

«مقاله پژوهشی»

نقد آثار عزت نفس از نظر ناتانیل براندن از منظر آموزه‌های اسلام

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چکیده

عزت نفس به معنای احساس ارزشمندی به خودی خود است که در آن استعلا و برتری نسبت به غیر لحاظ نمی‌شود. از آنجا که اطلاع از اهمیت عزت نفس موجب اهتمام بیشتر به افزایش آن و علم به آثار موجب واقف شدن به اهمیت است. این تحقیق آثار عزت نفس را از دیدگاه ناتانیل براندن که پدر عزت نفس نامیده می‌شود، در سه دسته شناختی، اخلاقی و رفتاری تنظیم، سپس از منظر آموزه‌های اسلام به روش توصیفی تحلیلی بررسی نموده است تا زمینه‌ای برای تعدیل و تکمیل نظرات او باشد. براندن معتقد است ابراز وجود، پذیرش تعریف دیگران و فردگرایی از آثار عزت نفس است اما به نظر می‌رسد آموزه‌های قرآنی و روایی این آثار را نپذیرد. زیرا گاهی عدم ابراز وجود، نشان‌دهنده عبور از خود دانی و رسیدن به خود عالی است که می‌تواند نتیجه عزت نفس باشد. همچنانکه امکان دارد فردی با وجود عزت نفس بالا آگاهانه تعریف دیگران را به دلایلی مانند تواضع و به هدف مبارزه با نفس نپذیرد. چنانچه فردگرا نبودن و ترجیح منافع دیگران بر خود گاهی نشان از رشدیافتگی فرد عزتمند است به طوری که خود مجازی را قربانی خود حقیقی کند و این منافاتی با عزت و کرامت نفس ندارد.

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عزت نفس، براندن، آثار، روانشناسی اسلامی.

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Critique of Self-esteem from Nathaniel Branden's Perspective in Light of Islamic Teachings

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ABSTRACT

Self-esteem refers to a sense of intrinsic worth that does not consider superiority over others. Awareness of the significance of self-esteem leads to a greater commitment to its enhancement, and understanding its effects highlights its importance. This research categorizes the effects of self-esteem according to Nathaniel Branden, who is regarded as the father of self-esteem, into three areas: Cognitive, moral, and behavioral, and then analyzes them through the lens of Islamic teachings using a descriptive-analytical method to provide a foundation for critiquing his views. Branden believes that self-expression, acceptance of others' definitions, and individualism are effects of self-esteem; however, these effects are not supported by the teachings of the Quran and Hadith. For instance, sometimes a lack of self-expression indicates transcending one's superficial self and reaching a higher self, which is a result of self-esteem. Similarly, an individual may consciously refuse to accept others' definitions despite having high self-esteem for reasons such as humility or the aim of combating the ego. Additionally, not being individualistic and prioritizing the interests of others over oneself can sometimes indicate the maturity of a dignified individual, whereby the false self is sacrificed for the true self, which does not contradict self-worth and dignity.

KEYWORDS

Self-esteem, Branden, Islamic Psychology.



Introduction

One of the fundamental topics in anthropological discussions is the issue of self-esteem, as it serves as the foundation for many human rights, privileges, and responsibilities. This term encompasses nobility of the self, feelings of worth, and avoidance of humiliation and degradation. There is a close relationship between this virtue, individual characteristics, and social effects, which is mentioned both in the Quran and Hadith and has also been addressed by psychologists. This research aims to answer the question, using a descriptive-analytical method, regarding what effects Nathaniel Branden, a prominent psychologist recognized as the father of self-esteem, attributes to self-esteem, and what critiques can be placed on these views according to Islamic teachings.

1. Necessity and Background of the Research

The respect for human dignity and the possession of self-esteem play a crucial role in education and guidance. Without regard to the source of revelation, humans will encounter sciences that are fallible and will not be immune to their harms. Therefore, since the discussion of self-esteem is a foundational issue in educational matters, deeper familiarity with its effects and critical examination of the views of Western psychologists with Islamic sources will enhance understanding of this virtue and highlight the deficiencies in psychologists' perspectives in this area. This understanding can help mitigate the problems arising from Western-style psychology and counseling, thus effectively contributing to the advancement of Islamic psychology and its application.

Self-esteem is one of the concepts that has garnered significant attention from many psychologists and researchers in recent decades and is considered an important psychological

topic. Some studies have focused on self-esteem and its effects from an Islamic perspective, such as "Self-esteem and Its Educational Effects from the Perspective of the Quran and Hadith" by Mohammad Reza Nili et al., published in the Islamic Social Research Journal, No. 105. Other studies have explored this topic from a psychological viewpoint, such as "The Concept of Self-esteem in Comparison of Islamic Views and the Views of Clinical Psychologists" by Ehsan Pour Esmaeil published in the Quran Sciences and Hadith Encyclopedia, No. 11. Additionally, some psychologists have specifically addressed this topic. Anna Barnes, in her book "Fifty Tips for Building Self-esteem", and David Burns, in "Ten Steps to Happiness", provide practical solutions for enhancing self-esteem. Christian Weber, in his book "Respect Yourself", focuses more on topics of self-awareness rather than practical discussions.

Nathaniel Branden (1930-2014), a theorist and psychotherapist who is a pioneer in self-esteem theory, has authored several books on this subject. His book "The Psychology of Self-esteem" has been translated into multiple languages worldwide.

Research has also been presented in the form of articles that typically examine the relationship between self-esteem and various subjects such as academic achievement, job satisfaction, anxiety, etc. However, none of these studies have specifically and thoroughly examined the effects of self-esteem or analyzed the views of psychologists in detail. Therefore, this research will address the question of what Islamic evaluation exists regarding Nathaniel Branden's perspective on the effects of self-esteem. To achieve this aim, Branden's authored books on this topic will be carefully reviewed. Considering that he has not authored

a book or article specifically titled "The Effects of Self-esteem," references regarding the effects of self-esteem will be extracted from his discussions and categorized. Ultimately, this will be critiqued and evaluated from an Islamic perspective using a descriptive-analytical method.

2. Conceptualization

Honor (*'Izzat*): The term honor is derived from the root "A z z," which signifies strength, intensity, dominance, and power (Ibn Fāris, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 4, 38; Ibn Sīdah, 2000 A/1421 AH: 1, 72), and has an opposite meaning to humiliation (Jawharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 3, 885).

Self (*Nafs*): The essence of the term "Self" refers to individuality in essence; the self is the absolutely individualized entity (Muṣṭafawī, 1981 AD/1360 SH: 12, 220). Therefore, the application of the word "Self" signifies individuality and determination (ibid: 221). Some linguists have explicitly identified "Self" with "Soul." (Jawharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 3, 984) However, essentially, "Self" is something that is added to (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 14, 285). For example, when we say "The self of a human," we mean the human being itself. Thus, if some linguists have interpreted "Self" as "Soul," it is because the essence of a human being is their soul.

Self-esteem (*'Izzat Nafs*): This is the value attributed by self-perception to the individual (Pope, et al., 1989). It is a state in which a person considers themselves worthy and successfully faces the challenges of life (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 14). The Persian equivalents in Islamic teachings are "Dignity of the self" or "Sanctity of the self," meaning that a person should maintain their existential dignity and not belittle their intrinsic value with

base desires and humiliating whims. In fact, it signifies not demeaning oneself; that is, the human self should be impervious to factors of humiliation and hardships (Rāghib, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 564; Muṣṭafawī, 1981 AD/1360 SH: 8, 115). Self-respect is one of the components of self-esteem, and naturally, the respect that each person has for themselves affects their self-esteem (Muṣṭafawī, 1981 AD/1360 SH: 8, 116).

Therefore, self-esteem and self-confidence are universally and absolutely related concepts. This means that anyone who feels valued also has self-confidence; however, it does not necessarily imply that everyone who has self-confidence also feels valued. Self-esteem is an individual's judgment of feeling valuable, whereas self-confidence is the belief in one's ability to perform a desired action or behavior, which is the result of a successful experience.

3. Effects of Self-esteem according to Nathaniel Branden

Branden posits that the level of self-esteem impacts all aspects of existence (Branden; 2001 AD/1380 SH: 26). He identifies the lack or deficiency of self-esteem as a common denominator of many disturbances and believes that low self-esteem produces numerous problems (Branden; 2001 AD/1380 SH: 271). If self-esteem can be elevated, many troubles can be resolved (ibid: 15). So, he mentions various individual and social effects throughout his writings, which can be examined in three categories: cognitive, moral, and behavioral.

3.1 Cognitive Effects

The cognitive effects refer to the impacts that influence a person's perspective and understanding. Since every action and behavior is based on cognition, self-esteem will affect a

person's thoughts and understanding before it influences their ethics and behavior. The only way to know one is to determine how individuals perceive situations and circumstances (Rogers, 840-(4)).

According to Branden, one of the effects of self-acceptance is that individuals with self-esteem possess self-acceptance, meaning they have an accurate and realistic description of themselves and will accept their realities instead of denying and rejecting them. He believes that the reasons some people do not accept their negative thoughts, feelings, and actions is due to their lack of self-esteem. The challenge of self-acceptance applies equally to positive aspects as well. However, Branden argues that if self-esteem is weak, it is more difficult to accept the best aspects of oneself than to accept the darker sides (Branden; 2009 AD/1388 SH: 36).

In terms of cognitive effects, a narration from Imam *Kāẓim* (AS) illustrates the significance of existence and its importance. He advises one of his companions by saying that if you know you possess a pearl, even if everyone says it is a walnut, their opinion holds no value because you know the worth of what you have in your hand (Ḥarrānī, 2003 AD/1382 SH: 386).

What Branden describes as self-acceptance reflects a reductionist perspective, as it limits itself to recognizing and accepting strengths and weaknesses, whereas, in the teachings of religion, an individual who achieves self-esteem understands their intrinsic worth and develops a disdain for any form of baseness. Imam Ali (AS) states: "A dignified person detests any form of baseness that lowly individuals boast of." (Tamīmī Āmidī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 231) Furthermore, worldly possessions and low desires become insignificant to them. As narrated from Imam *Bāqir* (AS), "Whoever possesses dignity, this

world becomes small and insignificant in their eyes." (Tamīmī Āmidī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 663; see also p. 637, 769; and *ibid*: 2002 AD/1381 SH: 231) Therefore, from a religious perspective, a person who reaches self-esteem not only acknowledges and accepts their strengths and weaknesses but also gains a better understanding of themselves and the world around them.

3.2 Ethical Effects

The feeling of dignity and worthiness is considered a facilitator of the desire for moral virtues. The ethical effects that Nathaniel Branden refers to are as follows:

3.2.1 Honesty and Courage

Branden argues that individuals with high self-esteem express their thoughts and feelings honestly, in a manner that is socially appropriate and does not disturb the comfort and emotions of others. In contrast, individuals with low self-esteem are unable to be honest or courageous because they live solely for others and place excessive importance on the approval and validation of others (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 227). For such individuals, achieving success is condemned to a feeling similar to that of con artists and liars, who anxiously await their true nature being revealed because they feel incompetent from within (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 19).

Individuals with low self-esteem experience significant fear and lack the courage to undertake new endeavors. They always feel that they are at risk of failure, being overlooked, or becoming the subject of ridicule by others. As a result, to avoid these issues, they tend to be overly cautious. This caution does not improve their situation and prevents them from taking actions that would enhance their self-esteem (Melanie Fennel, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 86). In

contrast, self-esteem empowers individuals with resilience and the ability to rebuild (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 43).

3.2.2 Feeling of Satisfaction and Peace

A person who feels valued experiences a sense of satisfaction and peace. Branden identifies a direct connection between self-esteem and feelings of satisfaction, stating that the higher the self-esteem, the greater the sense of satisfaction from achievements. When self-esteem is strong and firm, being successful feels natural and appropriate; however, when self-esteem is weak, success can lead to anxiety, which in turn may hinder their performance (ibid.). In fact, self-esteem is considered a personality trait that, when strengthened, increases the likelihood of living happily and being satisfied (Polti, Dabs: 2007 AD/1386 SH). Branden explains that the driving force for such individuals is joy rather than fear, as their goal is not to prove their worth; therefore, they enjoy life (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 46).

It is crucial to recognize that sometimes individuals may exhibit false self-esteem, showcasing what does not genuinely exist as a means to reduce anxiety and insecurity. Approaches such as seeking fame, wealth, or sexual exploits are among the methods of expressing false self-esteem (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 76). However, a person who is praised primarily for their achievements will only feel valued when they achieve further progress. Such a person rarely experiences complete happiness since they can never entirely fill their inner void and are always looking at those who are more successful than they are; this comparison leads to feelings of inadequacy and incompetence (Shihan, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 26).

This is while, if someone considers their economic, vocational, and other successes as their self-esteem, there is always the risk that if they lose or disrupt these successes, they will also lose their sense of self-esteem (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 164). However, someone with self-esteem will reconsider and choose another approach if they are not effective in a task, and for this reason, their peace and sense of satisfaction will not be harmed (ibid: 166).

Therefore, low self-esteem is the crucial factor in stress. Such an individual is worried every day that their masks will be removed and their true personality will be revealed. A person's character is determined by more than just internal factors. In other words, if a person has an anxious and false personality, their reaction in the worst situations will be nothing but anxiety. Hence, these individuals are usually very anxious. In the face of life's challenges and difficulties, they are prone to develop depression.

3.2.3 Kindness

Good-naturedness and kindness are other effects of self-esteem that Branden refers to. He argues that if a person does not value themselves, they cannot love themselves, and someone who cannot be kind to themselves cannot be kind to others. A person with high self-esteem, confident in themselves, will find the love of others to be genuine and convincing. Therefore, they are kind and flexible (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 71). Thus, such individuals may become upset, angry, or dislike others, but generally maintain their affection towards them and are not aggressive; they do not belittle others or seek revenge. Revenge is a form of protection for weak self-esteem. Consequently, such individuals often accuse themselves a lot

and feel a great deal of guilt (Fist et al., 2019 AD/1398 SH: 125).

3.2.4 Resilience and Indestructibility

Self-esteem is a factor for resilience and stability. Branden believes that the higher the self-esteem, the better equipped a person is to deal with personal and professional challenges. Therefore, after a setback, they not only do not become hopeless, but they also have more energy and the ability to face change for a fresh start (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 16). This is because self-esteem allows one to confront life's challenges better and to take advantage of favorable opportunities; however, in conditions of low self-esteem, there is a likelihood of giving up or not utilizing all their potential. As a result, they will have less resistance and perseverance, which will reduce their chances of success (ibid: 26).

There are many moral effects of self-esteem and feelings of worthiness mentioned in the verses and narrations, some of which are considered personal ethics and others social ethics. In this context, examples will be provided for each case, while the rest will simply list references:

- Personal ethics:

1) Honesty: "A liar does not lie except due to the humiliation within them" (Majlisī, 2001 AD/1403 AH: 45, 262; cf. Khānsārī, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 1298; Laythī Wāsiṭī, 1956 AD/1376 AH: 27; Kulaynī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 8, 24);

2) Courage: "Courage is true dignity" (Tamīmī Āmidī, 1990 AD/1410 AH: 259; Majlisī, 2001 AD/1403 AH: 78, 236; Khānsārī, 1964 AD/1384 AH: 259; Nahj al-Balāgha, Short Sayings (Kalimāt al-Qiṣār), Hadith 47);

3) Humility: "Only a distinguished person is humble" (Tamīmī Āmidī, 1990 AD/1410 AH: 9468; Khānsārī, 1964 AD/1384 AH: 9468;

Layth wāhidī, 1956 AD/1376 AH: 475; Khānsārī, 1964 AD/1384 AH: 6, 407; Kulaynī, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 2, 309);

4) Modesty: "The base individual does not feel modest" (Tamīmī Āmidī, 1990 AD/1410 AH: 1053; Khānsārī, 1964 AD/1384 AH: 1053).

- Social Ethics:

1) Forgiveness: "A noble person forgives when in a position of power" (Tamīmī Āmidī, 1990 AD/1410 AH: 132; Khānsārī, 1964 AD/1384 AH: 132; Tamīmī Āmidī, 1961 AD/1381 AH: 246; Mohammadi Reyshahri, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 4, 94);

2) Patience: "The noble soul does not find difficulties heavy" (Tamīmī Āmidī, 1990 AD/1410 AH: 83; Muttaqī, 1981 AD/1401 AH: 3, 271);

3) Indifference: "One of the noblest actions of a dignified person is their indifference to what they know" (Nahj al-Balāghah; Wisdom 222; Tamīmī Āmidī, 1961 AD/1381 AH: 245);

4) Keeping Promises: "It is the tradition of noble people to keep promises." (Tamīmī Āmidī, 1990 AD/1410 AH: 1, 398; cf. ibid: 56)

These are examples of moral effects. Since critique is not only about pointing out faults but also about distinguishing good from bad (Lewis, 2005 AD/1384 SH: 2, 1990) and recognizing truth from falsehood (Sharifi, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 82); it should be stated that the moral effects mentioned by Branden are confirmed by Islam, although he has only mentioned a few of these effects, which can be supplemented by the moral effects cited in Islamic teachings.

3.3 Behavioral Effects

Self-esteem is one of the determining factors of human behavior because the evaluation that individuals have of them affects how they act. Some of the effects that Nathaniel Branden has

mentioned concerning self-esteem relate to human behavior, which will be referred to here.

3.3.1 Respect for Oneself and Others

Nathaniel Branden believes that the healthier a person's self-esteem, the more respect they will show for themselves and others (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 28). The more individuals accept themselves, the more they are open to accepting others and conversely, the more unfavorable their view of themselves, the less likely they are to accept others. Branden holds that living for one and self-respect is important (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 185). Maslow proposed the need for respect as one of the fundamental human needs in the hierarchy of his theory (Maslow, 1970).

Most of the time, someone with low self-esteem experiences feelings of jealousy as they are deeply insecure about themselves and live with the constant expectation of rejection and abandonment (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 84). Therefore, if a person has grown up in an environment where they faced harsh criticism, this pattern is likely to continue into adulthood, resulting in criticism of both themselves and others (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 43).

3.3.2 Appropriate Social Connections

Branden considers social connections to be an important criterion for healthy individuals with self-esteem. One of the consequences of having self-esteem is the ability to form appropriate social connections, as these individuals do not seek superiority over others. All humans strive to overcome their shortcomings and feelings of inadequacy, but those who do not possess healthy psychology aim to be superior to others and exaggerate their efforts to gain an advantage over others to compensate for their flaws (Feist et al., 2019 AD/1398 SH: 116).

Although individuals with self-esteem do not feel the need to be friends with everyone, the few interpersonal relationships they maintain are deeply significant; they are adaptable with all individuals and even feel empathy towards those who are not particularly healthy (Feist et al., 2019 AD/1398 SH: 393).

These individuals, because they feel an inner richness, do not require self-validation and possess honest, appropriate relationships. As self-esteem increases, their communications become more prominent, sincere, and suitable (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 27). So, Branden notes a positive correlation between healthy self-esteem and many characteristics such as tolerance, satisfaction, flexibility, altruism, and cooperation (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 27). Such individuals are also characterized by great patience and are more tolerant (*ibid.*).

However, individuals with low self-esteem struggle to adapt to others and may exhibit aggression and antisocial behavior (Mackie, 2002: 285). Consequently, they pay more attention to weaknesses than strengths and often adopt a punitive stance (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 227). They usually attract others with low self-esteem, and their interactions tend to lead to difficulties. As a result, they form destructive relationships characterized by chaos and inadequacy, regarding their lack of confidence in their thoughts and feelings and anxiety about others' reactions (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 17). This often leads them to react sharply and thoughtlessly, even before the other person finishes speaking, which can result in regret (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 103). Their low self-esteem can lead to controlling and domineering behaviors, obsessive thoughts, compulsions, and disproportionate aggression (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 271).

3.3.3 Independence in Action

Individuals who feel a sense of self-worth have accepted themselves with all their strengths and weaknesses. They acknowledge their talents, abilities, and even their preferences, and they respect themselves, even though they may not always be accepted by others. Therefore, they possess independence in action (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 69). They can easily make choices regarding matters such as their field of study, career, profession, and clothing, and they make decisions, although they also seek the opinions of others for consultation. Therefore, since they have shifted their source of validation and approval from the environment to themselves, there is no void within them that requires them to seek others for validation and lose their independence (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 71).

3.3.4 Accepting Criticism and Praise from Others

Another outcome is the ability to accept criticism. Since individuals with high self-esteem have accepted themselves as they are and are autonomous, they are not only indifferent to flattery from others, but they are also not concerned about criticism from others. When they hear criticism, they do not become upset; they listen calmly and analyze it. If it is justified, they seek to make amends, and if it is unjustified, it does not make them angry because they believe in themselves, and the opinions of others do not diminish their values and worth. They are also receptive to praise from others and do not reject it, as they acknowledge their own progress and do not deny it. They do not consider admitting to mistakes beneath their dignity, which is why if they have made an error, they accept it and apologize (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 105). However, individuals with low self-esteem criticize themselves excessively and harbor unkind internalizations that lead to

feelings of shame (Ross, Kaminski, Herrington, 2019). In contrast, they do not accept praise from others and often smile awkwardly, turn red, and avoid eye contact. They do not take compliments seriously or consider them important. For example, if someone praises their new outfit, they might say, "I bought this on sale," or if someone talks about their success on an exam, they might say, "It was luck," or "The questions were easy," and they may hastily praise the other person. They tend to perceive feedback from others as predominantly negative, even though they are thirsty for positive feedback; however, their beliefs lead them to feel undeserving of it.

For this reason, the effects of self-esteem can be observed in the facial expressions, behaviors, speech, and movements of individuals. Generally, the words and actions of individuals with high self-esteem have a quality of ease and spontaneity. Their manner of speaking and movements indicate that they are not in conflict with themselves, and there is a harmony between what they say and what they do. There is a sense of joy and vigor in their eyes and facial expressions. Their hands appear relaxed, and their posture is upright, balanced, and determined (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 67-68).

3.3.5 Self-expression

Branden considers self-expression to be one of the important effects of self-esteem. Self-expression means respecting one's own desires, needs, values, and thoughts. It involves supporting oneself and behaving respectfully in interactions with others. It entails appreciating one's identity without fabricating one's true self. One should be able to enthusiastically define oneself in a way that reflects one's values. However, an individual with low self-esteem tends to underestimate their own plans and proposals. For this reason, they often fear expressing themselves rationally and suppress

their own intelligence and insight (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 31). Moreover, self-expression does not mean exerting pressure on others to be the center of attention, ignoring others' rights, or being indifferent to the interests and feelings of others. Rather, hostile, offensive, or sarcastic expressions are indicative of low self-esteem (Branden, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 51).

3.3.6 Individualism

In addition to the effects mentioned, Branden also adds individualism (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 70). Individualism means supporting anything that one perceives as beneficial to oneself (Haro, 1970: 790). Essentially, personal benefit takes precedence, and individuals pursue their own interests. Therefore, individualists promote the pursuit of personal goals and desires, advocating that individual interests should take precedence over group interests. Branden even considers the recommendations of some therapists to continue living with their spouses for the sake of family relationships to be unjust and invalid in his book "The Disowned Self." (Branden, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 179)

Regarding the effects of self-esteem on human behavior, some aspects align with Islamic teachings, while others require further elaboration and adjustment. Among these, Branden mentions greater respect for oneself and others, which is more comprehensively articulated in the verses, traditions, and the practices of the impeccable Imams. In addition to the necessity of respecting and honoring the self-esteem of others, it is also recommended that a person should not cause humiliation or disgrace to themselves.

It should be noted that there are two categories of hadiths on this subject. One

category contains narrations that recommend not humiliating oneself, such as a narration from Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) stating: "God Almighty has given the believer the choice to do anything, except to humiliate or degrade themselves." (Kulaynī, 1987 AD/1407 AH: 5, 63) The other category includes narrations that outwardly seem contradictory, such as the statement that whoever humiliates their own self, God honors him (Tamīmī Āmidī, 1991 AD/1410 AH: 1, 585). Upon examining these narrations, a duality of the self can be observed: One is the higher self, and the other is the lower self. What is pertinent in the context of self-esteem is the higher self, who is recommended to be honored and esteemed; because sometimes transcending oneself for a higher purpose does not indicate a lack of self-esteem; rather, it shows a passage from the lower self to the higher self, which can result from self-esteem.

Therefore, where Branden cites self-expression, acceptance of others' praise, and individualism as effects of self-esteem, this perspective lacks comprehensiveness and completeness from the viewpoint of Islamic teachings. If self-expression involves liking one's identity or respecting one's thoughts and values, it is acceptable, but if a person does not eagerly define themselves, it cannot necessarily be considering a lack of self-esteem. A person can elevate themselves to the point of transcending the lower self, and when they see themselves as connected to God, they may feel no need to express their existence in the sense of self-praise. Similarly, when it comes to accepting others' praise, it is possible for someone with high self-esteem to consciously refrain from it for various reasons, including humility and the purpose of combating their ego, to prevent the vice of arrogance from infiltrating them, and to avoid feelings of superiority or

vanity. Even while considering their existence as valuable and dignified, they may realize that everything they have comes from God and that they have nothing to boast about themselves. Therefore, while preserving their self-esteem, they do not accept what is attributed to them and see everything as a gift from their Creator.

Just as individualism cannot be absolutely compatible with religious teachings, from the Islamic perspective, sometimes a person can sacrifice their false self for their true self in order to reach their genuine identity (Motahhari, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 15, 367). This does not contradict self-esteem and dignity. On the contrary, those who value themselves more distance themselves from low and base matters related to their false self. Such individuals can easily feel a sense of unity with others and make sacrifices for them. This sacrifice and selflessness are, in fact, a transcendence of the false self, which holds no real value, and this altruism is precisely a sign and characteristic of true worth because they value their true self.

So, if a person separates from their other selves and develops a personal and individual aspect, this relates to the animalistic aspects of their false self. Conversely, when they see themselves in connection with the human selves of others and empathize with them, it pertains to their true essence.

Therefore, according to religious teachings, a dignified individual can grow to such an extent that they recognize two aspects of themselves. Since their existence emanates from the absolute existence and goodness, they possess complete dignity and will never submit to humiliation or disgrace. Moreover, since they do not consider a self for the ego, they do not accept definitions or praises and can sacrifice their false self for higher goals.

Conclusion

Self-esteem refers to the assessment and overall understanding of one's competence, abilities, and worth as an individual. It generally reflects the value that a person places on themselves and is a fundamental aspect of human psychology. Hence, it influences how individuals perceive and interact with themselves and the world around them, shaping their beliefs, emotions, and behaviors. Nathaniel Branden, recognized as the father of self-esteem, identifies cognitive, moral, and behavioral aspects associated with self-esteem in his writings. Many of the findings he arrived at through experience and empirical research were addressed centuries ago by religious leaders, and even more extensively.

Moral attributes such as forgiveness, patience, and overlooking others' faults are mentioned in religious texts. Additionally, since Islam considers all dimensions of a person, especially the true essence of a human being, it does not fully endorse certain aspects such as self-assertion, acceptance of others' praise, and individualism. This is because, from an Islamic perspective, sometimes the lack of self-assertion indicates transcending the lower self and reaching the higher self, which can be a result of self-esteem. A person can elevate themselves to such a degree that, seeing themselves connected to God, they feel no need for self-assertion in terms of boasting about themselves.

Moreover, even when it comes to accepting praise from others, an individual with high self-esteem may consciously refrain from it for reasons such as humility and the purpose of combating their ego. Thus, being non-individualistic and prioritizing the interests of others over one's own can sometimes indicate the maturity of a dignified individual, such that they sacrifice their false self for their true self, which does not contradict self-esteem and dignity.

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