

A Critique of Saadi's *Golestan* with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

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Golestan is one of the most influential books in Persian literature in which Saadi (an Iranian poet and writer) mentioned the realities of human life and gave moral advice. This book includes a preface and eight chapters in rhymed and rimed prose. There has been considerable volume of discussion on Saadi and his work *Golestan*. One of the topics that the scholars have considered in Saadi's works is his psychological approach. Various human behaviors in *Golestan* is research-worthy from a psychological perspective. This study, far from the criterion of valuation, aimed to compare Bandura's social cognitive theory with Saadi's views in anecdotes of *Golestan*. Documentary research method was used in this study including comparative aspects. Research findings indicate that Saadi used the form of tales and anecdotes to provide the best advice for life and improve his audiences'

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relationships and behaviors. These concepts match Bandura's social cognitive theory. The results of this study show that Saadi addressed the major concepts of Bandura's social cognitive theory such as observational learning and its related process, triadic reciprocal causation and human agency in his anecdotes. The issue of modeling and modeled behavior presented in Bandura's theory are reflected in different ways in Saadi's *Golestan*. He referred to the characteristics of models in many different anecdotes. For example, the particularity of kings as models and their promise and actions towards ordinary people was considered by Saadi. In its own way, he pointed to triadic reciprocal causation (the interaction of environment, personal factors, and behavior) in the *Golestan*. So, while paying close attention to environmental factors, Saadi did not ignore the role of personal factors and individual behaviors. For example, in the eighth chapter of *Golestan*, in addition to the impact of the environment, he referred to the individual's nature. Also, determinant role of personal factors is seen to be influenced by environment in various anecdotes of *Golestan*. According to the findings, there are several examples regarding the importance of individual behavior from the Saadi's perspective in *Golestan*. Saadi considered the learner's characteristics and talents, and believed that if someone wants to learn something, they should have some talent for it. In Bandura's social learning theory, it is believed that learning is done according to the principle of proximity. From Bandura's point of view, when things are frequently in close proximity to one another, they become associated with one another. Saadi considered the concept of memorial by observational learning and the principle of proximity in *Golestan*. Another concept of Bandura is latent learning that can be seen in Saadi's anecdotes. From different anecdotes of *Golestan*, it is believed that knowledge, awareness, and accumulation of knowledge (versus wealth creation) is very important. Furthermore, due to moral and educational effects of *Golestan*, the concept of feedback is frequently used in the anecdotes. Saadi emphasized the deep effects of corrective feedback on the formation of behavior learned from observing an individual. He also pointed out that this feedback can show both the positive and the negative aspects of the performance and have an effect of recreating behavior. Saadi believed in the use of reward and punishment in its proper place. In the seventeenth anecdote of eighth chapter, he mentioned moderation in the behavior and the simultaneous application of punishment and reinforcement. He believed that too much anger overtakes the fear; too much love and kindness kill grandeur. He

says "Do not be too angry and strict; they will be bored of you or hate you, and do not be so easy-going and tolerant; they will not pay attention to you or count on you". Saadi in *Golestan* wanted people, kings, rich and poor people to learn lessons from the lives of others. In this way, he refers to the concept of succession of repression, punishment and fear. Saadi used the concept of generalization in expressing educational and moral issues in his anecdotes. In the fifth story of the second chapter, it is mentioned that since the thief was dressed as a Sufi, joined a congregation of Sufis and fled after the theft, causing trouble to the Sufis, they lost their trust in any unknown person. One of the aspects of human agency is "intentionality". Bandura's term refers to the introduction of a string of actions to be undertaken in the future. Saadi pointed this in several of his stories. Another aspect of human agency is "anticipation". The foresight or anticipation is described as the expectation of consequences for our actions. This future orientation of behavior leads to positive outcomes and avoids negative outcomes. From Saadi's anecdotes, one can conclude that thinking of the results of the act is very important. Bandura's other characteristic of human agency is "self-reactivation," which means the link between thought and action. As Saadi also referred to in the following statement: "Master without action is like a tree without fruit, virtuous without knowledge is as like as a house without entering door". The present study showed that Saadi's views are consistent with the major concepts of Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. Saadi's awareness of the characteristics of the human being, his actions, his behaviors, and his thoughts made him a great psychologist whose view can be easily understood and inferred. We can spot a lot of psychological concepts in his stories and anecdotes. Major concepts of Bandura's social cognitive theory including interrelationship and the three-factor model, (triadic reciprocal causation: environment, personality and behavior), human agency (intentionality, predestination or foresight, self-awareness and thought), distribution, self-efficacy, ripple effect, self and other regulation are some of concepts that Saadi somehow expressed in his book, *Golestan*.

Keywords: *Golestan*, Saadi, Bandura, Social Cognitive Theory, Education.