THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENT IN SHAPING HUMAN BEHAVIOUR: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WESTERN AND ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This study is a comparative analysis of the Western and Islamic views of the role social environment in shaping human behaviour. The objectives of this study are to find out the social environmental factors that shape human behaviour according to Western psychology and Islamic view, and to bring out the similarities as well as the differences between the both regarding the role of social environment in shaping behaviour. As a preliminary to this journey, the researcher explored the historical developments that have taken place in the area of human behaviour in the West and in the Islamic world. This qualitative study used content analysis as the instrument for collecting data. This analysis involved four prominent Western psychology books to represent Western views and involved al-Quran, Hadith and tafsir to represent Islamic views on the subject matter. Through comparative analysis, the researcher brings to light that both Western psychology and Islam strongly believe in the influence of the social environment to human behaviour and personality development. While Western psychologists concentrated more on the outer and observable factors as the factors that shape human behaviour, Muslim scholar included and emphasised on the contribution of the inner composition of man, the soul, to his behaviour and personality development. This study has also found out that contrary to Western psychology, Islam believes that human behaviour development is a religious process, and so, it emphasised on not only the observable psychological changes that occur in an individual as a result of interaction with the social environment but also the spiritual changes as well as the consequences of each behaviour on the Day of Judgement. The findings also highlighted that human beings, irrespective of their religious faith, need to be God-conscious in order to bring out the positive behaviour. By so doing, man could transform the social environment into a better place for the benefit of all humanity. Students, parents, educationists and society can easily mould the good behaviour that lead to the production of intellectual individuals who are morally upright, spiritually sound with the best of leadership capability.

Keywords: Western and Islamic views, human behaviour, psychology, leadership & social environment