statistical and institutional data may identify the observable manifestations of social inequalities, while being less capable of revealing internalized stereotypes and the mechanisms through which they are reproduced within families and communities. This provides a logical justification for the adoption of a qualitative research approach based on women's first-hand narratives and personal experiences.

The bibliographic foundation, comprising 97 sources in three languages—Hebrew, Arabic, and English—is consistent with the specific nature of the research problem and enables the integration of international social psychological scholarship with literature directly addressing the Israeli and Arab-Israeli contexts. This constitutes an important strength of the dissertation, given that the subject matter could hardly be adequately examined through general English-language academic literature alone.

In summary, I highly appreciate the theoretical analysis presented in the dissertation. The doctoral candidate demonstrates the ability not only to systematize relevant scientific concepts and theoretical propositions but also to compare and integrate them in constructing the conceptual framework of her own research. Particularly commendable is the consistency of the analytical progression: from general social psychological mechanisms → cultural and intergroup contextualization → gender-specific manifestations → empirical examination through the subjective experiences of the women participating in the study. This logical sequence ensures substantive coherence between the theoretical and empirical components of the dissertation and demonstrates that the literature review serves as a genuine analytical foundation for the research rather than merely fulfilling a formal structural requirement of the doctoral thesis.

The research methodology can be assessed as appropriately aligned with the nature of the research problem and the objective of exploring subjective experiences and the mechanisms through which stereotypes and prejudices operate. The choice of a qualitative research design is justified by the need to investigate the meanings, interpretations, and lived experiences of the participants themselves, rather than relying exclusively on externally observable social indicators.

An important methodological strength is the researcher's demonstrated reflexivity regarding her own professional experience and its potential influence on the interpretation of the data. The dissertation also acknowledges limitations associated with the recruitment of participants through the researcher's professional networks, the possibility of socially desirable responses, and the constraints inherent in qualitative research designs with regard to the statistical generalizability of the findings.

In conclusion, the methodology is logically connected to the theoretical framework, sufficiently well substantiated, and appropriate for investigating a complex social psychological phenomenon. Its principal strength lies in its capacity to reveal not only the observable manifestations of stereotyping but also the mechanisms through which stereotypes are internalized and experienced by women themselves. The limitations of the research design are explicitly acknowledged and do not undermine the validity or significance of the findings; rather, they delineate the boundaries within which the results should be interpreted.

3. Scientific Contributions

On the basis of the theoretical and empirical analyses presented in the dissertation, the following major theoretical and applied scientific contributions can be identified:

1. An integrative theoretical framework has been developed and systematically elaborated for the analysis of stereotypes and prejudices towards women in Arab society in Israel. This framework establishes connections between the mechanisms of attribution, social categorization, intragroup and intergroup stereotyping, gender stereotypes, and manifestations of paternalistic ideology and sexism. Accordingly, the research problem is examined simultaneously at the individual, group, and sociocultural levels.

2. The complex interaction between gender, ethnic minority status, and culturally determined role expectations has been conceptualized as a set of interconnected factors constraining the aspirations, professional advancement, and social status of Arab women. A significant contribution lies in the differentiation and integrated examination of external and internalized systems of stereotypes through which inequality may be reproduced at institutional and interpersonal levels, as well as through individually internalized beliefs and expectations.

3. A dynamic model of the interaction between stereotype-based constraints and women's agency in overcoming them has been theoretically substantiated. The dissertation moves beyond the one-sided portrayal of Arab women as passive recipients of the consequences

of stereotyping by incorporating mechanisms of adaptation, coping, resistance, and empowerment into its explanatory framework. Thus, individual agency and structural constraints are examined not as competing explanations but as mutually influencing and interdependent processes.

4. Through qualitative empirical research, the dissertation has systematically documented the specific ways in which stereotypes and prejudices are experienced and how they affect the educational and professional aspirations, social participation, and life choices of Arab women in Israel. The inclusion of 50 participants with diverse age, educational, family, and professional backgrounds broadens the scope for identifying both common and distinctive patterns in their lived experiences.

5. Practically significant strategies for coping with stereotype-based constraints have been identified and systematically examined, including professional advancement, economic independence, the mobilization of supportive social relationships, intergenerational responsibility, adaptation, and various forms of resistance. These findings highlight practical resources for supporting and empowering women within the context of existing cultural and social constraints.

6. Practical recommendations have been formulated for the development of more appropriate educational, social, and public policy interventions aimed at improving the professional opportunities and social participation of Arab women. The contribution lies in substantiating the need for such programmes to address the interconnected gender, ethnic, and cultural mechanisms of stereotyping rather than relying exclusively on universal gender equality models or general minority integration programmes.

Conclusion

The dissertation submitted by **Lulu Baluos**, entitled *"The Influence of Stereotypes and Prejudices on Women's Aspirations and Status in Arab Society,"* addresses a **topical, scientifically significant, and practically relevant psychological research problem**. The study is distinguished by a clearly defined research focus, a logically structured theoretical framework, and a coherent relationship between the theoretical analysis and the empirical investigation conducted.

The major strengths of the dissertation include its comprehensive examination of stereotypes and prejudices in the context of gender, ethnic, and cultural identities; its effort to

integrate different explanatory models from social psychology; and its emphasis on the lived experiences of Arab women in Israel. The qualitative study involving 50 participants makes it possible to identify not only the mechanisms that constrain educational, professional, and social aspirations but also the individual and social resources that facilitate adaptation, coping, and the overcoming of these constraints.

The doctoral candidate's individual contribution is clearly evident in the conceptualization of the research problem, the implementation of the empirical study, the analysis and interpretation of the findings, and the formulation of practical recommendations.

On the basis of the analysis conducted, I consider that the dissertation meets the requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree of **Doctor (PhD)**. I therefore give my **positive assessment** of the dissertation and recommend that the distinguished members of the Department of Psychology award **Lulu Baluos the educational and scientific degree of DOCTOR (PhD) in Professional Field 3.2. Psychology (General Psychology).**

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Prepared by: .....

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