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	<p align="center">Title of research article</p> <p align="center">Mental Subjugation and the Crisis of Awareness in Ali Shariati's Thought: A Sociological Reading of Dependency, Consciousness, and Developmental Barriers</p>
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<p>Keywords</p>	<p>Development; mental subjugation; social awareness; intellectual dependency; Ali Shariati; critical sociology</p>
<p>Abstract</p> <p>This study investigates the phenomenon of mental subjugation as a critical barrier to awareness and social development, with particular reference to the sociological thought of Ali Shariati. Through a conceptual and interpretive analysis, the research highlights how Shariati's intellectual framework reveals the mechanisms by which mental dependency obstructs individual consciousness, collective awakening, and the prospects for authentic civilizational growth. The analysis demonstrates that mental subjugation functions not merely as an intellectual deficiency but as a structural impediment to political and social autonomy, leading to a cycle of dependency that undermines development initiatives.</p> <p>The findings underscore that societies burdened by distorted awareness and inherited subjugation often remain vulnerable to ideological manipulation, authoritarian dominance, and cultural dependency. To overcome these barriers, Shariati's thought emphasizes the necessity of critical education, intellectual liberation, and the role of media in reconstructing authentic awareness. By situating Shariati's analysis within the broader sociological discourse, this study provides insights into the ways mental subjugation hinders development projects and outlines pathways toward sustainable transformation rooted in collective consciousness.</p>	
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Introduction:

Development is widely considered to be one of the most important issues facing societies and nations. It is a comprehensive process that aims to improve the economic, social and cultural living conditions of individuals and communities. Development encompasses more than just material aspects; it also involves the development of awareness and thought as key elements in ensuring continuity and success. This makes development a fundamental pillar for achieving progress and prosperity in societies.

In this context, individual and social awareness form the cornerstone of any genuine and sustainable transformation. It reflects the extent to which individuals can understand their reality and interact with it to effect positive change. However, Shariati argues that the phenomenon of ‘mental subjugation’ represents an intellectual constraint that hinders this ability. This manifests as a state of collective oblivion, rendering individuals unable to engage in critical thinking or rebel against unjust realities. According to him, mental subjugation is not just ignorance, but a systematic tool used by dominant forces to keep people subjugated and intellectually stagnant through various means, including education, television, the media and technology. These things may appear liberating, but they actually serve to entrench complacency. Therefore, Shariati links the absence of social and individual alertness to the persistence of underdevelopment. He affirms that true liberation begins with an awareness that rejects mental subjugation and regains the capacity for creativity and initiative – an essential condition for any renaissance or genuine development.

This study aims to shed light on the concept of mental subjugation in the thought of Ali Shariati and analyse its sociological dimensions. The focus is on its negative impact on developmental awareness among individuals and communities. The study also seeks to understand the relationship between mental subjugation and development, and to highlight ways in which this phenomenon can be confronted to enhance sustainable development pathways.

The study addresses the following questions:

1. How does Ali Shariati define mental subjugation, and what are its causes and manifestations in society?
2. How does mental subjugation affect individuals’ and communities’ awareness and hinder development?
3. What is the relationship between a lack of awareness and the failure of development projects in societies whose individuals suffer from mental subjugation?
4. How can mental subjugation be confronted, and how can awareness be promoted as a fundamental condition for achieving genuine development?

1. Objectives of the study:

This study aims to:

- identify the concept of mental subjugation from Ali Shariati’s perspective, along with its causes and manifestations in different societies.
- analyse the impact of mental subjugation on individual and community awareness, and its role in hindering development processes.
- Examine the relationship between the absence of individual and social alertness, and failed development projects in societies affected by mental subjugation.
- propose ways and mechanisms to confront mental subjugation and enhance awareness as a fundamental pillar for achieving genuine, sustainable development.

2. Importance of the study:

In light of the contemporary challenges facing many developing societies, this study is of significant importance, as the phenomenon of mental subjugation is one of the major intellectual and social obstacles hindering comprehensive development. Understanding the nature of this phenomenon and its impact on individual and group awareness can provide a roadmap to enhance alertness and critical awareness. This will pave the way for building more effective and independent societies in their developmental decisions.

Additionally, the study provides an opportunity to gain a deep understanding of Ali Shariati’s concepts of mental subjugation, which remain relevant in the present day. The insights gained from this study can be used to develop strategies that dismantle the constraints of intellectual and cultural dependency and stimulate latent energies within

society to promote sustainable development. This, in turn, will enhance the community's ability to confront economic, social and political challenges with greater awareness and confidence.

3. Concepts of the study:

First: The concept of development:

A. Linguistic perspective:

The term 'development' is derived from the word 'growth', which refers to progress, advancement and increase, as well as other concepts indicating a transition from one state to a better one. The term 'development' comes from the verb 'namā', meaning to increase, and from 'namā', which signifies goodness and prosperity. (Abu Nasr, Medhat, 2017, p. 65).

B. Social definition of development:

Development can be defined as: 'a process aimed at improving the quality of life within the local community by enhancing the effective participation of the population, and, if possible, through initiatives originating from within the community itself' (Ali Loush, 2007, p. 105). (Ali Loush, 2007, p. 105).

Karl Marx viewed development as a revolutionary process involving comprehensive and profound changes to social, economic, political and legal structures, as well as to lifestyles, ways of living and cultural values. (Al-Najjar, 2025).

Paul Bascou considers development to represent an overall awareness of societal changes that varies between rural and urban populations, as well as between social classes, groups and elites. This awareness oscillates between contradictions such as alienation and liberation, illusion and reality, authenticity and modernity, tradition and modernisation, and reassurance and anxiety. (Bascou, 1975, pp. 79-96).

In this context, Paul Bascou argues that questions relating to the sociology of development in emerging countries, such as how to understand and potentially influence social change, are closely linked to the societal quest for self-identity. He also emphasises the importance of critically analysing awareness of social change as a prerequisite for effectively engaging in developmental work. This aligns with Jacques Berque's seemingly contradictory assertion that the problem is not the existence of underdeveloped societies, but the lack of adequate analysis of those societies. (Bascou, 1975, p. 89).

C. Economic Definition of Development:

In economics, the concept of development refers to the process of introducing radical changes within a specific community with the aim of enabling it to achieve sustainable growth that improves the quality of life of its individuals continuously. In other words, development involves enhancing the community's capacity to meet its basic and growing needs in a way that ensures those needs are met to a higher standard, through the wise use of available resources and equitable distribution of the returns from this exploitation. (Madi, 2006, p. 9).

Secondly, the concept of distortion of awareness (mental subjugation):

A. Definition of awareness:

Awareness is generally defined as a mental state through which a person perceives and interacts with their external environment via their senses. It cannot form without existing knowledge, experience and prior understanding. As an individual's knowledge and experiences increase, so does their awareness and perception, and vice versa.

Awareness is a reflective mental state that enables a person to perceive themselves and their environment at different levels. This includes awareness of mental and physical functions, the external environment, and identity as an individual and as part of a community. (Salem, 2018, p. 270).

B. Definition of Distortion of Awareness:

Hegazy (2005, p. 230) refers to the distortion of awareness as a process of 'wasting' awareness, whereby individuals become passive consumers of information and entertainment without analysing or thinking about it. This weakens their capacity for deep understanding and change, making them more susceptible to manipulation and marginalisation. (Hegazy, 2005, p. 230).

False awareness is defined as a lack of alignment between a person's thoughts, concepts, and material reality, which renders them unable to keep up with developments in reality. Marx emphasised this concept, suggesting that the capitalist system fosters false awareness among workers by distinguishing between true awareness concerning social and economic conditions, and false awareness that is divorced from reality and lacks a material basis. (Salem, 2018, p. 271).

Ali Shariati defines "mental subjugation" as a systematic distortion of awareness aimed at disabling human consciousness and obscuring self-awareness and societal awareness, while distorting the perception of reality. He considers that any force that diminishes human and social alertness, even if it is religious or moral, is a form of mental subjugation. (Shariati, 1974, pp. 43-46)

4. Overview of the Life and Works of Ali Shariati:

Ali Shariati was born in 1933 in the village of Mazinan, part of the Sabzevar region in Khorasan Province, an area located on the edges of the Great Desert known as "Dasht Kavir."

He continued his studies at Mashhad University, where he obtained two university degrees in Arabic and French. In the early 1950s, he began his career as a high school teacher, and in 1952, he founded an Islamic student organization and participated in various protest activities, leading to his arrest several times.

Thanks to a scholarship, Shariati went to France to complete his higher studies, where he earned a PhD in sociology from the Sorbonne University in 1964.

Shariati is distinguished for developing a new perspective on understanding the history of Islam and its related social context, presenting a series of influential intellectual lectures in Tehran, which later contributed to shaping the ideological groundwork for the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

In 1954, Shariati joined the Faculty of Arts at Mashhad University, where he established study groups that discussed and analyzed issues of Islamic thought. In the same year, he joined the National Resistance Movement that emerged after the overthrow of Mohammad Mossadegh's government, a movement founded by prominent figures such as Ayatollah Zanjani, Ayatollah Taleghani, and Mehdi Bazargan. His early political activities led to his arrest for six months before he completed his university studies.

Shariati graduated with honors in literature and received a scholarship in 1959 that allowed him to pursue higher studies in France, where he studied religions, sociology, and literature. At the Sorbonne University in Paris, he earned two doctorates: one in the sociology of religion and the other in the history of religions. During his stay in France, he continued to engage in political work and contributed to establishing a European branch of the "Liberation of Iran" movement, launched by Taleghani and Bazargan in 1961. (Shariati, Human and History, 2006, pp. 6-10)

Ali Shariati left behind a rich intellectual legacy, with many of his works having been translated into Arabic by renowned Arab scholars including Ibrahim Desouki Shata, Abbas Al-Ramdhani, Moussa Qasri and Haidar Haballah. His most notable translated works include: Building the Revolutionary Self, Understanding Islam, The Responsibility of Shiism, Alawi Shiism and Safavid Shiism, Hussein: The Heir of Adam, The Nation and the Imamate, The History of Civilisation, Alertness and Mental Subjugation, Approaches to Understanding Islam, Human and Islam, The Image of Muhammad, Martyrdom, The Responsibility of Women, The Responsibility of the Intellectual, Religion Against Religion, Ethics for Youth, Students, and the Young, Fatima is Fatima, Hajj: The Fifth Pillar', 'The History and Knowledge of Religions', and finally, 'Return to the Self'. (Lgras, 2024, p. 76).

5. Social Theories of Development:

This section focuses on the most significant theoretical trends in sociological thinking about development as a complex social phenomenon. These perspectives vary in their views on the nature of development and its objectives. Initially, the concept was linked to the ideas of ‘modernisation’ and ‘diffusion’, implying the transfer of elements of progress from industrialised Western countries to developing nations. (Ben Aissa, 2018, pp. 63–65).

First: Modernisation theory:

Most modernisation theories focus on the duality that separates ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’. They consider modernisation to be a natural consequence of the Industrial Revolution in the West and of political developments in countries such as France. Proponents of this perspective view modernisation as a social change process that enables underdeveloped societies to acquire the characteristics of developed societies, provided they redirect their structures and institutions towards objectives that align with the model of modern industrial societies.

This perspective is based on two main approaches to interpreting development: the cultural-psychological approach and the structural approach. The former considers modernisation to be related to changes in values and individual motivations, while the latter focuses on shifts in the economic, social and political structures of society.

According to these theories, development is defined as the gradual transition from a traditional to a modern society based on advanced technology, rational social organisation and political stability. Some strands of modernisation theory suggest that the development of developing societies depends on gradually integrating traditional structures with modern elements. This involves transitioning from a subsistence economy to a market economy, from rural to urban living, from small, local institutions to large, advanced institutional structures, and from simple technologies to modern technology.

According to this approach, a society is considered modern when it can evolve flexibly in response to changing challenges, enabling it to innovate new mechanisms in order to respond to internal demands and face external transformations positively and sustainably.

Second: The Diffusionist Approach:

This approach assumes that development cannot be achieved in developing countries unless material and cultural elements are transferred and disseminated from advanced industrial countries to them. This includes the flow of capital, the transfer of technology, as well as the dissemination of Western social, cultural, and economic values as necessary factors for achieving economic growth and instigating cultural transformation within underdeveloped societies.

Proponents of the diffusionist approach view the flow of capital from developed to developing countries as essential for providing the financial resources needed for development. The absence or scarcity of this funding in many developing countries is considered one of the most significant obstacles to progress. Additionally, transferring modern technology from industrialised nations to developing countries is considered a means of enhancing their economic and technical structures and contributing to the development of more integrated and efficient production patterns within developmental programmes.

However, this approach raises legitimate questions, the most prominent of which are: Do developing countries possess the qualified human resources capable of absorbing and employing modern technology effectively to serve their developmental objectives? Or are they dependent on importing technology alongside foreign expertise, which undermines their ability to achieve independent and sustainable development?

Imported technology often reflects the social and economic structures of these countries and serves as a means to transfer technology that can contribute to their development. It also plays a significant role in enhancing social and economic growth, which is considered an essential factor in technological development. Nevertheless, this approach seems too ambitious to be applicable to all developing countries. There must be a focus on developing technology, training specialised personnel to use it, and using it effectively. This can enable developing nations to achieve this goal, since development cannot be realised without it.

Third: the cultural sociological approach.

This approach considers that cultural change and development depend fundamentally on the psychological characteristics of individuals. Building on the ideas of Max Weber, who addressed development in Western Europe, it considers that development is not limited to economic growth, but also encompasses the values and principles that reinforce the spirit of capitalism in societies and influence individual behaviour, thereby contributing to development.

This approach views development as an integrative process in which internal psychological motivations are formed. It highlights the role of active social classes that contribute positively to developmental projects. However, for these motivations to yield actual development, a supportive social and cultural environment is required to enable these energies to emerge and function.

This approach emphasises the importance of developing values and motivations that contribute to elevating the level of development. It notes that the sources of these motivational energies are transferred from developed to developing countries, which often suffer from slow internal responsiveness. This hinders the achievement of the desired level of development.

Traditional development is fundamentally technical, relying on enhancing skills and capabilities, and focusing on transferring power and status within society. Developing productive technology is one of the key ways of building the community's self-capacities. However, failing to update this structure can lead to diminished individual effectiveness and hinder development progress in developing countries.

General modernisation theory emphasises the importance of psychological, social and economic factors in achieving development. It stresses the need to adopt new standards, values and beliefs that enable the required change in development patterns. It also asserts that developing countries can only progress by transforming their traditional models through the transfer of experiences and technologies from developed nations. This theory acknowledges that Western values are taken into account in the development process.

6. Types of development:

Development is a multidimensional concept encompassing economic, political, cultural and social aspects. It is viewed as a comprehensive process aimed at improving the living conditions of individuals and communities. To better understand this concept, development can be classified into several main types that interact to provide a comprehensive view of progress and prosperity in different societies.

A. Economic development:

This type of development focuses on material and productive aspects within society. It is defined as a set of planned actions aimed at modifying the structure of the national economy in favour of the majority of its population. (Al-Muqaddim, 1978, p. 27).

The objective is to boost production and national and personal income, thereby enhancing the population's standard of living and overall well-being. It is measured by the quantity of goods and services received by an individual; the greater this quantity, the higher their standard of living. (Sati, 2006, p. 82).

B. Political development:

Political development is considered a multidimensional process of social change that aims to elevate state institutions to the level of those in industrialised countries. It is manifested through structural differentiation, the distribution and specialisation of roles, and the ability of the political system to renew, mobilise and sustain itself. The process also aims to promote equality by disseminating a culture of political participation and ensuring competence in public office appointments. This dynamic process aims to develop institutions and political culture within a framework of freedom and rationality. (Al-Najjar, 2025).

C. Cultural development:

Cultural development revolves around managing cultural diversity within society to liberate the creative energies of its various segments. This requires respecting the culture and identity of each societal group, safeguarding their linguistic, cultural and religious rights while maintaining a shared culture that fosters a sense of belonging and national integration. It is based on fundamental values such as belief in rationality, respect for individual freedoms, tolerance, justice and democracy. (Al-Najjar, 2025).

D. Social development:

Social development involves making changes to the social structure and its functions with the aim of satisfying individuals' social needs. The aim is to empower disadvantaged groups, reduce poverty and social disparities, and provide income-generating job opportunities for vulnerable groups. It also supports civil society, elected officials and administrators in managing development programmes and implementing basic infrastructure projects. Furthermore, social development aims to unleash the material and spiritual energies of society, liberating it from backwardness and exploitation and achieving justice and equality. The focus is on raising the standard of living, especially in rural areas. UNESCO emphasises that social development is based on eliminating poverty, promoting employment and fostering social inclusion, which are the foundations of well-being and stability. (Al-Najjar, 2025).

7. Levels of development:

In addition to the diversity of development patterns in terms of their economic, political, cultural and social nature, levels are a key aspect in understanding how developmental policies are implemented in practice. Development does not occur uniformly across all fields and regions. Rather, it is divided into varying levels according to its geographical and administrative scope, each of which allows challenges to be addressed based on the specificities of the place and its population. These levels provide a practical framework for understanding the mechanisms of planning and the equitable distribution of resources and capabilities. (Al-Najjar, 2025).

First: The national level of development:

Efforts at this level are made on the scale of the entire state, where public policies aim to achieve comprehensive development in all sectors, including economic, social and service-oriented areas. In this context, the state is viewed as a single entity working towards achieving significant developmental goals that benefit the entire community and aim to enhance quality of life in all areas. (Al-Najjar, 2025).

Second: the regional level of development.

This level focuses on a specific area or region as a relatively independent unit of development. This region may be defined administratively, or it may be distinguished by cultural, economic or geographical characteristics. The importance of this type of development lies in addressing disparities between regions and ensuring a more equitable distribution of developmental opportunities and capabilities. (Al-Najjar, 2025).

Third: Local Level of Development:

Local development is often associated with decentralisation, whereby local authorities are given powers to undertake initiatives that address the needs of the population. However, it is important to distinguish between local development, which seeks to improve living conditions in a specific area, and decentralisation, which is a means of achieving this goal. Local development fundamentally relies on understanding the needs of local residents and involving them in shaping developmental priorities and decision-making processes. (Ibrahimi, 2007, p. 5).

8. Forms of Mental Subjugation as Mechanisms for Distorting Awareness:

Ali Shariati distinguishes between old and modern forms of mental subjugation. Direct subjugation stifles thought and immerses individuals in ignorance, whereas indirect subjugation distracts people with trivial matters such as sports, fame, meaningless certificates, superficial worship and empty arts. This diverts them from demanding their basic rights and focusing on essential issues (Shariati, Alertness and Mental Subjugation, 1974, p. 53). (Shariati, Alertness and Mental Subjugation, 1974, p. 53).

He also classifies mental subjugation as either old or modern, providing examples of the former, such as the exploitation of religion through asceticism, which numbs individuals and diverts them from their rights for the benefit of their enemies, and being grateful to God for everything, even trivial matters, which results in the acceptance of negative realities without attempting to change them. This includes the distortion of poetry's social and human message, and excessive pride in the past. (Shariati, *Alertness and Mental Subjugation*, 1974, pp. 57–66).

As for modern mental subjugation, Shariati presents it as being based on distraction, conflict and inciting sectarianism. He argues that it is not a natural difference within religion, but rather a structured tool used to distract and fragment society by stirring sectarian disputes and shifting attention to internal conflicts. This scatters people's awareness, weakens their national unity and prevents them from confronting injustice and tyranny, as well as achieving development. This division kills social and individual alertness, making society vulnerable to control. Thus, combatting sectarianism is essential in order to maintain unity and build a free and just future.

Models of modern mental subjugation include narrow specialisation and reliance on other civilisations without self-production. He argues that certain manifestations of individual freedom act as distractions, scattering attention and weakening the awareness of individuals and society, thereby contributing to the loss of social and individual alertness (Shariati, *Alertness and Mental Subjugation*, 1974, pp. 88–91). (Shariati, *Alertness and Mental Subjugation*, 1974, pp. 88–91).

He believes that mental subjugation distorts human thought and feeling by diverting individuals from their human and social awareness. This causes them to become preoccupied with issues that seem important or sacred, but which distract them from fundamental concerns. This allows adversaries to exploit their energies without their awareness. Any generation that neglects to think consciously and continuously about its true issues falls into the trap of mental subjugation. (Ali, 2025).

Shariati therefore sees a dilemma between technical knowledge linked to industry and capital, and knowledge based on faith and commitment to the interests of oppressed peoples. Societies that emerged from their identity and interests achieved true civilisation, while those that followed the West without social awareness remained consumers and lost their independence. Regarding religion, Shariati distinguishes between true religion, which affirms human authenticity, and false religion, which distorts individuals and robs them of their identity in the name of the unseen. Some have described this as 'the opium of the people'. (Qasim, 2025).

Shariati argues that religious mental subjugation used to be direct and crude, but today it has become more complex and is supported by science, the media, education and the social sciences. This turns individuals into 'modern slaves' and women into 'modern concubines'.

9. False awareness leads to false development.

Upon reading and analysing Shariati's thoughts, we find that mental subjugation, a form of false awareness, profoundly impacts development. An individual whose awareness is obscured is unable to lead development, build a nation or reform society. Mental subjugation is not simply ignorance; it is organised ignorance that takes religious, cultural and political forms, and is aimed at transforming individuals from active, proactive beings into submissive followers. Shariati does not view development as merely an economic or technical process, but rather as a liberating journey that begins with dismantling the mental and social structures that keep individuals subjugated. Therefore, understanding the mechanisms of mental subjugation and analysing its impact on hindering development is a prerequisite for any genuine developmental project. The effects of mental subjugation on development manifest as follows:

Sociologically, Shariati indicates that mental subjugation empties development of its liberating content, as development is not merely about accumulating wealth or improving infrastructure. It fundamentally involves a transformation in the structure of awareness. A subjugated society – one that has had its awareness distorted – reproduces backwardness through a culture of obedience, submission and rejection of change. In such a society, development becomes a formal process managed externally, lacking effective participation from the populace and serving elites and systems more than ordinary individuals. This renders it incapable of achieving real social transformation.

Shariati views mental subjugation as an organised process that aims to disable human awareness, making individuals dependent on religious, political, or symbolic authorities without their realisation. He argues that development does not begin with economic plans, but with the liberation of collective awareness because a subjugated society lacks the capacity for change or advancement; it merely reproduces its submission and dependency.

Development as a liberating act is dependent on the liberation of individuals. Shariati believes that development begins when individuals are freed from ignorance and submission, and regain their critical awareness and capacity for action. Therefore, liberating individuals from mental subjugation is a prerequisite for any genuine developmental project. At its core, development is not only economic; it is an intellectual and social revolution aimed at creating free and aware individuals.

Religious mental subjugation is considered by Shariati to be the most dangerous form, as it uses religion to convince the masses that backwardness is a divine fate or that patience in the face of injustice is a virtue. This reinforces the status quo instead of changing it, thereby disabling any real possibilities for liberation and development.

10. Individual and Social Alertness and Its Role in Enhancing Development:

Ali Shariati offers a distinctive perspective on the development of civilisation, arguing that any authentic civilisational endeavour must be grounded in knowledge and cannot be based solely on the blind adoption of modernisation methods. Instead, it must be based on clear intellectual and ideological principles. In this view, ‘alertness’ – meaning critical and intellectual awareness – becomes the prerequisite for any civilisational revival, and civilisation only arises as a result of this awareness. Shariati highlights the paradox of societies that sought modernisation without possessing independent self-awareness, instead remaining consumers of modernity. In this respect, he aligns with Malek Bennabi in emphasising the importance of foundational ideas as a driving force for revival. (Ali, 2025).

According to Shariati, the absence of social and individual alertness is one of the most significant factors contributing to backwardness in societies. This absence entrenches what he terms ‘mental subjugation’, whereby human awareness is distorted and exploited to serve external or internal authorities without true self-recognition or recognition of one’s social role. The danger is compounded by the fact that this mental subjugation is exercised today through modern tools such as education, the media and technology. These tools are ostensibly presented as means of liberation and development, but in reality they function as hidden mechanisms for reproducing dependency and backwardness. Thus, development becomes superficial, prioritising form over substance, and keeps individuals captive to a consumption system that they neither produce nor control. (Ali, 2025)

Conclusion:

It is evident that the phenomenon of mental subjugation is a fundamental obstacle to achieving true development. This is because it disrupts individual and social awareness, thereby constraining societies’ capacity for positive progress and change. According to Shariati’s perspective, intellectual alertness and critical awareness form the basis of any revival or development. The study also shows that the absence of this awareness entrenches dependency and submission to prevailing ideas, preventing people from realising their true potential.

Based on these findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

- Develop educational and awareness programmes that focus on enhancing critical awareness and intellectual alertness among individuals and communities.
- Reshape the role of the media and culture so that they become liberating tools that raise awareness rather than entrenching mental subjugation.

Support community initiatives that encourage individuals and groups to actively participate in developmental decision-making processes.

- Adopt developmental policies that integrate intellectual and cultural dimensions with economic and social aspects to achieve sustainable development.
- Foster independence of thought and combat the intellectual and cultural dependency that hinders development and progress.
- Stimulate scientific research and sociological studies that shed light on the phenomenon of mental subjugation and its impact on development.

Methodology and Methods

The study employs a qualitative and interpretive methodology grounded in sociological hermeneutics. Ali Shariati's works were analyzed through the lens of critical sociology, with special attention to his concepts of awareness (*āgāhī*), dependency, and liberation.

The methods include:

- Textual analysis of primary writings by Ali Shariati, focusing on his lectures and key works addressing development, religion, and consciousness.
- Comparative analysis with contemporary sociological perspectives on dependency theory, modernization, and postcolonial thought.
- Thematic coding of recurring motifs in Shariati's work (e.g., 'mental captivity,' 'distorted awareness,' 'religious alienation') to identify their implications for development.

This interpretive framework allows for a nuanced understanding of Shariati's critique of mental subjugation and its relevance to contemporary development challenges.

Findings

1. **Mental Subjugation as Structural Dependency:** Shariati identifies mental subjugation as a form of intellectual colonialism that prevents societies from autonomous thinking and authentic self-determination.
2. **Distortion of Awareness:** The findings show that distorted awareness perpetuates passivity, inhibits critical thinking, and reinforces hierarchical structures.
3. **Barrier to Development:** Mental subjugation is directly linked to the failure of development projects because it obstructs civic participation and weakens the role of education and media in fostering progress.
4. **Role of Critical Awareness:** Shariati's thought highlights that liberation of consciousness through education and intellectual struggle is a precondition for civilizational advancement.
5. **Sociological Relevance:** These findings remain relevant in postcolonial and neo-colonial contexts where external dependency and internal authoritarianism combine to perpetuate mental subjugation.

Actuality / Significance of the Study

The relevance of this study lies in its contribution to the debate on developmental barriers in postcolonial societies. By revisiting Shariati's sociological critique, the study reveals how mental subjugation remains a hidden but powerful obstacle to progress. In contemporary contexts of globalization, cultural domination, and media manipulation, the problem of mental subjugation has become even more pressing. This research offers a renewed lens for policymakers, educators, and intellectuals seeking to promote sustainable development rooted in critical awareness and authentic cultural identity.

Ethical Considerations

This research is based on the analysis of publicly available texts and intellectual traditions. No human participants or personal data were involved. Ethical integrity was maintained by ensuring accurate representation of Shariati's ideas, proper referencing of sources, and critical neutrality in interpretation.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest

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