

Verbal Violence in Contemporary Arabic Poetry Based on Robert Gurr's Relative Deprivation Theory: A Case Study: Abdullah Al Baradouni

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Introduction

Literature, as a dynamic and semiotic system, has always maintained an inseparable connection with the social and political realities of its time. Poetry—especially in the modern Arab world—has moved beyond a purely personal or emotional mode of expression and evolved into a structured discursive act, serving as a medium for articulating collective consciousness, protest, and resistance against mechanisms of domination.

Abdullah al-Baradouni (1929–1999), the eminent Yemeni poet, stands as a distinguished figure who transformed the potentials of poetic language into a critical tool for confronting historical inequalities and discriminatory structures. Within his intellectual and literary framework, linguistic expression transcends mere aesthetics, assuming an interrogative, revelatory, and oppositional function. This dimension is most profoundly manifested through symbolic “verbal violence” against oppression and social injustice—violence that is not an impulsive reaction, but an organized linguistic encoding of dissent, expressed through his choice of diction, specific rhetorical devices, and aggressive syntactic structures.

Tracing the roots of this linguistic behavior requires an understanding of the socio-political context of al-Baradouni's poetry, particularly the critical situation in Yemen and the widespread deprivation of its people. His poetry reflects the accumulated suffering of society, and through a radical tone, it rises in protest against Arab rulers and the dominant political order. Explaining this phenomenon—deeply embedded in the linguistic and rhetorical fabric of his poetry—demands a theoretical framework capable of analytically linking the manifestations of social discontent to the mechanisms of linguistic expression.

Methodology

The present study adopts an analytical-linguistic approach to examine al-Baradouni's poetry through the lens of verbal violence. To explain the underlying motivations of these explicit and confrontational linguistic

expressions, Robert Gurr's theory of relative deprivation has been employed as the analytical framework. This comparative approach allows us to explore how social, economic, and cultural grievances are transformed into specific linguistic patterns in al-Baradouni's poetic discourse.

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

What factors have contributed to verbal violence in al-Baradouni's poetry?

Which pattern of relative deprivation has had the greatest impact on the poet's discontent and rebellious discourse?

Results and Discussion

Verbal violence in al-Baradouni's poetry stems from three major types of deprivation: political, economic, and social. His life coincided with one of the most turbulent periods in Yemeni and Arab history, during which political failure, corruption, and injustice shaped the backdrop of his sharp protest. As a committed poet, al-Baradouni turned poetry into a tool of struggle against authoritarian rule, employing a biting tone to criticize both Arab rulers and the people for their passivity and self-defeat.

Economically, widespread poverty, severe inequality, and the plundering of national resources intensified his anger. He viewed this condition as the downfall of a nation that had once stood at the height of civilization—a condition closely aligned with Gurr's concept of "decremental deprivation," which plays a dominant role in shaping his rebellious tone.

On the social level, moral decay, injustice, and the erosion of authentic Arab values serve as major themes in his protest. By recalling the glorious Arab past, al-Baradouni expresses his dissatisfaction with ethical decline and the abandonment of foundational values—again reflecting a clear instance of decremental deprivation and the feeling of losing a once-honorable moral standing.

Conclusion

The findings of the study show that verbal violence in al-Baradouni's poetry has emerged within a multidimensional context encompassing political, economic, and social dimensions.

On the political level, factors such as the oppression of rulers, the killing of fighters, and the imprisonment of freedom seekers are evident. On the economic level, issues such as poverty, financial corruption, and class disparity have played a role, while on the social level phenomena such as the moral corruption of rulers, indulgence in sensual pleasures, and the lack of freedom and security have further intensified this sense of frustration.

Based on the examined poetic evidence, the dominant pattern of deprivation in al-Baradouni's protest discourse is decremental deprivation, as

the poet often contrasts the present condition of society with a glorious past and speaks of the decline of moral values, human dignity, and historical status. In contrast, other patterns of relative deprivation appear less prominently in al-Baradouni's poetry.

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