

The Structure of Belief in the Culture of Academic Youth Field Study in the University of Damascus

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I. The problem of the study and its importance

Academic youths have become the center of interest on the national level in all fields; and from a scientific point of view, academic youths in general represent a well educated group or class in society where hundreds of thousands of young people attend educational institutions giving these institutions great importance in every domain.

Educational institutions, and particularly the academic ones, are considered a tool of social upbringing (or re-upbringing) that is by no means less important, if not more important, than family. This means that university is responsible for providing the academic youths with new behavior patterns that are mostly different from those they have acquired in their families. University is also responsible for adapting youths to the social and professional roles imposed, and still being imposed, by the emerging vast social change, and affiliating youths in the new social system, and making them sympathize with this system mentally and emotionally.

Higher education in general, and university in particular, as the American sociologist Parson puts it, is a particularly decisive element in the modern societal structure, and performs on the social system level very important functions above which come social upbringing, distributing individuals on the educational and professional system, providing knowledge and spreading the factors upon which emotional participation in the modern social structure is founded.

Parsons confirms that university plays a crucial role in social upbringing that does not only surpass the roles of family and school, but also complements them; and this is clear in developing 'independent behavior' in academic youths far more than the family and school do.

University, with its social system, represents the values forming the pillar of modern societies. University by all means is a part of modern society, and we cannot imagine the university carrying out its 'standard' social system in a society that lacks reason and renovation; thus university must offer a great contribution to building the modern personality through social upbringing and education.

In order for university to achieve this goal, it must work on increasing scientific research about academic youths to explore their problems, needs and trends, because planning for youths in a young society, like the Syrian society, is planning for the future.

In the light of field researches which have studied and analyzed academic youths, we can conclude that the culture controlling academic youths behavior and opinions and visions of most prominent human and daily issues, and the most urging problems facing Syrian academic youths and obstruct their progress and ability to effective contribution to the current process of development and modernization in Syria.

What gives this study its significance is the new trend adopted by all societies, including the Syrian, to develop and modernize themselves by stressing the importance of comprehensive development as a goal, which requires searching for the obstructions of this development as a goal, especially the cultural factors of human progress, which is considered to be the tool and main pillar of development. Thus we can see that youths form one of the most effective sections in the Syrian society, hence the importance of studying this section on both levels: the individual and the collective.

- On the individual level, one is in urgent need, when handling different situations and needs, for standards, values, directions, beliefs and behavior patterns that function as a guide for his behavior and action tools for responding to issues raised by different situations i.e. those used for problem solving. Needless to say that if these values or tools of action disappear or conflict, man will be alienated from himself and his society.
- On the collective level, every system needs standards, values, directions and beliefs similar to those in individuals, so it adds to them its own objectives and values. If those were not clear or were in conflict, soon there will be social conflict that might lead the social system to disintegration and collapse. Therefore, we can say that the successive economic social and cultural changes taking place in the Syrian society have left their imprints on man in this society in general, and on the academic youths in particular, where youths are considered to be the most sensitive, in this transient stage, and most affected by the problems occurring in their society. Accordingly, the problem of this study in brief is:

What is the culture that controls the behavior of the test group in this study – the Syrian academic youths – and determines their view of most prominent human and daily issues; that is because thoughts and beliefs, and thus the whole cultural structure of the test group in this study is the one that controls their behavior and efficiency, and the direction of this efficiency in terms of a number of important and basic issues in the Syrian society:

1. Viewpoint regarding superstitions.
2. Viewpoint regarding the phenomenon of *al-awliya'* [Muslim holy men].
3. Viewpoint regarding the past and history.
4. Viewpoint regarding the implementation of *Shari'a* [Islamic Law].

II. Objectives of the study

This study aims at recognizing the culture that controls the behavior of the members of the test group in it, and determines their view of most prominent human and daily issues; that is because thoughts and beliefs, and thus the whole cultural structure of the test group in this study is the one that controls their behavior and efficiency, and the direction of this efficiency in terms of a number of important and basic issues in the Syrian society.

The theoretical frame of the study

Recognizing the belief structure in youths' knowledge implies the necessity to study a number of basic concepts, such as the concept of youths and culture, youths' knowledge, and academic education.

a. Concept of youth

Academic youths, in their basic definition, represent a distinguished age group in the modern Syrian society with respect to their position and role in the process of development and modernization taking place in the modern Syrian society. Since modernization has led to the decline of traditional knowledge, which does not grant youth any sense of distinction, when the Syrian society started modernizing its social, economic and cultural structure, it faced the necessity of qualifying manpower, which helped crystallizing youths as an age group and a distinguished social and cultural class to be qualified for holding the main burden in modernizing society, because they are the first to understand when it comes to renovation and modernization; in addition to the role played by different circumstances in crystallizing this class through developing and enforcing the national state which holds the responsibility for making, implementing and monitoring all social and economic development programs many of which have come into existence. In the same time, however, they caused cultural and spiritual deterioration as a result of social and political prejudices that restrained the spirit of refusal and efficiency in youths, especially with regard to development. No job, thus no income and no hope for marriage or making a family, stopped youths from mingling in society, and led them to a state of withdrawal because dreams have gone.

Defining the concept of youth requires shedding light on many issues. If we attempt to determine youth in the light of external factors, like demographers do, depending on age variable that a young person spends interacting with society, we will find that demographers have different opinions about the beginning and the ending points of this age. Some say it is under 20, determining the end without the beginning; others say it is between 15 and 25; and others claim it to be between 15 and 30. (Leila & others 1991, 7-8)

Unlike demographers, psychologists tend to determine youth depending on internal factors. They determine youth on the basis of completeness of psychological structure,

which reconciles the biological element in personality, with all its needs, motives and instincts, with values acquired from social context through the process of social upbringing, when the completeness of motive structure leads to make the young personality able of normal interaction in different fields of social reality. (Flaks 1971, 37)

Sociologists, however, have their scientific diagnosis of youth. They see that in addition to age determination, mentioned above, youth period begins when society tries to qualify the person who represents a specific social position, and performs a role or more in building his personality. Whereas the end of this period comes when this person manages to occupy his position and play his role in social context in accordance with social game rules. Sociologists support their view by saying that personality remains young as long as its standard formulation has not completed yet. (Mustafa 1999, 44-45)

b. Concept of culture

This is the second concept we come across. We mean by culture the values and thoughts which form a symbolic pattern directing social interaction in different social domains. Culture passes over generations, and individuals acquire it from social upbringing institutions such as family, school, media and job institutions. When personality absorbs cultural values, these values form a dimension or a basic element in the personality's structure. Thus culture plays the role of the individual's conscience that constrains the human instincts so they do not expand and drag the individual down to subhuman levels. Moreover, culture controls human behavior in order to keep it within the limits of the normal, and keep the person's capability to interact with society in a normal manner.

Culture is mostly formed out of four sources interacting with each other in order to create cultural structure in society. The first source is the historically developed cultural heritage which passes over from a generation to another in a form of modified and growing historical accumulation, expressing the society's experience and the richness of its cultural past. That is because this source contains a selective continuity of different values that eliminates values related to past epochs, and values that suit interaction in many epochs remain. (Leila 1992, 70)

The second source is the result of social interaction between cultural values in the society, where some values arise from the interaction occurring amongst people; and as soon as these values arise, they acquire independence that qualifies them to control social interaction in society, especially if these values are supported with inherent values.

Whether these values are resulting from social interaction or were reproduced through it, the moment they crystallize, they generate a controlling power for what is happening in society. (Leila 1992, 72)

The third source is the world surrounding the society's culture. If diffusionism has previously indicated the possibility of cultural features emigrating amongst relatively isolated societies in an obsolete world order, the culture of dominant superpowers has emerged in a world controlled by the ideology of globalization – flowing to penetrate the cultural defenses of third world societies; as a result the culture of the conqueror and its ways of life rule in the beginning through a mechanism of imitation as Ibn Khaldun puts it, which is the culture that can be contained in the end to turn into a number of elements in the group of superior values that organize the social interaction. It is difficult now to keep the cultural identity in the face of communication revolution and never-ending media invasion (Leila 1992, 73). This brought the western values into our culture to direct our behavior, especially the youths.

Finally the fourth source is the needs of youths, where new effective value elements are formed among youths. Youths are a group of people with a psychological and biological formula different than other age groups; they have their social situations and different stands, which generate new values and standards matching the youths' needs. Needs of youths is also capable of directing youth behavior in various fields of social reality; this leads us to the third concept, which is the concept of youth culture.

c. Concept of youth culture

The concept of youth culture is compound of two terms characterized by expansiveness and difficulty to define, those are culture and youth. Though there is a diversity of opinions concerning this concept, yet there is a considerable agreement on connecting this concept with the concept of sub-culture or calling it 'youth sub-culture.'

Youth sub-culture represents one of the sub-cultures in society; it may share some characteristics with the general cultural trend, or may differ from it just like any other sub-culture.

In fact, youth sub-culture is one of the favorite topics in American sociology which pays a lot of attention to subjects like the city, family, behavior, work and crime. This attention particularly comes within the frame of the many sociological studies which focused on the topic of juvenile deviance. (Al-Zeidi 2006, 203)

Talcott Parsons has stressed since the 1950s the importance of these sub-cultures as a social phenomenon on the one hand, and a step in social upbringing on the other. From this perspective, sub-cultures are related to the rupture that might take place between a young person and his family, and to the pressure practiced upon him by school. These sub-cultures come to existence within friend groups, and manifest themselves in a collective lifestyle characterized by a sort of marginalization from society; they also

provide a compensating space since they represent a reaction against the pressures practiced by industrial societies. (Al-Zeidi 2006, 204)

Youths use these cultural themes in developing and forming a set of standards which give youths the strength to acquire skills and social experiences that are difficult to acquire through general cultural standards inherent from ancestors or grownups in society in general. (Mannheim 1952, 8)

This means that youth culture is a combination of values which have descended from history or resulted from the modern social interaction. These domestic values intermingled with universal ones and travelled into our society through media and information technology, in addition to the element of uniqueness of youth as an age stage.

However, there are two notes about this combination: the first one is about the fact that the elements of this combination lack complete integration, which makes it organically not cohesive, besides these elements are expected to impose contradicting confirmations regarding certain topics. The second note is about the universal element which dominates the youth medium. This is true because youths are the most exposed group to information technology, besides the youth culture is a culture of renovation and fast changing, thus it reflects youth characteristics (Leila 2003, 20). This implies that culture is the brain of society or, as Émile Durkheim puts it, it is the collective conscience; if this brain was strong and cohesive, then it can control the rhythm of social interaction in order to reach the society's aims; however, if society's culture collapsed or was breached, society then will move randomly without a guiding compass; moreover, society will unleash instincts – the animal feature in man – without a controller to be in charge, and human behavior functions in an instinctive manner, void of every kind of values or norms just like it is void of any reason.

In our study, we are going to analyze the concept of youth culture from a perspective that considers the new changes entering to youth culture is not a local or national reality resisting the ancestors' culture any longer; in fact it is vulnerable now more than ever to be absorbed and shaped on a universal scale in a manner that it will be emptied of its significance, which is based upon the qualities of criticism and desire to overcome and change and independency in self-building, then turned into a set of negative values and consumer behaviors, and set the circumstances for cultural and economic domination by the power that has the strongest economy, force, technology and media, to hamper youth affiliation in society; because it is related to analyzing these changes and their effects on youth culture.

d. Academic education

Education in general is the 'art of making a citizen;' and education in Syria has a great effect on youth culture due to the wide expanding of education, and making it compulsory in the primary stage, and somewhat making it free. In the same time, despite all the successive reformations which aimed at improving the tools and quality of education, it still suffers from many deficiencies because of its indolence and failure to meet the needs of youths and their cultural and professional ambitions, and inability to merge youths in the social and economic life, in addition to its failure in providing original and balanced knowledge that can qualify generations to be able to control modern technology and knowledge and science. Furthermore, there is a curriculum crisis where the curriculum does not develop social, physiological and mental faculties, on the contrary, it only develops the memorizing faculty alone, because the teacher's task is to tell (explain) what is in the curriculum book, and the student has to memorize what has been told.

Students in most Syrian universities are used to read only one book or a number of papers, not more than hundred per course, as if making the student read a number of books and refer to the library for a research were a non-recommendable thing. The curriculum does not qualify the student to raise inquiries or write a paper to be read or join a scientific discussion, which is the essence of education; thus the student becomes educationally limited, and trapped within a siege, being a subject tool without a permission to think, criticize, analyze or take a stand, and eventually become a victim of educational prejudice which feeds the tendency of obedience and weakens the sense of creativity and renovation.

This reality of education introduced to the youths a kind of culture characterized by ambiguity and confusion. It is still far from scientific reasoning that is firmly connected with reality, it is controlled to a great extent by submissive thought which does not have but few scientific flashes.

III. Preceding studies

Many studies and sociological researches have studied the topic of youth. As a means of handling the subject of this study, *Variables of Building the Syrian Youth Knowledge and the Problem of Merging in the Modern Syrian Society*, we attempted to present some examples of Arab and Syrian sociological studies, which we consider to have a strong theoretical point of view in the field of youth sociology in Syria, and followed two main courses in handling the subject of youths:

1. Theoretical studies: handling the subject of youths using the available theoretical studies and theories about youths.
2. The desire of some researchers to study the subject of youths following an organized research method by examining a number of hypotheses related to a subject or another.

We are going to present the most important Arab and Syrian studies regarding both courses, and are related to the subject of our research. Of those studies: *Arab Youths and Their Problems*, by Izzat Hijazi (Hijazi 1978). This study tackled the problems of Arab youths, including the organic, psychological and social problems, in addition to discussing the suffering of the Arab youths from a crisis with themselves, and their problems in the modern Arab society – family, educational system, grownups, political institutions, work and marriage. *Clash of Generations*, by Al-Sayyed Abdul’ati al-Sayyed (al-Sayyed 1990). This study aimed at unveiling the phenomena of compliance and differing in the culture of the Egyptian youths now, based on the hypothesis that ‘the Egyptian youths have a special culture reflecting their situations and positions in society.’ The findings showed that the problems and tension in child-family relationship is one of the most complicated problems facing youths, in addition to high costs of living and scarcity of proper job opportunities, and low salaries. *Value Conflict in Arab Youths*, by Mahmud Sa’ud Kaddham al-Sarhan, who studied youths in Jordan (al-Sarhan 1994). This study showed value conflict aspects were manifested in social, psychological, emotional, political and religious dimensions. *Intellectual Framework of Arab Youths*, by Abdulmajeed Karkutly (Karkutly 1973). This study’s objective was to recognize the intellectual framework of the Arab young man in the city of Cairo, Egypt, and the reflections of his economic status on his intellect. *Culture and Youth Values*, by Malakeh Abyad (Abyad 1984). This study explained that there are certain prominent trends agreed upon by youths, manifested in youths’ optimistic view to the future; the trust that their individual efforts play the biggest role in determining their destinies and appreciating the concepts of work, family and Arab nationalism; the view to the husband-wife relationship as a relationship based upon equal participation; and in politics, considering democracy a more related concept to social justice and equal opportunities than to individual freedom. *Youths and Social Change*, by Adnan Muslim (Muslim 1999, 83 – 112). This study resulted in very important findings. It showed the depth of the economic problem manifested in low salaries according to % 27 of youths; % 37.33 believe it is money and wealth as a social status determining factor; % 53.5 believe in the importance of parent-child dialogue; and % 39.3 agree on work for women. *Youths and the Advantages of Investing Leisure Time*, by Kamel Omran (Omran 1999, 125 – 154). This study brought about a number of important results: awareness of Damascus University students to the importance of investing leisure time and its advantages. And finally a study that we carried out, entitled *Cultural Contrast amongst Generations in Urban Societies*. this is a thesis presented for doctorate degree in the department of sociology – University of Damascus; showed that the Syrian youths have a special sub-culture contrasting with the culture of their parents, and identical in the same time i.e. it has not reached to conflict.

Those studies and others show us that youths now occupy a very important place in society, and their positions, culture, behavior patterns and social participation are

considered phenomena that must be subjected to thorough study. We must not rest to over generalizations or concessions regarding youths unless based upon comparative study in different social contexts and different points of view.

Research method and data collecting tool

A researcher must select the proper method that secures organization for his research. Therefore, the proper method must be closely related to the subject of his research and its goals (Ibrahim Rajab 2003, 201). For this research, and for its main inquiries, I followed the descriptive analytical method as a basis of analyzing data, and offering answers for the raised questions. I adopted the surveying technique as a tool for collecting data for its high efficiency in collecting data from large sectors in society in a relatively limited time, and its moderate expenses compared to interviews and monitoring. I designed the survey form according to the study inquiries and objectives; and tried to maintain the clarity of the questions.

The survey is composed of 9 questions including the basic questions and the ones about:

1. Viewpoint regarding superstitions.
2. Viewpoint regarding the phenomenon of *al-awliya'* [Muslim holy men].
3. Viewpoint regarding the past and history.
4. Viewpoint regarding the implementation of *Shari'a* [Islamic Law].

Scientific hypotheses dedicated for the study

1. Academic youth culture might tend to reject belief in superstitions.
2. Academic youth culture might tend to reject belief in the phenomenon of *al-awliya'*.
3. Academic youth culture might tend to reject the past.
4. Academic youth culture might tend to reject implementing the *Shari'a* [Islamic Law] as a whole.

The community of the study and the test group

The community of the study includes all students in the University of Damascus. The test group consists of 600 male and female students chosen by a simple random manner out of the university dorm residents. I paid close attention to making the test group represent the utmost diversity of characteristics, circumstances, economic situations, academic year and scientific field.

Definitions

- **Youth culture:** sociology offers a lot of definitions for youth culture; we are going to adopt this one: 'youth culture is a structure of values, trends, standards and behavior patterns considered by youths as solutions for some problems that might result from internal contradictions in the surrounding social and economic contexts.' (al-Sayyed 1990, 124)

- **Academic youth:** every student registered in Damascus University records, and dedicated entirely for study.
- **Family monthly income:** the researcher has categorized the monthly income under three categories: **low:** under 10000 sp; **average:** 11000 – 20000 sp; and **high:** above 20000 sp.

Characteristics of the test group

1. Gender:

Chart (1) demonstrates the gender distribution of the test group

| Gender | Number | Percentage |
|--------|--------|------------|
| Male | 270 | 45 |
| Female | 330 | 55 |
| Total | 600 | 100 |

2. Age:

Chart (2) demonstrates the age distribution of the test group

| Age | Number | Percentage |
|---------|--------|------------|
| 17 – 23 | 265 | 44.17 |
| 24 – 30 | 333 | 55.50 |
| n/a | 2 | 0.33 |
| Total | 600 | 100 |

3. Family Monthly Income:

Chart (3) demonstrates the family monthly income distribution of the test group

| Family monthly income | Number | Percentage |
|-----------------------|--------|------------|
| Low | 140 | 23.33 |
| Average | 411 | 68.50 |
| High | 39 | 6.50 |
| n/a | 10 | 1.67 |
| Total | 600 | 100 |

4. Academic Year

Chart (4) demonstrates the academic year distribution of the test group

| Academic Year | Number | Percentage |
|---------------|--------|------------|
| First | 160 | 26.67 |
| Second | 150 | 25 |
| Third | 120 | 20 |
| Fourth | 90 | 15 |
| Fifth | 80 | 13.33 |
| Total | 600 | 100 |

5. Scientific Field

Chart (5) demonstrates the scientific field distribution of the test group

| Field | Number | Percentage |
|-------------|--------|------------|
| Theoretical | 320 | 53.33 |
| Practical | 280 | 46.67 |
| Total | 600 | 100 |

These charts show that the previous test group reflects maximum contrast in economic characteristics, field of study, academic year, age and gender. This random selection and the large size of the test group guarantee accurate results in order to achieve the objectives of this research.

Findings of the Field Study

I. Superstitions

Researcher Mustafa Hijazi considers belief in superstitions and magic a main feature of prejudiced man, who seeks adaption to existence via a compensating process implying belief in superstitions and finding their manifestations in reality, 'man cannot simply bear prejudice and persecution or accept them as they are; he needs a catharsis to contain his agony and have some control over it, or else life would be impossible to live. If he does not find the cure that enables him to control his reality in a way or another, he will resort to superstitions' (Hijazi 2001, 161). Hijazi continues saying that 'the diffusion of belief in superstitions and magic in any medium matches the degree of prejudice and deprivation, and the growing sense of weakness and inability' (Hijazi 2001, 168). Since the majority of Arabs believes in superstitions and practices them because of ignorance and backwardness, what has the educated class done about that?

Backwardness practices a considerable pressure upon the educated class as a result of the debatable relationship between the individual and society. It is too difficult for an educated person to reject totally the society's customs and traditions and the concepts and ideas behind them, especially with having in mind the fact that education is shallow and unable to change the core structure of the Arab mentality which has been formulated since childhood with superstitions standing as one of its main pillars. Furthermore, the educated person in the Arab countries suffers from political and economic pressures in various forms using temptation and threat to make him give up his freedom and spontaneity and thus turning into a subject tool within the hands of the controlling class. By time, this class manages to domesticate the educated person and alienate him from reasonable thinking and rational behavior so that not only he becomes accustomed to accept the ideology of the controller and not to reject, but also support and enforce it. This way the educated person falls prey to superstitions in thought and practice so that he lives depending on the superstitious mentality he acquired since childhood.

But to what extent would we find superstitions present in the mentality of the academic youths as a manifestation of cultural conviction and thus an accumulated ideological background. Although logical thinking hypothesizes the absence of such ideology to some extent in the minds of academic youths, yet the breakup between academic youths, as we define them, and superstitions is not necessary or compulsory; and so it is not out of question that the academic youths test group does not exclude superstitions from their culture. In fact, there are a plenty of academic youths still dominated by superstitions which represent one of the essential components of their cultural concepts; actually this is associated organically with the common culture. Chart (6) shows the following figures:

Chart (6) shows the degree of belief in some superstitious statements

| Superstitions | Agree | | Neutral | | Disagree | | n/a | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|-------|----------|-------|-----|------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Luck might determine future | 328 | 54.67 | 90 | 15.00 | 179 | 29.83 | 3 | 0.50 |
| Astrology | 49 | 8.17 | 58 | 9.67 | 489 | 81.50 | 4 | 0.67 |
| Existence of invisible beings | 274 | 45.67 | 107 | 17.83 | 215 | 35.83 | 4 | 0.67 |
| Optimism will let you make it | 47 | 7.83 | 81 | 13.50 | 47 | 7.83 | 2 | 0.33 |
| God has distributed the living | 459 | 76.50 | 75 | 12.50 | 63 | 10.50 | 3 | 0.50 |
| The poor make their poverty | 163 | 27.17 | 147 | 24.50 | 281 | 46.83 | 9 | 1.50 |

1. Note from these charts that academic youths tend to believe that luck has something to do with determining the future of man. For them, luck controls their everyday life. Luck practically is the unknown, but not any unknown; it is the unknown that is capable of acting and interfering; that is because what controls their lives is unknown to them.
2. Field outcomes demonstrated academic youths' tendency to reject the word *astrology* with % 81.5 disagreement, % 9.67 being neutral, and % 8.17 agreement. Although the agreement percentage is rather low, yet in the same time, we found that the root cause of this percentage was the firm faith in fate resulting from social prejudice practiced on young men in some social environments; consequently, astrology seemed to be rather like a relief for this prejudiced man to ward off this state of weakness that he suffers from; an attempt to make an existential balance in a life full of worries and fears from the unknown. This is obvious in quacks' behavior when they practice their tricks; they always use the questions of worry and relief by frightening the ones in need and stressing their worries and amplifying the misfortunes they have been through or waiting ahead, then come back again to assure them there is a way out and

predicting a soon relief and overcoming the circumstances and misfortunes after a long time of calamities. (Hijazi 2001, 168)

3. Field study showed the tendency of academic youths to believe in the existence of 'invisible beings' like genies or fairies. We incline to believe that agreement on this belief is high due to the attitude of all divine religions which acknowledge the existence of such beings. Therefore, rejecting this belief, or bringing it to question remains a problematic issue that needs a scientific mentality which can free itself in a sense from the grip of metaphysical culture, and obtain a wider scientific vision of different phenomena.

Believing in such beings and their supernatural powers has two functions:

- A. Knowledge function: offering answers that may fill the objective scientific gap.
- B. Psychological function: belief turns into a defense means within the hands of a prejudiced man.

4. According to the charts, academic youths tend to believe in the statement 'Optimism will let you make it.' The authority of metaphysical beliefs is obvious in academic youths, who are expected to be leaving behind, with their scientific mentalities, many abstract conceptions that lack every scientific or logical basis in reality.
5. Academic youths believe in the fact 'God has distributed the living.' We can note the dominance of the religious mentality which justifies the existence of an extremely rich class and an extremely impoverished one waiting for God's mercy.
6. Academic youths reject the idea of 'The poor man makes his poverty.'

We come to the conclusion that there is a high sense of faith in fate and full confidence in divine providence. This does not indicate a propensity to reliance and idleness; rather it is a state of contentedness with life as it is; in addition to a high sense of faith asserting that 'since God has created this world, He is also responsible for distributing the living in it. Man has only to work in order to get what is allotted to him.' Whereas the few who asserted the responsibility of the poor for his poverty stressed that the human will is the one responsible for determining one's fate. Of course, the probability of questioning this claim is highly possible. As for the secular mentalities which had the opportunity to acquire a high sense of rational faith, they thought that man is the first one to hold responsibility for his living status; and this sort of responsibility is asserted by Islamic values and principles.

a. Field of study and its view of superstitions

Chart (7) demonstrates the impact of field of study on the presence of superstitions

| Superstitions | | Theoretical | | Practical | | Total | |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------------|-------|-----------|-------|-------|--------|
| | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Luck might determine future | Agree | 200 | 62.50 | 128 | 45.71 | 328 | 54.67 |
| | Neutral | 70 | 21.88 | 20 | 7.14 | 90 | 15.00 |
| | Disagree | 50 | 15.63 | 129 | 46.07 | 179 | 29.83 |
| | n/a | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 1.07 | 3 | 0.50 |
| Astrology | Agree | 22 | 6.88 | 20 | 7.14 | 42 | 7.00 |
| | Neutral | 5 | 1.56 | 60 | 21.43 | 65 | 10.83 |
| | Disagree | 289 | 90.31 | 200 | 71.43 | 489 | 81.50 |
| | n/a | 4 | 1.25 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 0.67 |
| Existence of invisible beings | Agree | 194 | 60.63 | 80 | 28.57 | 274 | 45.67 |
| | Neutral | 57 | 17.81 | 50 | 17.86 | 107 | 17.83 |
| | Disagree | 65 | 20.31 | 150 | 53.36 | 215 | 35.83 |
| | n/a | 4 | 1.25 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 0.67 |
| Optimism will let you make it | Agree | 270 | 84.38 | 200 | 71.43 | 470 | 78.33 |
| | Neutral | 30 | 9.38 | 51 | 18.21 | 81 | 13.50 |
| | Disagree | 20 | 6.25 | 27 | 9.64 | 47 | 7.83 |
| | n/a | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 0.71 | 2 | 0.33 |
| God has distributed the living | Agree | 259 | 80.94 | 200 | 71.43 | 459 | 76.50 |
| | Neutral | 41 | 12.81 | 34 | 12.14 | 75 | 12.50 |
| | Disagree | 20 | 6.25 | 43 | 15.36 | 63 | 10.50 |
| | n/a | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 1.07 | 3 | 0.50 |
| The poor make their poverty | Agree | 100 | 31.25 | 63 | 22.50 | 163 | 27.17 |
| | Neutral | 100 | 31.25 | 47 | 16.79 | 147 | 24.50 |
| | Disagree | 115 | 35.94 | 166 | 59.29 | 281 | 46.83 |
| | n/a | 5 | 1.56 | 4 | 1.43 | 9 | 1.50 |
| Total | | 320 | | 380 | | 600 | 100.00 |

b. Academic year and its view of superstitions

Chart (8) demonstrates the impact of academic year on the presence of superstition

| Superstitions | | First | | Second | | Third | | Fourth | | Fifth | | Total | |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Luck might determine future | Agree | 130 | 81.25 | 100 | 66.67 | 73 | 60.83 | 15 | 16.67 | 10 | 12.50 | 328 | 54.67 |
| | Neutral | 20 | 12.50 | 30 | 20.00 | 17 | 14.17 | 13 | 14.44 | 10 | 12.50 | 90 | 15.00 |
| | Disagree | 10 | 6.25 | 20 | 13.33 | 30 | 25.00 | 59 | 65.56 | 60 | 75.00 | 179 | 29.83 |
| | n/a | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 3.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 0.50 |
| Astrology | Agree | 30 | 18.75 | 10 | 6.67 | 10 | 8.33 | 5 | 5.56 | 4 | 5.00 | 59 | 9.83 |
| | Neutral | 20 | 12.50 | 10 | 6.67 | 10 | 8.33 | 10 | 11.11 | 8 | 10.00 | 58 | 9.67 |
| | Disagree | 116 | 72.50 | 130 | 86.67 | 100 | 83.33 | 75 | 83.33 | 68 | 85.00 | 489 | 81.50 |
| | n/a | 4 | 2.50 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 0.67 |
| Existence of invisible beings | Agree | 100 | 62.50 | 80 | 53.33 | 50 | 41.67 | 34 | 37.78 | 10 | 12.50 | 274 | 45.67 |
| | Neutral | 40 | 25.00 | 30 | 20.00 | 15 | 12.50 | 15 | 16.67 | 7 | 8.75 | 107 | 17.83 |
| | Disagree | 16 | 10.00 | 40 | 26.67 | 55 | 45.83 | 41 | 45.56 | 63 | 78.75 | 215 | 35.83 |
| | n/a | 4 | 2.50 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 0.67 |
| Optimism will let you make it | Agree | 140 | 87.50 | 130 | 86.67 | 100 | 83.33 | 50 | 55.56 | 50 | 62.50 | 470 | 78.33 |
| | Neutral | 10 | 6.25 | 15 | 10.00 | 15 | 12.50 | 20 | 22.22 | 21 | 26.25 | 81 | 13.50 |
| | Disagree | 8 | 5.00 | 5 | 3.33 | 5 | 4.17 | 20 | 22.22 | 9 | 11.25 | 47 | 7.83 |
| | n/a | 2 | 1.25 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 0.33 |
| God has distributed the living | Agree | 130 | 81.25 | 129 | 86.00 | 100 | 83.33 | 60 | 66.67 | 40 | 50.00 | 459 | 76.50 |
| | Neutral | 20 | 12.50 | 15 | 10.00 | 10 | 8.33 | 10 | 11.11 | 20 | 25.00 | 75 | 12.50 |
| | Disagree | 7 | 4.38 | 6 | 4.00 | 10 | 8.33 | 20 | 22.22 | 20 | 20.25 | 63 | 10.50 |
| | n/a | 3 | 1.88 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.50 |
| The poor make their poverty | Agree | 63 | 39.38 | 50 | 33.33 | 30 | 25.00 | 10 | 11.11 | 10 | 12.50 | 163 | 27.17 |
| | Neutral | 47 | 29.38 | 30 | 20.00 | 30 | 25.00 | 20 | 22.22 | 20 | 25.00 | 147 | 24.50 |
| | Disagree | 41 | 25.63 | 70 | 46.67 | 60 | 50.00 | 60 | 66.67 | 50 | 62.50 | 281 | 46.83 |
| | n/a | 9 | 5.63 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 9 | 1.50 |
| Total | | 160 | 100 | 150 | 100 | 120 | 100 | 90 | 100 | 80 | 100 | 600 | 100 |

Note that there is a direct proportion between the academic year and belief in superstitions, that is the higher the academic year is, the lower the number of students believing in superstitious statements indicating false convictions existing along with scientific thought. This demonstrates the positive role of academic education in formulating scientific mentality for the future.

c. Gender and its view of superstitions

Chart (9) demonstrates the impact of gender on the presence of superstition

| Superstitions | | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|--------------------------------|----------|------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Luck might determine future | Agree | 150 | 55.56 | 178 | 53.94 | 328 | 54.67 |
| | Neutral | 70 | 25.93 | 20 | 6.06 | 90 | 15.00 |
| | Disagree | 50 | 18.52 | 129 | 39.09 | 179 | 29.83 |
| | n/a | 0 | 00.0 | 3 | 0.91 | 3 | 0.50 |
| Astrology | Agree | 9 | 3.33 | 40 | 12.12 | 49 | 8.17 |
| | Neutral | 8 | 2.96 | 50 | 15.15 | 58 | 9.67 |
| | Disagree | 249 | 92.22 | 240 | 72.73 | 489 | 81.50 |
| | n/a | 4 | 1.48 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 0.67 |
| Existence of invisible beings | Agree | 100 | 37.04 | 174 | 52.73 | 274 | 45.67 |
| | Neutral | 67 | 24.81 | 40 | 12.12 | 107 | 17.83 |
| | Disagree | 100 | 37.04 | 115 | 34.85 | 215 | 35.83 |
| | n/a | 3 | 1.11 | 1 | 0.30 | 4 | 0.67 |
| Optimism will let you make it | Agree | 180 | 66.67 | 290 | 78.88 | 470 | 78.33 |
| | Neutral | 50 | 18.52 | 31 | 9.39 | 81 | 13.50 |
| | Disagree | 40 | 14.81 | 7 | 2.12 | 47 | 7.83 |
| | n/a | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 0.61 | 2 | 0.33 |
| God has distributed the living | Agree | 189 | 70.00 | 270 | 81.82 | 459 | 76.50 |
| | Neutral | 45 | 16.67 | 30 | 9.09 | 75 | 12.50 |
| | Disagree | 33 | 12.22 | 30 | 9.09 | 63 | 10.50 |
| | n/a | 3 | 1.11 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 0.50 |
| The poor make their poverty | Agree | 63 | 23.33 | 100 | 30.30 | 163 | 27.17 |
| | Neutral | 47 | 17.41 | 100 | 30.30 | 147 | 24.50 |
| | Disagree | 156 | 57.78 | 125 | 37.88 | 281 | 46.83 |
| | n/a | 4 | 1.48 | 5 | 1.52 | 9 | 1.5 |
| Total | | 270 | 100 | 330 | 100 | 600 | 100 |

These charts show the female students' tendency to believe in some superstitious statements indicating metaphysical mentality more than male ones. Perhaps this is attributed to the nature of the common culture in the Syrian society which grants males a wider range for knowledge and research in scientific and cultural issues outside the house, beside the limited time of females because of house work after college.

d. Family monthly income and its view of superstitions

Chart (10) demonstrates the impact of family monthly income on the presence of superstition

| superstitions | | Low | | Average | | High | | n/a | | Total | |
|--------------------------------|----------|-----|-------|---------|-------|------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Luck might determine future | Agree | 81 | 57.86 | 221 | 53.77 | 20 | 51.28 | 6 | 60.00 | 328 | 54.67 |
| | Neutral | 15 | 10.71 | 69 | 16.79 | 5 | 12.82 | 1 | 10.00 | 90 | 15.00 |
| | Disagree | 44 | 31.43 | 118 | 28.71 | 14 | 35.90 | 3 | 30.00 | 179 | 29.83 |
| | n/a | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 0.73 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 0.50 |
| Astrology | Agree | 27 | 19.29 | 13 | 3.16 | 6 | 15.38 | 3 | 30.00 | 49 | 8.17 |
| | Neutral | 12 | 8.57 | 40 | 9.73 | 5 | 12.82 | 1 | 10.00 | 58 | 9.67 |
| | Disagree | 101 | 72.14 | 354 | 86.13 | 28 | 71.79 | 6 | 60.00 | 489 | 81.50 |
| | n/a | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 0.97 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 0.67 |
| Existence of invisible beings | Agree | 68 | 48.57 | 183 | 44.53 | 20 | 51.28 | 3 | 30.00 | 274 | 45.67 |
| | Neutral | 16 | 11.43 | 79 | 19.22 | 9 | 23.08 | 3 | 30.00 | 107 | 17.83 |
| | Disagree | 56 | 40.00 | 146 | 35.52 | 10 | 25.64 | 3 | 30.00 | 215 | 35.83 |
| | n/a | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 0.73 | 0 | 0.00 | 1 | 10.00 | 4 | 0.67 |
| Optimism will let you make it | Agree | 112 | 80.00 | 321 | 78.10 | 29 | 74.36 | 8 | 80.00 | 470 | 78.33 |
| | Neutral | 15 | 10.71 | 58 | 14.11 | 6 | 15.38 | 2 | 20.00 | 81 | 13.50 |
| | Disagree | 13 | 9.29 | 30 | 7.30 | 4 | 10.26 | 0 | 0.00 | 47 | 7.83 |
| | n/a | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 0.49 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 0.33 |
| God has distributed the living | Agree | 100 | 71.43 | 322 | 78.35 | 28 | 71.79 | 9 | 90.00 | 459 | 76.50 |
| | Neutral | 19 | 13.57 | 50 | 12.17 | 5 | 12.82 | 1 | 10.00 | 75 | 12.50 |
| | Disagree | 21 | 15.00 | 36 | 8.76 | 6 | 15.38 | 0 | 0.00 | 63 | 10.50 |
| | n/a | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 0.73 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 3 | 0.50 |
| The poor make their poverty | Agree | 50 | 35.71 | 101 | 24.57 | 10 | 25.64 | 2 | 20.00 | 163 | 27.17 |
| | Neutral | 26 | 18.57 | 106 | 25.79 | 9 | 23.08 | 6 | 60.00 | 147 | 24.50 |
| | Disagree | 61 | 43.57 | 199 | 48.42 | 19 | 48.72 | 2 | 20.00 | 281 | 46.83 |
| | n/a | 3 | 2.14 | 5 | 1.22 | 1 | 2.56 | 0 | 0.00 | 9 | 1.50 |
| Total | | 140 | 100 | 411 | 100 | 39 | 100 | 10 | 100 | 600 | 100 |

The numbers above show that students with low family monthly income have tendency to believe in some superstitious statements more than students with high income. Perhaps this is due to poor social environment where traditional culture prevails, and people wait for some kind of relief sent from heaven, and believe their situation to be a test from God.

II. The phenomenon of *al-awliya'* [Muslim holy men]

In order to determine how much the phenomenon of what is called *al-awliya'* exists in academic youths' mentality, we put forward a number of serious issues ranging from denial and condemnation to this phenomenon and faith and submissiveness to its spiritual effect. The students' views and attitudes showed a spirit of acceptance and loyalty to this concept; chart (11) offers the following results:

Chart (11) shows the test group's view of the phenomenon of *al-awliya'*

| View of <i>al-awliya'</i> | Number | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Totally reject them | 92 | 15.30 |
| Represent backwardness | 86 | 14.30 |
| Contradict science | 136 | 22.70 |
| Cannot decide | 144 | 24.00 |
| Respect them like parents do | 232 | 38.70 |
| Must believe in them | 243 | 40.50 |
| They have powers | 256 | 42.70 |
| Believe in them and their powers | 235 | 39.20 |
| Don't care | 16 | 19.30 |

The chart shows the academic youths' tendency to believe in *al-awliya'*. This fact indicates the spirit of submissiveness and feeling of weakness and inferiority before *al-awliya'* and their powers. These beliefs are but characteristics of a man who is:

1. Lacking scientific reason and objective logical analysis of surrounding phenomena (natural, social, political).
2. Losing free will and feeling inferior to human kind, and thus unable to act or control the surrounding circumstances (natural, social, political).

The relationship between those two factors is a relationship of debate and argument, based upon the submissive and prejudiced mentality to all situations, circumstances, orders and powers.

a. Age and its view of *al-awliya'*

Chart (12) shows the test group's view of the of *al-awliya'* according to age

| View of <i>al-awliya'</i> | 17 – 23 | | 24 – 30 | | Total | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Totally reject them | 42 | 15.80 | 50 | 15.00 | 92 | 15.30 |
| Represent backwardness | 30 | 11.30 | 56 | 16.80 | 86 | 14.30 |
| Contradict science | 56 | 21.10 | 80 | 20.00 | 136 | 22.70 |
| Cannot decide | 100 | 37.70 | 4 | 13.20 | 144 | 24.00 |
| Respect them like my parents do | 142 | 53.50 | 90 | 27.00 | 232 | 38.70 |
| Must believe in them | 110 | 41.50 | 133 | 40.00 | 243 | 40.50 |
| They have powers | 156 | 58.90 | 100 | 30.00 | 256 | 42.70 |
| Believe in them and their powers | 135 | 50.90 | 100 | 30.00 | 235 | 39.20 |
| Don't care | 76 | 28.70 | 40 | 12.00 | 116 | 19.30 |

Note that the academic youth's plays a role in determining the view of *al-awliya'* especially when influenced by parents' view. This reflects dependency with respect to beliefs regarding the age factor.

b. Gender and its view of *al-awliya'*

Chart (13) shows the test group's view of the of *al-awliya'* according to gender

| View of <i>al-awliya'</i> | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|----------------------------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Totally reject them | 62 | 23.00 | 30 | 9.00 | 92 | 15.30 |
| Represent backwardness | 56 | 20.70 | 30 | 9.00 | 86 | 14.30 |
| Contradict science | 100 | 37.00 | 36 | 10.90 | 136 | 22.70 |
| Cannot decide | 44 | 16.30 | 100 | 30.30 | 144 | 24.00 |
| Respect them like my parents do | 100 | 37.00 | 132 | 40.00 | 232 | 38.70 |
| Must believe in them | 100 | 37.00 | 143 | 43.30 | 243 | 40.50 |
| They have powers | 80 | 29.60 | 176 | 53.30 | 256 | 42.70 |
| Believe in them and their powers | 95 | 35.20 | 140 | 42.40 | 235 | 39.20 |
| Don't care | 66 | 24.40 | 50 | 15.10 | 116 | 19.30 |

As shown above, female students have more tendency to believe in *al-awliya'* than male ones. We believe it is due to the longer time females spend home with their families than males.

III. View of the past

In order to find out the academic youths' view of the past and history, we raised a question about our past; and whether we have to go back to our history, learn from it, hold on to it and look at it as an aim and ambition and pillar to build our modern Arab civilization; or we should submit our history to a process of sifting and selection; or reject it totally and turn our backs on it. Chart (14) shows the following results:

Chart (14) shows the test group's view of the past

| View of the past | Number | Percentage |
|---------------------|--------|------------|
| Go back to the past | 137 | 22.83 |
| Sift the past | 397 | 66.17 |
| Reject the past | 25 | 4.17 |
| Cannot decide | 39 | 6.50 |
| n/a | 2 | 0.33 |
| Total | 600 | 100 |

Academic youth tend to submit history to a sifting process, besides going back to history. This point of view our past, which reflects a non-fanatic mentality regarding history, contains deep inside the seeds of a logical analyzing view that takes into account the evolution of humanity.

a. Age and its view of history

Chart (15) shows the test group's view of the of history according to age

| View of history | 17 – 23 | | 24 – 30 | | Total | |
|---------------------|---------|------------|---------|------------|--------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Go back to the past | 50 | 18.73 | 87 | 26.13 | 137 | 22.83 |
| Sift the past | 180 | 67.42 | 217 | 65.17 | 397 | 66.17 |
| Reject the past | 5 | 1.87 | 20 | 6.01 | 25 | 4.17 |
| Cannot decide | 30 | 11.24 | 9 | 2.70 | 39 | 6.50 |
| n/a | 2 | 0.75 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 0.33 |
| Total | 267 | 100.00 | 333 | 100.00 | 600 | 100.00 |

The older group showed more tendency to go back to our past than the younger one.

b. Academic year and its view of history

Chart (16) shows the test group's view of the of history according to academic year

| View of history | First | | Second | | Third | | Fourth | | Fifth | | Total | |
|---------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Go back to the past | 70 | 43.75 | 30 | 20.00 | 20 | 16.67 | 10 | 11.11 | 7 | 8.75 | 137 | 22.83 |
| Sift the past | 38 | 23.75 | 106 | 70.67 | 100 | 83.33 | 80 | 88.89 | 73 | 91.25 | 397 | 66.17 |
| Reject the past | 20 | 12.50 | 5 | 3.33 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 25 | 4.17 |
| Cannot decide | 30 | 18.75 | 9 | 6.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 39 | 6.50 |
| n/a | 2 | 1.25 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 0.33 |
| Total | 160 | 100 | 150 | 100 | 120 | 100 | 90 | 100 | 80 | 100 | 600 | 100 |

We can see the positive role of education obviously through the positive attitudes towards history increasing gradually with every academic year up.

c. Gender and its view of history

Chart (17) shows the test group's view of the of history according to gender

| View of history | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|---------------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|
| | Number | percentage | Number | percentage | Number | percentage |
| Go back to the past | 50 | 18.52 | 87 | 26.36 | 137 | 22.83 |
| Sift the past | 168 | 62.22 | 229 | 69.39 | 397 | 66.17 |
| Reject the past | 20 | 7.41 | 5 | 1.52 | 25 | 4.17 |
| Cannot decide | 30 | 11.11 | 9 | 2.73 | 39 | 6.50 |
| n/a | 2 | 0.74 | 0 | 0.00 | 2 | 0.33 |
| Total | 270 | 100 | 330 | 100 | 600 | 100 |

Obviously, the female students are more inclined to go back to the past than males.

IV. Implementation of *Shari'a* [Islamic Law]

It is quite known that after socialism proved failure in socialist countries, and the United States of America trying to control the world, calls in the Arab communities have risen for going back to Islam, and commit to its teachings as an economic, social and political system, and a way out of all problems (social, economic, political, etc.) In order to determine the profoundness of this idea in the academic youths' culture, we brought up a question about whether to implement Islamic *Shari'a* in all issues that may come up in society in order to overcome all its problems, or it would be better to limit *Shari'a* to certain matters such as inheritance, marriage, divorce, etc.; or it is impossible to implement *Shari'a* in all issues of life. Chart (18) holds the following results:

Chart (18) shows the test group's view of implementing *Shari'a*

| View of <i>Shari'a</i> | Number | Percentage |
|--|--------|------------|
| Implementing <i>Shari'a</i> in all issues | 305 | 50.83 |
| Implementing <i>Shari'a</i> in some issues only | 162 | 27.00 |
| Impossible to implement <i>Shari'a</i> in all issues | 124 | 20.67 |
| n/a | 9 | 1.50 |
| total | 600 | 100 |

There is a tendency among academic youth to calling for implementing Islamic *Shari'a* in all issues of the Syrian community. This proves the strength of the religious wave of the academic youth at the present times. We tend to believe that this wave can be attributed to the failure of socialism on the international scale, failure of nationalism on the pan-Arab scale, in addition to the fierce aggressive American rush against the Arab region, and the reflections of all these factors in the academic youths' culture.

a. Family monthly income and its view of implementing *Shari'a*

Chart (19) shows the test group's view of the of implementing *Shari'a* according to family monthly income

| Implementing <i>Shari'a</i> | Low | | Average | | High | | Total | |
|--|-----|-------|---------|-------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Implementing <i>Shari'a</i> in all issues | 100 | 71.43 | 196 | 47.57 | 9 | 18.75 | 305 | 50.83 |
| Implementing <i>Shari'a</i> in some issues only | 20 | 14.29 | 132 | 32.04 | 10 | 20.83 | 162 | 27.00 |
| Impossible to implement <i>Shari'a</i> in all issues | 15 | 10.71 | 84 | 20.39 | 25 | 52.08 | 124 | 20.67 |
| n/a | 5 | 3.57 | 0 | 0.00 | 4 | 8.33 | 9 | 1.50 |
| Total | 140 | 100 | 412 | 100 | 48 | 100 | 600 | 100 |

The charts show that academic youths from low monthly income families incline to the implementation of *Shari'a* in all issues of the Syrian society's life. Perhaps they believe that this is the only way to improve their living.

b. Field of study and its view of implementing *Shari'a*

Chart (20) shows the test group's view of the of implementing *Shari'a* according to field of study

| Implementing <i>Shari'a</i> | Theoretical | | Practical | | Total | |
|--|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Implementing <i>Shari'a</i> in all issues | 155 | 48.44 | 150 | 53.57 | 305 | 50.83 |
| Implementing <i>Shari'a</i> in some issues only | 100 | 31.25 | 62 | 22.14 | 162 | 27 |
| Impossible to implement <i>Shari'a</i> in all issues | 59 | 18.44 | 65 | 23.21 | 124 | 20.67 |
| n/a | 6 | 1.88 | 3 | 1.07 | 9 | 1.50 |
| Total | 320 | 100 | 280 | 100 | 600 | 100 |

There is not much difference in point of view between theoretical students and practical ones in terms of implementing *Shari'a*.

c. Gender and its view of implementing *Shari'a*

Chart (21) shows the test group's view of the of implementing *Shari'a* according to gender

| Implementing <i>Shari'a</i> | Male | | Female | | Total | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Implementing <i>Shari'a</i> in all issues | 120 | 44.44 | 185 | 56.06 | 305 | 50.83 |
| Implementing <i>Shari'a</i> in some issues only | 100 | 37.04 | 62 | 18.79 | 162 | 27.00 |
| Impossible to implement <i>Shari'a</i> in all issues | 45 | 16.67 | 79 | 23.94 | 124 | 20.67 |
| n/a | 5 | 1.85 | 4 | 1.21 | 9 | 1.50 |
| Total | 270 | 100 | 330 | 100 | 600 | 100 |

Note that female students are more inclined for implementing *Shari'a* in the Syrian society than males.

CONCLUSION

In the end, we can conclude from the above charts and data that Syrian youths' culture is rather inclined to metaphysical irrational thought, which indicates a crack in the rational social orientation process. Those who chose to go back to the past themselves believe that luck determines their futures, and invisible beings exist, etc. the fact that youths' culture involves a number of contradictory ideologies and concepts without understanding the reality of those ideologies and concepts, or recognizing the philosophical and ideological connotations of them, and what they reflect on the future renaissance in a stage characterized with openness to the world, namely the age of globalization.

This fact is the result of the complicated social reality, and its simplicity and limitedness common in traditional societies. Moving from a simple society with limited needs and visions into a more sophisticated one with more complex relations makes one reconsider their cultural heritage. Moreover, modern technology and connecting with other societies with different cultures, knowledge, customs and traditions, which offered new cultural sources, intensified the state of contradiction from which the members of the test group suffer, and led to the emergence of new primary constituents of scientific analysis and objective scientific views of many phenomena instances.

Though the educated person in the Arab World suffers such pressures, yet the majority, who are uneducated, suffer even harder because of poverty and ignorance making them the best environment for superstitions and false beliefs. If you recall the Arab history, you will find that the Arab person has not got the opportunity in any historical period to determine his own destiny, or practice the freedom of thought away from external prejudices, or live his life safe from any threats. These frequent conditions caused the Arab person a feeling of constant fear from the future, and in the same time, feel unconfident in logical or reasonable thinking, which made the belief in superstitions a safe resort, reflecting a shallow relation with reality. The arbitrary ideology did not only set the objective circumstances for superstitious thinking to spread widely, but also, in some cases, it spreads this type of thinking itself, because it is fully aware that it shares a common ground with superstitions, that is rejecting reasonable and logical thinking; and it knows as well that spreading superstitions supports its existence and continuity. Otherwise, how could we interpret the spread of superstitions and quackery in the Arab society, particularly amongst lower classes in the time we claim that we are doing our best to get rid of backwardness in all its forms? For instance, how come the censorship, which exists in every single Arab country, does not feel the necessity of prohibiting the circulation of books of magic, quackery or superstitions, while it enjoys excessive sensitivity against books dealing explicitly and directly with the situations in the modern Arab society?

The fact that the Arab peoples still believe in superstitions despite the spread of education and modern technology is an evidence of the inadequacy of education alone to end superstitious thinking. Cultural, economic and political situation of the Arab person must change in order to make him change his thought and methods in general. If we take the nature of political, economic and social relations which the Arab person have suffered, and still suffering, as the reasons behind superstitious thinking, then we can deduce that the Arab person cannot give up superstitious thinking – in thought and practice – unless the political, social and economic reality is changed in a scientific manner provided that the Arab person remains the ultimate aim of every change, and not be overlooked for any reason whatsoever.

This state of contradiction is not fully a pathological situation; in fact, it holds many indications of healthy characteristics in the context of developing the scientific analytical awareness; it reflects a conflict between the inner self and this subject through the frequent attempt of making a more mature personality, and more capable of scrutinizing reality and analyzing it scientifically.

We believe, accordingly, it is necessary to build an integral and developed model for Arab culture in the Syrian society, founded on the basis of the interrelatedness of culture constituents in a correlated process consisting of different elements above which comes media, educational institutions, family, etc., that can play a crucial role in forming youths' culture and bringing them up on the social level and on the national level through the following:

1. Modernizing local media technically and politically i.e. rebuilding the technical base of information through (comprehension), not (mechanical copying); developing the political system and making it meet the ambitions of man and his freedom; involving the greatest public participation, especially that of youths, in the process of connection and negative reception from media; establishing culture and communication industry including the industry of cultural production instruments and tools in order to achieve national knowledge and guarantee the cultural security for the society. All that will not be available unless freedom is guaranteed, as well as supporting innovation and renovation faculties, and offering new opportunities to generations for participating in developing the content of programs and their quality and methods of transmission to the audience. In the same time, we must not look at globalization as an inevitable destiny to submit to; and when we analyze the negative aspects of globalization – which are too many –, not to show a ludicrous attitude of objection and rejection to the many positive aspects achieved by the scientific and technological progress for the sake of humanity, or losing the various opportunities which globalization offer our society for effective involvement in its age; and finally, while we are anticipating the future of our youths, we have to correct our attitude

towards the new world facts in general, so that our rejection of cultural consumption and cultural penetration does not turn into a rejection of the other, especially the West; our attitude is rather like rejecting the negative aspects in it, as well as exploring the human and communication ones.

2. Family and school both remain very important institutions for social upbringing and forming the youths' 'cultural capital', as well as determining and developing their cultural practices despite the profound changes that took place in these two institutions, which have affected the personality of the new Arab young person, and have generated a lot of problems and difficulties that he must face. We are in bad need to rediscover the concept family as an environment for balanced upbringing; and a fundamental and thorough reformation process for the educational system that avoids the mistakes of the past in order to establish a new educational institution which glorifies knowledge, and stresses the values of hard work and innovation, grants youths the ability to live this age standing on a solid ground, and share the world its knowledge and sciences and progress, and escape the seclusion the previous generations have suffered from wondering how to reconcile modernism with traditionalism. On the educational level, we must face this state of deterioration by reconsidering our philosophy of education in all stages, and turn from the dictation and memorization method, and the student being a mere receiver, into a new philosophy based upon dialogue, discussion, self-learning and incorporating learning with culture in a parallel manner. Cultural programs such as arts of all genres (music, drama, painting, sports, general knowledge and free reading) must be part of the curriculum; and library attending must be part of the curriculum as well.
3. Youths also must be heard and pushed to participate in making political, economic and social decisions and in everything related to their life and ambitions through representing them in the democratic and legislative institutions; and we must listen to their opinions and take them into account when making decisions. Political knowledge must be an essential constituent in youths' culture if we want to qualify them for leadership in a later stage. This way young people can merge into their society instead of turning into tools of destruction and extremism. Youths must also be offered a balanced and integrated knowledge that heeds their heritage and the history of both their country and that of the pan-Arab nation, seeks to catch up with modern knowledge, open to science, technology and modern philosophy, and looking for more scientific discoveries in all fields. Youths must know about other peoples' cultures so they can deal and interact with them in a world where different cultures intertwine into a universal culture that seeks peace all over the world, and maintains the culture, customs, traditions and national and religious heritage of each people in the same time.

Youths today are either a basic element in reviving a modern renaissance in the Syrian society, or a tool for destructing what the previous generations have built. Under globalization, we have neither a plenty of choices nor of time to think and decide; we and time are in a race, and we – leadership, government, governmental institutions and NGOs in each and every domain – to make the youths’ question first priority if we really want to guarantee a secure future; and thus we make youths participate in all issues in society.

These recommendations are put forward to be thought of, and do not claim offering solutions or recipes. In the same time, however, they are not slogans, like *Cultural Revolution* or *Political Revolution*; and we have not lost hope in our society’s latent abilities or faith in the possible.

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