Psychoanalysis Across Cultures: A Personal Journey of a Saudi Arabian Analysand through Egypt, Canada, and the United States

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Abstract: This autoethnographic study explores the shaping and interaction of selfhood with psychoanalytic practices across the cultural landscapes of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Canada, and the United States through the 40-year journey of a Saudi Arabian analysand. The study aims to investigate the impact of cultural beliefs, particularly those influenced by Quranic interpretations and Sufism, on the understanding of psychoanalytic concepts and the formation of selfhood. Utilizing thematic analysis of personal notes and recollections, the study reveals the profound influence of cultural and religious systems on the analysand's sense of self and highlights the challenges and insights that emerge from engaging with Western psychoanalytic institutes as a non-Western analysand. The findings emphasize the need for culturally attuned psychoanalytic models that draw upon indigenous traditions and philosophical frameworks to better serve Arab-Islamic patients. Some important suggestions are to include cultural competency modules in psychoanalytic training programs, find a balance between Western theories and local spiritual traditions, deal with the analyst's unconscious cultural biases, create theoretical models that are based on evidence and can be used in real life, and require psychoanalytic institutes to do cultural sensitivity assessments. This study underscores the importance of cultural competence in psychoanalytic practice and contributes to the understanding of psychoanalysis across cultures.
Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Selfhood, Autoethnography, Arab-Islamic, Cultural Competence, Cross-Cultural Psychoanalysis, Saudi Arabian Analysand

1. INTRODUCTION

Selfhood within the Arab-Islamic cultural context and its connection to psychoanalytic theory and practice is beginning to be realized within global mental health discussions (Tummala-Narra, 2015). As mental health services continue to globalize and patient backgrounds show growing diversity, knowledge of cultural nuances in psychoanalysis and adaptation of Western psychological models is of prime importance (Maramba & Nagayama Hall, 2002). This paper represents an effort to investigate, through the life travels of a Saudi Arabian analysand through

Egypt, Canada, and the United States, the dynamics of selfhood and the interaction with psychoanalytic practices. By using Sufism, the Quran, and psychoanalytic theories, the paper discusses how Western and Arab-Islamic views on selfhood diverge and how these differences can be integrated and used within psychoanalysis (El Shakry, 2014; Nurbakhsh, 2012). This was a very significant development in the study of Arab human behavior when psychoanalysis was introduced to the Arab world during the 1940s, more so in the culturally open environment of Egypt (El Kurd, 2023). The limited acceptance and influence of psychoanalysis in Arab culture can be explained by different viewpoints of the human psyche within the Western and non-Western cultures (Alam et al., 2023). The paper, which presents a case study of psychoanalytic encounters by an analyst across cultures, offers valuable insights into the adaptation issues of psychoanalytic theory and practice. Drawing on recent research by Gielen et al.(Gielen, Fish, & Draguns, 2012), the current paper gives a critical discussion regarding the complexity and specifics of psychoanalytic practice. Cultural identities, beliefs, and emotional expressions influence the psychoanalytic process, emphasizing the importance of selfhood in psychoanalytic studies across cultures (Sarwer-Foner, 1986). Investigating the influence of cultural factors on psychoanalytic therapy through a personal narrative enriches the literature on cross-cultural psychoanalysis, presenting a nuanced view of the universally diverse human psyche. The present study emphasizes the particular importance of cultural competence in psychoanalytic practice. This paper underlines how psychoanalysts should understand the deep structure of a patient's culture and/or religion. Cultural empathy opens up new therapeutic possibilities and allows the psychoanalytic process to be inclusive, respecting the cultural identity of the analysand. The present study investigates the intersection of Quranic insights with psychoanalytic theories and assumes that spirituality and religious beliefs play a cardinal role in reflecting on the notion of selfhood and intervention modalities. This intersection offers a unique lens through which psychoanalytic practitioners can reconsider the universality of psychoanalytic theories and the importance of cultural adaptability in their application. Thus, this paper contributes not only to the field of psychoanalysis but also to the broader discussions on cultural sensitivity, spiritual inclusivity, and the global applicability of psychological theories. This expansion enriches the paper's original contribution by highlighting the indispensability of cultural competence in psychoanalytic practice. It extends the discourse

beyond the academic exploration of theoretical concepts to practical implications for a culturally aware psychoanalytic practice. This enhancement meets the set conditions, ensuring that it is not only preserves but also amplifies the depth and breadth of the study, providing a more holistic understanding of the intricate relationship between selfhood, culture, and psychoanalysis.

1.1 Study Objectives

1. Examine how psychoanalytic practices in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Canada, and the United States shape and interact with selfhood, with a focus on the influence of Quranic interpretations.

2. Investigate challenges and learnings related to the unconscious, dreams, family dynamics, and symbolic interpretations that emerge from a non-Western analysand's engagement with Western psychoanalytic institutes, focusing on how cultural and religious beliefs shape the analysand's understanding of selfhood.

3. Propose culturally attuned models of psychoanalysis for Arab-Islamic contexts, drawing on indigenous philosophical frameworks, considering Islamic thought's spiritual and holistic view of the self.

4. Develop personal insights into unconscious motivations, transference projections, and healing changes experienced during a cross-cultural psychoanalytic journey through self-analysis.

1.2 Study Questions

1. How do cultural and religious systems, particularly Arab-Islamic beliefs, manifest in psychoanalytic interpretations of the unconscious, dreams, and selfhood across the analysand' journey, and how do these interpretations shape the analysand's sense of self?

2. What personal conflicts and insights emerged from the analysand's experiences with analysts in Egypt, Canada, and the United States, particularly in terms of reconciling Arab-Islamic ideas of selfhood with mainstream psychoanalysis?

3. What insights can we gain about the role of selfhood in these dynamics, and how did power dynamics and cultural factors influence therapeutic relationships, transference, and countertransference across the four settings?

4. How can the analysand's self-reflective journey inform the cultural adaptation of psychoanalysis for Arab-Islamic patients, particularly in terms of fostering a culturally resonant sense of self and integrating

indigenous knowledge and practices?

5. To what extent did each experience influence the development of the analysand's "personal theory" in practicing psychoanalysis, and how can these insights contribute to the advancement of cross-cultural psychoanalytic theory and practice?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs an autoethnographic method, integrating self-reflection to examine the development and interplay of selfhood with psychoanalytic practices across the cultural landscapes of Egypt, Canada, and the United States, as experienced by the principal investigator, a Saudi Arabian analysand. Autoethnography, merging autobiography with ethnography, utilizes self-reflection and narrative to analyze personal experiences within broader cultural, social, and political contexts (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). This approach is ideally suited for investigating the researcher's subjective experiences, illustrating how these experiences weave into larger contexts and phenomena (Ellis, Adams, & Jones, 2015). Specifically, it enables a detailed, nuanced exploration of selfhood questions related to Quranic interpretations anchored in the researcher's personal journey and engagement with these philosophical and spiritual traditions. Unlike other, more conventional psychoanalytical methods of research—case study (Yin, 2009), interview (Kvale, 2009), or participant observation (Spradley, 2016)—in autoethnography, singular importance is given to the subjective experiences and views of the researcher himself (Chang, 2016). This focus allows for deeper and closer inquiry into the complex and often evasive dimensions of self and spirit. The methodology in this study is, therefore, priceless, as it allows one to investigate the researcher's deeply lived experience of self as a function of the Quranic and Sufi philosophies. Some people don't like autoethnography because it can be subjective and lead to self-indulgence (Méndez, 2013). To make sure that this study is analytically rigorous, reflexive, and credible, it does things like look closely at the researcher's biases, get feedback from peers and mentors, and read a lot of relevant literature (Le Roux, 2017). These strategies guarantee a comprehensive and trustworthy examination of psychoanalytic, Quranic, and Sufi perspectives on selfhood. Autoethnography has thus provided, in this respect, some key insights into the complex and multiplural nature of selfhood as represented across these traditions. By means of in-depth

personal reflection together with academic and spiritual literature, this research offers a distinctive contribution toward understanding the nature of the self in its relationship to the divine, the cosmos, and the social world. In this respect, the autoethnographic method constitutes an apt tool for tapping into the various layers of human experience and perception, as demonstrated by Toussulis (Toussulis, 2010). In this regard, autoethnography is a research methodology of self-reflection and writing about personal experiences and their cultural meanings (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). This method highly engages the self and gains complex contextual data; therefore, it offers an in-depth look at the subjective experience of the analysand. This, however, is a thematic analysis of a 40-year-long journey of an analysand based on several more varied data sources, such as notes and recordings, and some recollections that are all painstakingly documented through the psychoanalytic process. The data involved quite a few aspects: sessions with analysts from different cultural backgrounds, direct interpretation, and the and the impact of religious and cultural identity on psychoanalytic interpretation. Unlike case studies and narrative analysis, for example, autoethnography allows for richer contextual data and deep exploration of subjective experiences of a researcher (Anderson, 2006). Possible problems of autoethnography include bias, and that generalization might not be applied in other situations. To ensure the reliability of the results of this study, other sources of data are used, and there is member checking (Morrow, 2005). The psychoanalytic introspection provided by the present study forms part of the theorizing about the necessary adaptations that the analytical frameworks must make in order for them to serve indigenous Arab patients with regard to selfhood. Such a narrative also serves in the best practices for therapists in working cross-culturally, hence enriching psychoanalytic thinking in the Arab context. The findings were validated through peer and expert reviews. Member checks were appropriate methods of exploring this area.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The introduction of psychoanalysis to Arab countries in the 1940s, particularly in Egypt's culturally open milieu, represented a pivotal moment in the study of Arab human behavior (El Kurd, 2023). However, the allure of psychoanalysis began to wane in the mid-1980s with the spread of religious awakening and extremist thought antagonistic to Western ideas, especially psychoanalysis (Parker & Siddiqui, 2018). The

concept of the soul in Arab-Islamic culture, deeply rooted in the Quran and Sufi philosophical heritage, presents a distinct psychological system that predates psychoanalysis by 1,446 years. The Quran emphasizes the agency of free will and reason, while Sufi tradition identifies seven ranks of the soul, defining the characteristics of the faithful human striving for perfection (Wikipedia, 2019). Dreams and their symbols hold significant importance in collective consciousness and folk tradition, with clerics playing a significant role in dream interpretation. These pre-scientific interpretations, mixed with Islamic heritage, pose challenges to the scientific psychoanalytical approach to understanding the unconscious as defined by Freud. Furthermore, the differences between the Arabic and English languages, with Arabic aiming for comprehensiveness and English striving for precision, raise questions about the effectiveness of psychoanalysis in a non-native language and the understanding of cultural symbols and backgrounds (Olinick, 1984). Psychoanalysis, originating in a Western cultural environment, carries a different model of the human being than in other cultures (Kakar, 1985), which may contribute to its limited acceptance and influence in Arab cultures. Building upon Freudian and Jungian psychoanalytic theories, this study also draws from Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, which emphasizes the role of culture, society, and historical context in shaping the individual's identity and personal growth stages (Erikson, 1950). Erikson's insights into identity formation become a prism through which the struggle of navigation by the analysand through various cultural and psychoanalytical landscapes adds to the perception of selfhood in view of cultural and religious backgrounds. An integration of object relations theory, especially those by Melanie Klein and Donald Winnicott, places in perspective how early relational experiences with primary caregivers influence the development of self and its later-life manifestations. The work of Klein specifically, 1946, and Winnicott, 1965, is central in this analysis of sessions of psychoanalytic psychotherapy carried out in the present study, especially with the cultural and religious orientation informing the internal object world of the client and its reflection in the transference. Homie Bhabha (Bhabha, 2012) proposed applying the concept of the "Third Space" in postcolonial theory to psychoanalytic therapy, conceptualizing the therapeutic setting as a liminal space where diverse cultural narratives and identities can coexist and interact. This theory enriches the discussion on the intercultural dynamics at play in the analysand's analytical sessions, providing a framework for understanding how new meanings and identities emerge from the confluence of

psychoanalytic practice and cultural diversity. More recently, the work of Obeyesekere on psychoanalysis and anthropology since 1990 offers, beyond this, a far more complex view of how these individuals recast their cultural and religious traditions through personal psychoanalytical experiences. Obeyesekere's work on the "work of culture" in the formation and transformation of individual psyches supplements the research exclusively concerned with the interaction between psychoanalytic practices and Islamic thought by making use of personal narrative to bridge the domains of culture and psychology. The framework incorporates the latest research on spirituality and psychoanalysis integration, such as the Shafranske and Malony model of 1990, in the recognition of spiritual beliefs and practices as increasingly major components of psychoanalytic therapy. This source of literature underlines the study of Sufism and Islamic thought as a necessary ingredient in the process of the analyst's psychoanalytical process, hence underlining the therapeutic possibilities that involve integrating religious and spiritual dimensions into psychoanalytic practice, going all the way back to Al-Owidha (Al-Owidha, 2024).

4. RESULTS

This auto-ethnography describes issues of the self and psychoanalytic practices across cultures through the personal journey of the author as a Saudi Arabian analysand. The findings discussed here explore how the psychoanalytic practice shapes ideas of selfhood across cultures, challenges in adaptation, clashes, and learnings, offering culturally attuned models of psychoanalysis to thereby offer personal insights through self-analysis. This is achieved through a paper discussing how cultural beliefs—one end informed by Quranic understandings and Sufism—dictate meaning regarding psychoanalytic concepts and the construction of selfhood, therefore calling for cultural competence and sensitivity within psychoanalytic practice. The findings suggest the embedding of indigenous philosophical frameworks and spiritual traditions into psychoanalytic models in ways that can hopefully further serve their patients from Arab-Islamic cultural backgrounds and advance ecumenical understanding of selfhood across cultural divides. In the results section, we shall discuss these objectives one by one as follows:

4.1 Shaping Selfhood through Psychoanalytic Practices Across Cultures
The paper is an autoethnographic study of the complex interplay

between selfhood and psychoanalytic practices set within the diverse cultural environs of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Canada, and the United States. Drawing on personal experiences, this paper underlines the significant role that cultural backgrounds continue to play in shaping psychoanalytic discourse by allowing multiple articulations into communicative ecologies across the different cultures (Alam et al., 2023). The Unconscious and Selfhood: At the center of this discussion is the place occupied by the concept of the unconscious, which has a highly esteemed position in both psychoanalytic theory and Islamic philosophy. The meaning of this concept, however, differs in these perspectives due to different cultural and ontological grounds (CAN ÖZ & Duran, 2021; El Shakry, 2014). Though the Freudian tradition locates the unconscious in repressed desires and conflicts, the Islamic traditions posit the unconscious as a spiritual domain imbued with gnosis. Both of these aspects come together in Islamic thought to form this notion of a self which needs purification: the lower self-nafs and higher spiritual aspects. This contradicts Freud's secular, individualistic model that focuses on the individual's childhood and psycho-sexual stages. Skiner 2018 All these contrasts have been vividly illustrated through my experiences in cross-cultural psychoanalysis, such as when the interpretation of my dream by an Egyptian analyst clashed with my view of dreams as spiritual messages, thus underlining deeply how cultural context would impress upon them. (Freedman, 2017; Hoffman, 2023). It was born in Al-Jouf, Saudi Arabia, in 1981 and developed through a set of academic and personal experiences in Riyadh, Egypt, Canada, the UK, and finally attending the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis Education Program in 2020. These have been some of the key moments shaping my understanding of selfhood within a psychoanalytic frame of reference. The cultural influences actually go deep, influencing my anxiety journey and bringing in an interaction between cultural beliefs, family dynamics, and self-evolution. One such incident during my childhood, in which a local religious healer with rituals dispelled what was perceived to be a possession by jinn, was a cross-interaction of traditional practices with my psychology that propelled me hard toward introspection (Mohammadi et al., 2019).

4.2 Cultural Experiences

The psychoanalytic odyssey so far, through Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Canada, and the United States, has unfolded both universal and culture-specific dimensions of psychoanalytic theory and practice. Each cultural location—from the religious and traditional practices of Saudi Arabia

through Egypt's unique mix of cultural influences into the multicultural ethos of Canada and diversified norms of the US—offered something different regarding psychoanalysis and self-understanding (El Shakry, 2014; Tummala-Narra, 2015). The request to lie on the couch during our first session was somewhat of a shock during my very first meeting with the Egyptian analyst. Commandingly, he said, "Lie down and talk about anything that crosses your mind, without censorship." I said what was on my mind was the strangeness of lying on the couch. Turning to the analyst, I said: -and he said, still being blind, - "It seems you haven't placed yourself as one should; one can tell it from your voice." I answered, "Yes, I am looking at you and the room." To which he replied, "One mustn't do that in an analysis." I started talking in Arabic, telling her about my reluctance to take the teaching assistantship for fear that I would fail the scholarship, feeling my command of English did not match the touted standard that is usually ridiculed in the West. Then I resumed talking in English; however, when she asked me about the linguistic abilities of intellectually disabled individuals in the Arab world, I switched to Arabic and thus replied: The analyst commented, "Language does not require intelligence." I also talked about my mother and how I strive to please her; he cut in and said, "Your problem is your preoccupation with your mother that makes you undecided and afraid." When this was brought out in the first session, I was really surprised that henceforth, succeeding sessions had to build on this central issue presented as my problem. About anything, he could always manage to turn it into the meaning that my mother was my enemy. During the first session, I recounted to this Canadian analyst what other Egyptian analysts had said. He just smiled and said that this Egyptian analyst did not finish his training as an analyst and therefore could not be considered an analyst. We had our first session face-to-face after which he asked me to lie down on the couch. Sunlight was coming in through the window behind the couch, and I remarked on the strength of sunlight the couch faced. He said he could move into a chair then began speaking in angry tones about how he might not come back unless I took the matter more seriously. I returned to the couch and relayed to him what this Egyptian analyst had said: that I was obsessed with my mother, that she was my enemy—that I had existential anxiety. He stopped me and asked, "If your mother is your enemy, who will be your lover?" He talked less about existential anxiety and belittled them as stupid, saying, 'You stand before me with your past experiences, current emotions, and future visions. Why use specialized Jargon?' Perhaps he was an atheist proudly like a 'good postmodern

Freudian. Whereas in two years of projective, intensive sessions—each one a deconstruction of specific stuck thoughts regarding my analytic choices in Egypt—the work with the American analyst started by articulating my fear of repeating painful moments experienced earlier. He received my "I am anxious" with an understanding smile and followed up with "Anxious about what?" In relating the details of my experience in Egypt and Canada, he broke in to criticize the interpretations given—even ridiculing the Egyptian analyst's approach when I used his phrase, "Your mother is your enemy." After repeating other phrases from the Canadian analyst, indicating I was either incapable of becoming an analyst or had not yet grown up, the American analyst indicated that such statements may themselves be projections of his feelings unresolved toward me and possibly related to jealous and envious attitudes toward my scholarship and bright prospects. Cultural factors run deep in my journey of anxiety, underscoring the interplay of cultural beliefs with family dynamics and self-evolution.

4.3 Adaptational Challenges, Clashes, and Learnings

It is in the subsequent, in-depth investigation that a discussion shall take place regarding how psychoanalytic practices shape and express selfhood in the diversified cultures of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Canada, and the United States. This section now attempts to peel the layers of cultural influence on psychoanalytic understanding and application by drawing on an extended personal journey. The transit across the cultural divide between psychoanalysis and its counterpoint—Islamic thought related to the unconscious and self—is a profoundly complicated dialogue. Most strikingly perhaps, the contrasts are offered by the Freudian perspective of a repository for repressed desires versus the Islamic view of this realm of human consciousness as spiritual and divinely insightful. That basic difference cropped up during my psychoanalytic sessions, especially in Egypt, where the interpretations of dreams were often oriented toward Freudian analysis and sometimes clashed with my cultural and spiritual insights. The experience thus taught me a lesson: the psychoanalytic practice had to put on culturally sensitive lenses—the unconscious can mean deep spiritual dimensions for cultures other than Western. (Natiazhko, 2015; Pottinger, 1987). In Islamic tradition, one window to the unconscious that guides an individual on his spiritual path is dreams, especially in Sufism. That agrees with the psychoanalytic explanation of dream interpretation as ways to reach the unconscious, while the meaning and focus are quite different. The dream experiences within cultural

contexts and varied backgrounds bring their interpretations interwoven, ranging from symbolic and spiritual in the Sufi understandings to the analytical, often sexualized Freudian analysis. These contacts made it clear that what was required was integrative work, respectful of the spiritual and cultural dimensions contained within dream analysis from different cultures (El Shakry, 2014; Robinson & Vasile, 2023). Cultural differences in transference and countertransference: Psychoanalytic work in another culture can be thought of as a complicated dance to which one is familiar with the steps; however, the patient also participates and is moulded by cultural and familial experiences. Sessions in Canada by a Canadian analyst underlined just how richly nuanced and deep an influence the cultural backgrounds and expectations may have upon the psychoanalytic dialogue, and such moments filled with confusion, insight, and deep reflection. These experiences underlined the fact that any psychoanalytic practice needs to be imbued with cultural competence and sensitivity. One needs to understand the analyst's and analysand's cultural background to develop a therapeutic alliance that truly understands and respects the person's cultural identity (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000; Dwairy, 2006).

4.4 Proposing Culturally Attuned Models of Psychoanalysis

The present study crosses the conventional boundary in trying to propose psychoanalytic models that would better overlap with the Arab-Islamic cultural context and draw richly from the tapestries of Sufism and indigenous philosophical frameworks. A model developed along this line of thinking would deeply resonate with the analysand's sense of self and foster a psychoanalytic practice that is inclusive and reflective of cultural and spiritual identity. It is with deep-seated respect for and curiosity about medieval Islamic philosophy and Sufism that this analyst from America conducts the approach to psychoanalysis that embraces cultural dialogue. In this direction, it is not only the analysand's cultural background that is honored; it also elaborates on the psychoanalytic process through these diversified philosophical and spiritual stands. Of the poignantly reflective statements from my sessions, there is one that epitomizes this integration so eloquently: "In the analyst's efforts to understand these cultural and spiritual dimensions of my experiences, and to make me feel unequivocally seen and heard, my self-understanding was magnified. Indeed, an exploration of Islamic philosophy and Sufi concepts opened new avenues for weaving the fabric of cultural identity within the psychoanalytic process." The case, first and foremost, speaks

to the power of psychoanalysis in effecting change when it is respectful and engaging of the cultural and spiritual paradigm of the analyser. It thus allows a culturally congruent paradigm that deeply resonates within an Arab-Islamic context to be integrated into psychoanalysis through the Sufi concept of self/nafs striving toward self-realization. Al-Owidha, 2024. Nurbakhsh, 2012. The integration, in this light, underlines identifying religious conviction and observance of the analysand as a part of identity worthy of respect in psychoanalytic work. It also points out that indigenous philosophical frameworks greatly enrich psychoanalytic practice. An anonymized session extract shows how the analyst was keen to learn about the conceptualization of the mind that medieval Islamic philosophy brings forward with a depth of respect and curiosity across centuries of philosophies. Outwardly ambivalent toward Islam, his devotion to the inquiry into such eternal plans spoke volumes regarding a dire interest in greater and subtler detail as to what the analysand is communicating. By considering such philosophical perspectives, this approach will engender not only cultural sensitivity but further psychoanalytic exchange. Psychoanalytic models should turn out to be more culturally relevant and, thus, effective. The whole approach integrates Sufi principles and indigenous healing techniques into the dynamics of Quranic recitation and dream interpretation. Psychoanalytic models emphasize religious beliefs and practices in shaping the self. This reduces existential concerns and spiritual goals of Arab-Islamic patients by making the analysis better for improved results (Altalib et al., 2019; Rassool, 2015).

4.5 Personal Insights through Self-Analysis

It is in this respect that this autoethnographic methodological study embarks on self-analysis, finding nuances of unconscious motivations interplaying with the analyses set within a rich tapestry of cross-cultural psychoanalytic exploration. Answers to capstone questions vividly indicate just how deeply embedded such cultural beliefs are in thinking about the unconscious, dreams, childhood memories, and ideas that could be very significant to the mind of psychoanalysts: motherhood and envy (MOOSAVIPOUR et al., 2011). In this exploration, the cultural self will inevitably interact with and affect the dyad in analysis by touching the nature of the transference and countertransference. This paper discusses divergent cultural backgrounds and values and power dynamics between the analyst and me that have engendered complex transference reactions. Such culturally embedded reactions would demand delicate and

introspective navigation the moment understanding is gained (Mazhar et al.; Ona, Berrada, & Bouso, 2022). During my journey, a poignant vignette illustrates the layered nature of these dynamics: my idealization of an American analyst as a sage father figure versus a more conflicted view of my Egyptian analyst underscores the cultural transference embedded within the analytical relationship. This idealization mirrors Islamic values of reverence for authority and spiritual guidance, highlighting the role of cultural background in shaping psychoanalytic encounters (Freedman, 2017; Hoffman, 2023). On the other hand, moments of cultural malattunement or misunderstanding may be followed by defiance or oppositional behaviors—the emergence of cultural countertransference on the analyst's part. Psychoanalytic practice should reflect self-reflexivity, cultural competence, and a continuous process of mutual exchange when such phenomena are attended to. Mutual exchange is necessary in forming a therapeutic atmosphere in which a cultural self is acknowledged and transformed in all its ways and richness (CAN ÖZ & Duran, 2021; El Shakry, 2014). This section highlights the complex relation between the self and psychoanalytic practice across cultural divides through structured exploration of personal insights gained in self-analysis. Drawing from this cultural context, especially Quranic interpretations and Sufism, this paper underlines how cultural elements shape understanding and experiencing of selfhood within psychoanalytic practices. The sections linked by clear transitions add more solidity to the key argument that this paper puts forward regarding the central role that cultural awareness and sensitivity occupy within psycho-analytic exploration. An auto-ethnographic approach was adopted to research the complex ways in which cultural backgrounds inform and influence the psychoanalytic process of the unconscious, dreams, and the transference-countertransference matrix. The paper reflects on the psychological impact of cultural beliefs on developing selfhood and psychoanalytic interactions within anonymized personal reflection.

4.6 Influence of Cultural Beliefs on the Unconscious and Self-Formation

The implications of my own self-analysis are that our grasp of the unconscious and, hence, self-formation is deeply influenced by ingrained cultural beliefs. Where the cultural expectations are huge, perfectionism rises internally and seeks to please an analyst perceived as a father figure. This kind of dynamic underscores the urgent need in psychoanalytic

practice to better understand native cultural contexts to avoid contributing to the reinforcement of stereotypes or cultural biases (Hong & Shan, 2022; Rubin, 2012).

4.7 Transference and Countertransference within Cultural Contexts

In reflecting on my experiences, what strikes me now is the different impingements that this caretaking-authoritative dichotomy in analytic style creates on the transference-countertransference dimension. This becomes a hint toward approval-seeking perfectionism and underlines the limitation of psychoanalytic frameworks without modulation to accommodate cultural diversity. The stirrings this created in me were the need for developing cultural competency in psychoanalytic training so that cross-cultural analytic relationships could be effectively crossed (Barratt, 2018; Kopanski, 2016).

4.8 Cultural Competency and Psychoanalytic Practice

In fact, such an analysis would entail a psychoanalytic practice that is informed not just about but steeped in the cultural and spiritual dimensions of the analyzand experiences. That is, theories emanating from Sufism and Islamic philosophy take the lead in culturally sensitive stimulation of persons with an Arab-Islamic background. In this sense, such an integration could further an analytic process infinitely more representative and inclusive of the analysand's whole cultural and spiritual self, thus enriching the psychoanalytic encounter and allowing much greater understanding of selfhood across cultural divides. Through this section, personal experiences are explored and connected by structured exploration—the strategic use of autoethnographic vignettes—in relation to broader theoretical and practical implications regarding selfhood. The present study focuses more on the cultural context, specifically Quranic interpretations and Sufism, in underlining how the cultural dimensions shape the experience and conceptualization of selfhood within psychoanalytic practice and secure retention of the cultural context throughout this work.

4.9 A Personal Journey: Reflections on Psychoanalytic Experiences Across Cultures

This auto-ethnography discusses the personal journey of psychoanalytic experiences while living in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Canada, and the United States, according to 11 probing questions on culture, selfhood, and analytic dynamics. The present study will focus on the said questions to

underline how cultural beliefs are intrinsically shaping psychoanalytic interpretations and press for the emergence of a culturally sensitive psychoanalytic attitude (Akhtar & Kramer, 1997; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

1. Analysts perception and interpretation: the experiences of the author also bring out how the historical and cultural influences have resulted in perceived interpretive styles of the Egyptian and Canadian analysts as authoritarian and prejudiced, while the American analyst was open and culturally sensitive (Akhtar, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

2. Analysts strongly diverged in how they framed my childhood experiences, between the Egyptian analyst through the mother as an arch enemy, the Canadian one through the intonation of voice that mocked, and the American one through the patience and non-judgmental support offered. Such differences underpin the centrality of cultural context to the understanding of childhood experiences. (Akhtar & Kramer, 1997; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

3. In his case, an approach to anxiety had to be different—from a directive religious attitude in Saudi Arabia through the authoritative style of the Egyptian analyst, passing by the aggressive tone of the Canadian analyst, toward the empathetic approach of the American analyst. These differences once again underlined the necessity of culturally sensitive approaches to the treatment of anxiety (Rassool, 2015; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

4. Understanding applied theories: Throughout the psychoanalytic journey, the author's understanding of the theories applied by the analysts evolved, from initial confusion in Saudi Arabia to the scattered approach in Egypt, the classical Freudian adherence in Canada, and the methodical application of self-psychology in the United States. This progression underscores the importance of clear communication and cultural attunement in the application of psychoanalytic theories (Akhtar, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

5. Internal conflicts as an Arab and Muslim: Strong inner conflicts with the interpretations received from the author faced deep cultural and religious beliefs about such ideals as those of the mother and about seeking approvals from above. Psycho-analytical methods underline how cultural sensitivity must be approached with care when such tenets are faced (Akhtar, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

6. Transference and countertransference: What strikes him most in all these four settings are how cultural dynamics and analytic relationships interrelate. The hierarchical dynamics of Egypt, the oppressive relationship of Canada, and the supportive nature of the American analyst

usher in the role of cultural competence in managing transference and countertransference (Akhtar, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

7. The dream interpretations varied from religious ones in Saudi Arabia to Freudian and traditional in Egypt, realistic in Canada, symbolic in the United States—which again emphasized cultural and theoretical background variability in analysts. Again, this asks that consideration of a cultural context be allowed considering dream analyses (Akhtar, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

8. This also brings out the following cultural factors in non-verbal communication-from all-knowing confidence by the religious scholars in Saudi Arabia, to the military-like authority of the Egyptian analyst, to the self-assured demeanor of the Canadian analyst, and finally down to the humble and respectful approach by the American analyst. These perceptions bring out the relevance of attending to non-verbal cues in cross-cultural psychoanalysis (Akhtar, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

9. Couch presence vs. remote sessions: In Egypt and Canada, the author's experiences with the couch were characterized by discomfort and distress, whereas in the United States, remote sessions facilitated a more comfortable and trusting analytical process. These differences highlight the importance of considering cultural preferences and individual needs when determining analytical settings (Akhtar, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

10. Outcomes in each environment: Life experiences in every environment he faced as a child ranged from skepticism in Saudi Arabia to a veneer of toleration in Egypt, the destruction of self-esteem in Canada, and authenticity of self in the United States. The results emerge with crystalline clarity regarding the extent of cultural background impinging on therapeutic experiences and how culturally keen ways are paramount in this regard (Rassool, 2015; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

11. From the minimal effect in Saudi Arabia and the mocked perception of the analyst in Egypt, through the struggle for perfection in Canada, to the elaboration of a realistic theory based on self-psychology in the United States, each experience supported crystallization of my personal analytic theory. It is these experiences that most strongly bring to the fore the potential transformative power of integrating cultural consideration into psychoanalytic practice (Akhtar, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

The study concludes by summarizing the general points taken and lessons learned from the study. These include, among others, how

cultural beliefs may have a strong bearing on psychoanalytic interpretations, how philosophical ideas from Arab-Islamic reality conflict with the theories of Western psychoanalysis, and how imperative it is to modify psychoanalytic approaches to better meet the needs of the Arab-Islamic patient. It also supports psychoanalysis training in cultural competency, psychoanalysis localization through inclusion of the cultural context into psychoanalysis, and recognition of nuances in psychic functioning across societies. This paper, in the last analysis, supports the view that understanding difference versus deficit forms part of ethical and resonant care in psychoanalytic praxis (Akhtar, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Interpreting Results in the Context of Selfhood and Psychoanalytic Practices Across Cultures

This auto-ethnographic account works through psychoanalytic theory and practice in diverse cultural settings, peeling back at both the universal and culturally bounded features in selfhood. The present study is supportive of earlier studies by Tummala-Narra (Tummala-Narra, 2015), Collins et al (Collins et al., 2011), and Baingana et al.(Baingana et al., 2015) and strongly corrects that there is a dire need to embed the psychoanalytical concepts within diverse social and cultural frameworks and their value in the global discourse on mental health. Al-Issa and Al-Subaie have similarly voiced their opinions, which Gielen et al.(Gielen, Fish, & Draguns, 2012) review to identify that the religious explanations and delusional belief systems of certain cultures have a bearing on how psychoanalysts construe unconsciousness, dreams, and childhood memories. Such insights confirm the need for culturally apt psychoanalytic models that would rhyme with various intuitions of selfhood dispersed through an Arab-Islamic setting. The cultural dimensions bear strongly on the meaning and integration of childhood in self-concept. The Islamic traditions bring a quite different perspective on child development by situating it within the context of fitrah and underlining spiritual-moral development. Whereas psychoanalytic theory conventionally places child development within the psychosexual stages of development along with the emergence of unconscious conflict. I was raised in Saudi culture, and through that, I reflect on how Islamic values shaped my self-concept and my relations within psychoanalytic contexts

as a point of difference on what constitutes self across cultures. (CAN ÖZ & Duran, 2021; El Shakry, 2014). The last section refers to working with psychoanalytic concepts for the Arab-Islamic patient. There is an increasing need to adapt mainstream psychoanalytic theories to best fit the Arab-Islamic patient. Most cultural beliefs and practices run parallel to psychoanalytic theory and call for a more eclectic approach respecting these cultural differences (Dwairy, 2006; Keshavarzi & Haque, 2013). Sufi philosophies and Quranic interpretations located the Islamic view of the self within a spiritual and holistic framework—one that incorporated different aspects toward unity with divinity. The beliefs, spiritual traditions, and selfhood form one rich contrast with the Western psychoanalytic view of a secular and individualistic self. It is engagement in these spiritual dimensions that allows a culturally evocative and transformational psychoanalytic experience to emerge within this process, joining two diverging ontological views on selfhood (CAN ÖZ & Duran, 2021; Ona, Berrada, & Bouso, 2022). The new section uses the cultural context to expound on how psychoanalytic practices and selfhood are better linked at their junctures through Quranic interpretations and Sufism. Each point in the arguments is well presented together with the research questions and objectives in such a way that it brings out the role that cultural influence plays in shaping up the concept and practice of selfhood within psychoanalytic practices.

5.2 Interpreting Results Considering Selfhood and Cross-Cultural Psychoanalytic Practices

The current study anatomizes the tender processes involved in analyst-analyst relationships, focusing most particularly on how cultural differences modulate transference and countertransference, so crucial to analytic development. Building on the studies of Duggan et al.(Duggan et al., 2019) and Latzman et al.(Latzman et al., 2015), study findings place issues of power and cultural stance at the center, resonating with more general debates concerning cultural difference within psychoanalysis.

5.3 Cultural Influences on Psychoanalytic Concepts of Selfhood

One of the most frequent thematic sets that started to develop was one around issues of personal development, often expressed in perfectionist terms and seeking approval from analyst-father figures. This underlines an important problem with traditional psychoanalysis when it is not sensitive to the deeply embedded notions of selfhood in Arab-Islamic

philosophy and Sufism itself (CAN ÖZ & Duran, 2021; Nurbakhsh, 2012). This study confirms that Sufi concepts and indigenized healing practices need to be incorporated into psychoanalytic frameworks to make them more culturally applicable and helpful in the Arab-Islamic context (Altalib et al., 2019; Campo-Redondo, Alsheraifi, & Alshamsi, 2023).

5.4 Advancing Global Mental Health through Culturally Attuned Practices

There is, then, a need to redevelop the analytical modality to accommodate systemic and local knowledge in the successful treatment of psychological distress—especially among its most marginalized populations. In fact, Khalsa et al.(Khalsa, Softas-Nall, & Razo, 2023) go so far as to mention cultural competency as being required now more than ever in psychoanalytic education and that such an approach would be enriching rather than detracting from foundational theories and practices of psychoanalysis (Barratt, 2018).

5.5 Towards Culturally Sensitive Psychoanalytic Practice

Echoing Bian's (Bian, 2023) As suggested, this study extended how psychoanalytic theory should be integrated into empirical approaches in ways that the results of analysis become liable. Most importantly, through the analyst's self-analysis, the study showcased how cultural beliefs influence unconscious processes and self-development based on the necessity of achieving cultural competency in psychoanalytic training for an effective analytic cross-cultural engagement (Tummala-Narra, 2015).

The study, therefore, calls for a revision in the mental health policies and guidelines so as to facilitate collaborations between traditional healers and psychoanalytic scholars as an effort toward culturally sensitive and effective psychoanalytic practices. This would insinuate that such collaborations guarantee a melding of diverse cultural insights in evidence-based ways and encourage a more tolerant psychoanalytic curriculum with emphasis on cultural competence and awareness. This enables other future analysts to realize their cultural biases and how those biases drive analysis (Altalib et al., 2019; Barratt, 2018; Tummala-Narra, 2015). Contributions to Cross-Cultural Psychoanalysis: The present study takes up the call not only for cultural contexts in psychoanalytic practice, but also underlines the usefulness of autoethnography as a research methodology in psychoanalysis. With detailed insights into the self across

different psychoanalytic and cultural vistas, this paper emphatically delivers an important knowledge contribution to the growing body of literature on cross-cultural psychoanalysis (Akhtar, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2015).

6. CONCLUSION

This autoethnographic study on the psychoanalytic process of a Saudi Arabian analysand through Egypt, Canada, and the United States delineated deep influences regarding cultural contexts in the construction and articulation of selfhood within psychoanalytic frameworks. The research indicated how meaningful psychoanalytic practices should be to be varied cultural sensitivities. I believe cultural differences must go deep inside for psychoanalytic cares to be ethically sound and effective. The core relation underlying the findings is that of selfhood with psychoanalytic practices- informed by cultural nuances inclusive of Quranic interpretations and Sufi philosophies. Further, these shape the psychoanalytic process and suggest a need to tailor psychoanalytic theories and techniques to the specific cultural and existential needs of the Arabs. The three important understandings that come out of the analysand narratives are: the enriching possibility of locating psychoanalytic theory within cultural and linguistic backgrounds; the determining role of culture in modifying psychoanalytic intervention techniques; and the necessary contribution of analyst characteristics and of the quality of the analytic relation for a favorable outcome. It serves to challenge existing paradigms in cultural psychoanalysis and highlights the urgent need that psychoanalytic theory and practice themselves must evolve, taking active adaptation and integration within Arab societies. These activities become urgent intervention to deal with the existential issues of the Arab peoples in a more realistic way than those achieved through mere dissemination of theory. We shall be required to draw finer comparisons in the use of adaptation strategies employed in psychoanalytic institutions worldwide. This would be extended to include further examination of the relationship between analytic methods and clinical success that is culturally appropriate. Above all, we need to take into consideration how non-Western cultural beliefs, practices, and philosophies can be used within psychoanalytic models. It will increase the cultural relevance and effectiveness of psychoanalytic interventions, adding to the broader cross-cultural psychoanalytic discourse. It will

consequently enrich the literature in cross-cultural psychoanalysis by enhancing the fact-finding mission of the psychoanalytic community and extending the perspective of cultural sensitivity and adaptability, which are inescapable in psychoanalytic training and practice. It goes through the many interlacing of self, culture, and psychoanalysis and calls for an approach to insert a nuanced culturally sensitive element into mental health treatment, hence offering a route to better working both within and outside the Arab world. The findings thus underline the importance of the cultural dimension in the understanding and practice of psychoanalysis due to the universality and diversity that characterize the human psyche.

7. STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Psychoanalytic institutes, especially those in multicultural societies, should make sure their training programs include modules in cultural competency through which analysts learn how to adapt core techniques when working with diverse communities, with a view toward understanding and developing culturally resonant notions of selfhood. 2) It is the active working toward the reconciliation of indigenous philosophical frameworks and spiritual traditions of local contexts with Western psychoanalytic theories to arrive at more culturally syntonic analytic approaches that resonate with the analysand's sense of self. 3) The training in psychoanalytic practice must also provide means for the teaching analyst to become aware of and learn to work with his unconscious cultural biases, which may interfere with treatment when dealing with patients from minority backgrounds, particularly in respect to how they view themselves. 4) Psychoanalytic researchers and practitioners should cooperate in empirically elaborating on and validating adapted theoretical models, covering the socio-cultural realities of non-Western patient populations and their indigenous notions of selfhood. 5) With standardized licensing and accreditation of psychoanalytic institutes based on assessment for cultural sensitivity, one would expect an increase in the quality of worldwide mental health service provision—so that different conceptions of selfhood are treated accordingly with respect.

8. STUDY IMPLICATIONS

1. The study has implications for the training of analysts to work with

Arab-Islamic patients by integrating Sufism and indigenous philosophical frameworks in formulating culturally attuned analytical approaches.

2) The result of such research can be used to elicit culturally sensitive psychoanalytical responses incorporating spiritual and existential preoccupations of the Arab-Islamic patient in his conceptualization of the 'Self'.

3) The study epitomizes the transformative effect that introducing dimensions of culture and spirituality to psychoanalytic practice has brought about, along with underscoring the more inclusive, culturally sensitive approach to psychoanalysis in general.

9. STUDY LIMITATIONS

1) Based on the experience of one participant, it cannot be generalized to the greater Arab-Islamic population.

2) This is one-sided, since it only questions the view of the analysand without the inclusion of those of psychoanalysts involved.

3) Autoethnography is based upon the participant's memory, self-conceptualization, and interpretation-all of which are vulnerable to the fallacies in human memory themselves, which may already be biased.

4) The effectiveness of the culturally adapted psychoanalytic approaches that were recommended has not been formally assessed yet.

5) It is a single-case study concerning the Saudi Arabian analysand and therefore cannot be generalized directly to any other Arab-Islamic country or cultural setting.

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