

# How Do Arab Female Higher Education Students In The Bedouin Society In Israel Perceive The Influence Of The Pedagogical Instructor On Their Feeling Of Personal Growth?

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## Abstract

*This research study examines the perceptions of Arab female higher education students in the Bedouin society in Israel of the influence of pedagogical instructors on their own development, through the lens of their participation in a conservative, patriarchal culture that frequently limits the educational possibilities of women. This study was driven by the desire to learn how pedagogical mentors could help marginalized female students develop resilience, self-efficacy, and persistence in higher education. It adds to the growing body of literature about inclusive education and teacher preparation by examining culturally responsive mentorship. Using a qualitative framework, semi-structured interviews were administered to 50 Arab Bedouin female students through purposeful sampling in higher education in Israel. The results produced five important themes which included: characteristics of effective instructors, the nature of emotional support, cognitive support, pedagogical support in academic persistence, cultural sensitivity, and mentorship in shaping future aspirations. The study argues that pedagogical instructors are important mentors and cultural mediators, who foster not only academic success but personal success as well. Important next steps include institutionalizing culturally responsive mentorship programs to build efficacy in pedagogy for women students, as well as teacher education and mentoring. Theoretically, the study advances understandings of personal development, within the realms of pedagogical mentorship and inclusion, as a relational process. Practically, this study also includes a roadmap guide to support, inform, connect, and otherwise provide backfill support for underrepresented female students in higher education.*

**Keywords:** Arab female students, Bedouin society, higher education, pedagogical instructors, personal growth, emotional support, academic persistence, self-efficacy, marginalized populations, Israel.

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## • INTRODUCTION

This study examines the meaning Arab Female higher education students of the Bedouin society in Israel assign to the impact of pedagogical instructors on their personal development. These Bedouin women come from a deeply patriarchal, conservative community wherein their educational and personal development is not only limited, but also bounded by cultural, social, and institutional mores (Allasad Alhuzail, 2021). Given these challenges, the study researches the role of pedagogical instructors, who prepare teachers in Israel, so they may assist in the personal development of female students who are from marginalized backgrounds. This study position adds to the literature on education in highlighting intersections of culture, gender, and teacher education in identifying pedagogical instructors' desirable characteristics in supporting resilience and self-efficacy among underrepresented students.

The study's population included female students in higher education from a Bedouin Arab identity in the context of Israel. This population is still socially and economically marginalized (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020). In terms of personal growth, the study is referring to students' definition of self-improvement, resilience, emotional intelligence and having the power to visualize, sitting down long-term goals and pursue them (Maurer et al., 2023). Pedagogical instructor was used by the study to represent educational personnel in an academia who are responsible for student teachers' practice teaching and general development in academia acting in the capacity of mentor and role model (Kelchtermans et al., 2018). Pedagogical instructors do not just educate methods and theories, they also present attitudes, and psychological and emotional help to students involved in complicated educational ecosystems. This study looked at how these

pedagogical instructors worked with students from a particular, culturally specific, background. It contributed to the larger themes of inclusive education, and mentoring in diverse and complex societies.

This research is significant in that it addresses a vital gap in the literature regarding the experiences of Arab Bedouin women in higher education in Israel; specifically, how they perceive mentoring and support within their teacher education programs. While earlier studies have examined the role of pedagogical instructors (Richter et al., 2021) or the challenges of Bedouin women in education (Ben-Asher, 2020), none, to our knowledge, have focused on the students' perceptions of their personal development. In addition to this, it had practical implications in terms of developing culturally relevant pedagogy and mentorship practices that support greater equity in teacher education. It adds to the literature by proposing importance of the humaneness of teacher-student relationships while also illustrating how personal and professional development can occur when teacher education students receive instruction that is emotionally intelligent and culturally responsive. The findings support policies and mixed service training opportunities that prioritize mentoring, emotional supports, and inclusion in higher education.

This qualitative study methodically completed semi-structured interviews of 50 Arab Bedouin female students attending higher education institutions in Israel. Semi-structured interviews provided the researcher with thick and nuanced data about the lived experience of participants (Bearman, 2019). The study used purposeful sampling so that all participants had direct experience with pedagogical instructors, which provided the opportunity to identify common themes and patterns. Thematic analysis yielded five themes: (1) characteristics of effective instructors, (2) emotional and cognitive support, (3) pedagogical support in educational persistence, (4) cultural sensitivity, and (5) the role of mentorship in future aspirations. The themes illustrate how pedagogical instructors can impact students' sense of self, motivation, and career visioning, particularly for women who navigated restrictive cultural expectations.

The study offers several recommendations and implications. First, it recommends that higher educational institutions in Israel develop formalized mentorship programs that account for the cultural and emotional needs of Arab Bedouin women. Second, it recommends that pedagogical instructors receive training in culturally responsive pedagogy and mentorship practices. Third, this study's findings will inform institutional policy and teacher education programs that support marginalized populations. Finally, the study identified areas for future research, research on the institutionalization of supportive pedagogical relationships and the potentially enduring impacts of mentorship on students' professional lives. The overall conclusion of the study situates pedagogical instructors as advocates of change, supporting marginalized students to attain academic success, and ultimately realize themselves as capable female actors of change who contribute meaningfully to the well-being of their communities.

## • LITERATURE REVIEW

### .1 *The Bedouin Society in Israel*

A significant portion of the Bedouin population residing in the Negev today, also occasionally referred to as the Negev Arabs, originates from nomadic shepherd tribes of the Arabian deserts. They arrived in waves of migration from the Arabian Peninsula to Sinai and the Negev, primarily since the end of the eighteenth century, taking advantage of the weakening Ottoman Empire. The Bedouin society in the Negev is a Sunni Islamic population that preserves pre-Islamic tribal customs and traditions. This population was estimated in 2022 to be about 290,000 people, most of whom reside in the northern Negev area (Yahel & Galilee, 2023).

The Bedouin population is a tribal one, where blood relations and origin play a significant role in social status. This tribal and class consciousness has been preserved even after the transition from tents to permanent settlement (Shmueli & Khamaisi, 2011). Economically, the Bedouin population is the poorest in Israel, suffering from high unemployment rates and low levels of education. According to the Central Bureau

of Statistics, Bedouin settlements are in the lowest socio-economic cluster (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020).

The Bedouin society is traditional and patriarchal, with women dependent on many contexts, including freedom of movement and property, on their husband's decisions. The phenomenon of multiple wives ("polygyny," more commonly known in public as "polygamy") is prevalent in significant percentages within this population, regardless of educational level or economic status. Accurate information about its extent, as well as the exact number of women living in these families, is not available, partly because the phenomenon is unreported and illegal in Israel (Ben-Asher, 2020).

### **.2 *The Pedagogical Instructor in Israel***

The pedagogical instructor represents a heterogeneous group of professional women who are responsible for training students for teaching (Kelchtermans et al., 2018). They have diverse background characteristics, such as previous experience teaching in schools, fulfilling various roles in schools and in the Ministry of Education. They sometimes have advanced degrees and some experience in research. Nevertheless, they are described as individuals who actively assist in the learning of students preparing them to become educators, accompanying them, designing their curriculum, working with teachers and preschool teachers who are coaches in educational institutions, contributing practical knowledge to research and impacting the quality of future educators (Murray et al., 2009; Loughran, 2006). They engage in a dual role – supporting students in their learning about teaching and implementing models of proper teaching, including mediating the pedagogical considerations that dictate their functioning as a model. They work in a culturally and socially complex environment that integrates diverse agendas and sets many, sometimes conflicting, goals (Izadinia, 2014).

Vanassch & Kelchtermans (2014) identified three types of role perceptions among pedagogical instructors: pedagogical, reflective, and disciplinary. Each role perception includes a coherent pattern of beliefs about what constitutes good teacher training, which relationships should be built between them and the students, and which important practices they should adopt to advance their beliefs. Based on these distinctions, Richter and colleagues, (2021) characterized two main role perceptions of the instructors. One focuses on the students and according to it they are "facilitators". It includes advising students, supporting their development, and encouraging their learning processes. According to this view, their perception of their roles is not limited to the disciplinary aspect that the students will teach in the future when they become teachers, nor to the unique teaching techniques suitable for the discipline. Rather, they primarily see the students as human beings who need support during their development, which includes pedagogical, emotional, and reflective components (Richter et al., 2021).

The second type of perception of the role of pedagogical instructors is teacher- focused, aiming to teach disciplinary content and it's related to teaching methods. These pedagogical instructors, known as 'transmitters', reportedly enable a higher sense of self-efficacy compared to other instructors (Richter et al., 2021). They also foster more significant professional development, greater promotion of learners' independence, and increased activity and satisfaction in their work as instructors. According to Loughran (2014), Teaching about teaching involves more than just sharing knowledge or tips from school or kindergarten experiences. Pedagogical instructors must go beyond the technical aspects of teaching and use the complexities of practice to highlight effective teaching methods. They should engage in collaborative research to explore teaching and learning experiences and create opportunities for developing clear and explicit professional knowledge. This approach helps in understanding and addressing various educational issues effectively.

### **.3 *Personal Growth***

Personal growth is conceptualized as the phenomenological experience of self- directed growth, which has been found to be related to positive functioning. The concept of personal growth has never been clearly defined but can roughly be related to the idea of a life span developmental process directed toward the goal of becoming a better person (Ugur, et al., 2015). Although there isn't a precise definition for personal growth, it generally involves a lifelong journey aimed at self-

improvement. This journey is about consistently improving one's abilities, knowledge, and self-awareness to more effectively manage the challenges and seize the opportunities life presents (Jain et al., 2020). It entails moving beyond one's comfort zone, engaging with new experiences, and examining one's own thoughts and actions. Engaging in personal development helps build resilience, boosts emotional intelligence, and deepens one's understanding of oneself and others. Personal growth can be pursued through various avenues such as education, introspection, or practical experiences, enabling individuals to realize their highest potential, align their behaviors with their values, and live more rewarding lives (Maurer, et al., 2023).

#### • MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach that suits the complex and rich description of Arab female higher education students in Bedouin society in Israel. Qualitative research makes space for the collection of rich and thick data related to the lived experiences, feelings, and reflections of the research participants (Bearman, 2019). Qualitative research is useful for contextually based phenomena such as the cultural, social, and personal dimensions of human activity because it grants researchers access to deeper understandings about how individual meaning-making is reliably situated in culturally informed relationships (Oranga & Matere, 2023;). In the case of this study, qualitative inquiry was utilized to uncover subjective experiences that will involve complexities that cannot be quantified; these experiences will help to inform and understand the phenomenon under investigation (Lim, 2024).

The main tool for collecting data in this study was semi-structured interviews. This tool provides flexibility in the interview with the ability for participants to discuss their answers further and for the researcher to further interrogate themes emerging from the research. A semi-structured interview is particularly useful in case if research is focused to understand participants' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs due to the mixture of guided questioning and dialogue (Saunders et al., 2017; Bryman, 2017). For the purposes of this study, the semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to consider how the pedagogical instructor impacted the participants' sense of personal growth while still allowing the participants to reflect emotionally and cognitively in their own words.

The population for this study is Arab female students from the Bedouin society in Israel who are enrolled in a university or college. They have been chosen as this minority group has its own unique cultural, educational, and gendered challenges (Harel-Shalev et al., 2018) that might affect how these women view pedagogical support and their own development. Each culture has an educational system and sociocultural conditions. The Bedouin community is ardently conservative and patriarchal, as they live in a specific sociocultural environment (Allasad Alhuzail, 2021) that will influence the educational experiences for women. Hence, the study explored how pedagogical instructors can be supportive, pertinent, and empowering, as well as understanding of each female's growth in this culture.

The study collected a sample of 50 Arab female higher education students from the Bedouin society. The sample size is appropriate for qualitative research, and provides enough variation to discover developed thematic patterns and still allow for in depth analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The use of purposeful sampling was likely applied in order to ensure that all participants had relevant experience with a pedagogical instructor in their educational experience (Adeoye, 2023). Examining a specific cultural subgroup allows the study to provide knowledge that is contextually located and also of use to inform pedagogical practice to assist the personal and academic growth of marginalized student populations.

#### • RESULTS

This section presents the key findings of the study based on in-depth interviews with 50 Arab female higher education students from the Bedouin society in Israel. The analysis revealed five central themes that reflect how participants perceive the influence of their pedagogical instructors on their personal growth. These themes include the instructors' key characteristics, the emotional and cognitive support they provide, the role of pedagogical support in shaping educational experiences, the importance of cultural sensitivity, and the impact of mentorship on future aspirations. Each

theme is illustrated with participant testimonies and supported by relevant academic literature, offering a comprehensive understanding of how pedagogical relationships contribute to the personal and academic development of marginalized women in a complex cultural context.

#### ***Theme 1: Key Characteristics of Effective Pedagogical Instructors***

The participants in the study all described empathy, respect, and encouragement as important transformations in their pedagogical instructors. One student described, *"The first time one of my instructors told me she believed in my abilities was the first time anyone other than my family said that to me. It made me feel seen and capable."* Another student added, *"She listened to my fears and did not judge me. That encouraged me to continue."* These testimonies recognize the emotional impact of instructors with respectful relationships that were present and supportive. This resonates with Izadinia (2014) when the teacher educators engaged in a healing, nurturing, and student-centered approach to their teaching, it inevitably contributed to the pre-service teachers' professional identity and confidence. Phillippo and others (2018) support this in their findings that caring relationships between pedagogical instructors and teacher candidates enhance feelings of connectedness and personal empowerment especially for students from a culturally marginalized background.

#### ***Theme 2: Emotional and Cognitive Impact of Instructor Support***

The emotional and cognitive support offered by educational instructors was mentioned as a central support to their academic experience. One student said, *"Her support helped me, not only in the classroom—it made me believe that I can think critically and I can ask questions that matter."* Another student said, *"When I was nervous about my presentation, she reminded me that fear is a part of learning. That shift helped how I framed challenges."* These comments suggested that there was a connection between the instructors' support on providing emotional security and the students' cognitive transformation. Khatri and others (2024) describe personal development as building resilience and emotional intelligence. These attributes can be developed in part through relations with supportive academic instructors. In addition to supporting students, Loughran (2014) maintains that pedagogical instructors address both emotional scaffolding and critical reflection; effectively, instructors support students in transcending rote learning to gain greater self-awareness and analytical reasoning.

#### ***Theme 3: The Role of Pedagogical Support in Shaping Educational Experiences***

Many participants recounted their pedagogical instructors were the reason they persisted in their post-secondary studies. One explained *"Without her I don't know how I would have even studied at university. she enabled me to succeed."* Another shared, *"I felt her belief gave me permission to believe I belonged in this system and even with me coming from a completely different world..."*. These quotes are indicative of how pedagogical support provides more than an academic leg up; they are a means of emotional anchoring toward the complexities of post-secondary education. Owusu- Agyeman and Mororeoe (2023) describes how pedagogical relationships are foundational in constructing student engagement - particularly among marginalized communities. Murray and others (2009), also contend pedagogical instructors are important in understanding a student's cultural background, the institution, and their values to understand how the student can bridge cultural and institutional intentions and thereby help students move forward in learning and develop as more capable people.

#### ***Theme 4: Cultural Sensitivity and Contextual Understanding***

Participants appreciated the experience they had with their instructors and instructors who were aware of the Bedouin society culture. A participant commented, *"She never forced me to defy my family. She helped me discover how I can grow, within my reality."* Another mentioned, *"Some teachers want us to fit in with the other students and treat us as other students, my instructor valued my identity as a Bedouin woman."* These comments reveal the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy. According to Allasad Alhuzail (2021), with Bedouin women as traditional gender roles and the community they belong to influence their sociocultural realities and thus culturally relevant teaching practices need to be implemented with Bedouin women. According to Richter and others (2021), instructors who understand these dynamics are more effective at furthering inclusive education; allowing them to achieve academically without losing who they are.

***Theme 5: The Role of Pedagogical Relationships in Shaping Future Aspirations***

Participants often acknowledged their instructors as helping them open up their view for the future. One student noted, "I was always just focused on finishing my degree. Now I think about becoming a teacher and helping girls like me." Another said, "My instructor showed me what you can achieve as a strong, educated woman. I want to be like her." These replies illustrate the power of mentorship to inspire. Pedagogical instructors not only support students in their current academic effort but also inspire students to think of themselves in roles they had not previously imagined. This echoes the work of Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2014), who discuss the role of pedagogical instructors as examples of reflective practice and consider long-term professional development. Additionally, Maurer and others (2023) assert that a strong mentoring relationship is necessary to promote self-efficacy and goal orientation among underrepresented students, including women from traditional societies..

• **DISCUSSION**

The first major finding of this study is the importance of empathy, respect, and encouragement, in the teaching and learning relationship between instructors and Arab female Bedouin students. Participants often emphasized the value of being respected and seen by their instructor which elevated their feelings of self-worth and ability to engage in academic work. This friction with the study's findings supports Izadinia's (2014) realization that teacher educators who built these emotionally supportive and student-centered connections were influential in the formation of their students' professional identity and confidence. Similarly, effective instructor-student relationships ultimately contributed to the students' psychological safety and sense of allies in educational settings, especially for students from marginalized or minority communities (Newman, 2024). Inherently, in a patriarchal society that typically represses women's sense of autonomy, affirmations from pedagogical instructors may have a substantial influence on self-concept and motivation.

Second, the research highlighted that the emotional and cognitive support from pedagogical instructors was a key factor in developing students' self-efficacy and intellectual engagement. Some of the participants described how the instructor reframed fears and uncertainty as a normal part of the learning process, thus expanding students' resilience and critical thought. These findings are consistent with those Khatri and others (2024), who highlighted that emotional support in the educational context helps students keep resilience in their learning processes in order to cope with the academic stressors. Likewise, Loughran (2014) indicated the role the pedagogical instructor had in emotional scaffolding as well as reflective learning. This aspect of the learning process is especially meaningful within the parameters of cultural dissonance between students' conservative upbringing and the liberal expectations often in post-secondary spaces.

Pedagogical support also played a significant role in shaping the students' educational experiences, often central to their persistence in higher education. When Bedouin women may feel excluded by language and cultural and gendered obstacles, supportive instructors help students feel included, accepted, and capable of success. These findings are consistent with the work of Owusu-Agyeman and Mororeoe (2023), who found that productive pedagogical relationships were an important dimension of the process of academic persistence and participation for minority and first-generation students. Dee and Penner (2017) also noted that pedagogical instructors, who understood the cultural and institutional context their students were faced with, created pedagogical practices for their students to bridge personal identity and academic expectancy through acting as cultural mediators.

The fourth finding offers insight indicating that students highly valued their instructors' acknowledgement of cultural and contextual considerations. In cultural contexts that did not require Bedouin women to assimilate into the mainstream student body, instructors who respected the students' unique individual social and family situation were perceived as more empowering. This stance is corroborated by Allasad Alhuzail (2021), who stated how the reality of Bedouin women is defined for them through strict cultural regulations. Educators need to factor lived experience into their practice if they wish to avoid excluding students from education. Similarly,

Richter and others (2021) assert that culturally-aware instructors are better positioned to make inclusive pedagogical interventions, because these inclusive pedagogical interventions promote equitable and accessible practice for the diverse students in their classrooms.

Another key theme is the role of pedagogical relationships in shaping future desires. Participants shared how their educators expanded the hopes and vision of what a future might look like - their educators were much more to them than instructors, but mentors who shaped their vision of possibility. This mentorship role supports the work of Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2014), who found pedagogical educators act as reflective practices and guide students in creating future professional identities. Furthermore, Carsone and others (2024) provide evidence that mentoring with pedagogical educators was productive in developing self-efficacy in many cases, provided that students were also from underrepresented backgrounds. For Bedouin women, who are commonly discouraged from pursuing careers or leadership roles, aspirational support and mentoring was exceptionally valuable.

Finally, collectively, this study shows the multi-faceted role of pedagogical instructors in the personal development of Arab female students in Bedouin society, who are acting as cultural mediators, emotional supporters, academic guides, and future-oriented mentors. In this context, personal development can be thought of not as mere academic success, but as the processes of becoming self-aware, resilient, and possibilities for the future. These findings reflect the notions of personal development as presented by Ferianti and others (2024), which conceptualizes personal development as an ongoing process towards becoming a better version of self through self-reflection and ambiguity. This study has recognized the challenges these women face in their own society, as well as those in the academic institutions, highlighting potential for pedagogical practices to be more inclusive, easier to relate to, and culturally relevant even in the most improbable situations.

#### • CONCLUSION

This research examined how Arab female higher education students in the context of Bedouin society in Israel perceive the impact of pedagogical mentors on their growth and development. The findings indicated that empathy, respect, and encouragement of pedagogical mentors are vital to the growth of self-worth and confidence in their academic ability. With emotional and cognitive support in their learning to reframe the challenges of pursuing an education, students developed their tenacity and critical thinking skills. Pedagogical mentors were perceived as mentors or role models, in addition to their role as educators, they appeared to be vital in shaping students' educational experiences, cultural accommodation, and vision of their future. The development of student growth was also meaningful in a patriarchal and conservative cultural context, where women's autonomy and ability to progress their education were limited both explicitly and implicitly.

Several important conclusions for the profession emerged from this study including, firstly, the need for culturally responsive pedagogy, secondly, the importance of mentoring relationships to support students' goals and futures, and lastly, the pedagogical mentor's actions shaped the development of resilience and academic persistence. Pedagogical mentors acknowledged the cultural and gender barriers facing the Bedouin women, and voiced they were empowering their students to pursue higher education without disempowering their cultural identity. The pedagogical mentor relationships acted as a bridge between traditional societal expectations and the academic world over and above normal teacher student boundaries, conceptually allowing the women to envision themselves not only as students/learners but future professionals, and leaders in the community.

However, this study raises a number of important areas of future research, including - how can educational institutions provide systems for ongoing and sustainable pedagogical culturally aware professional development? What structures need to be in place to keep these supportive developmental relationships? Due to varying intersecting identities, for example, socio-economic status, or marital status, how do these impact women's lived experiences with pedagogical mentors? Future research should explore pedagogical mentorship and how such mentorship can become institutionalized within teacher preparation programs, especially in places with rigorous cultural tradition and inequality between genders. Overall, this study argues that learning (or personal growth) in education is never achieved in isolation, it is dependent on relationships - and more importantly, when those relationships are built on understanding, trust, and encouragement, they have the power to change lives.

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