

Political Coercion and its Role in the Spread of the Culture of Banality in Islamic Societies, and the Islamic Da'wah Methodology for its Treatment

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the socio-political dynamics between political coercion and the proliferation of the "culture of banality" within contemporary Islamic societies. While traditional discourses often treat cultural decline as a purely moral or individual issue, this research argues that the systematic marginalization of intellectual depth is a strategic structural byproduct of restrictive political environments. Using a conceptual-analytical approach, the paper identifies the causal link where political coercion (Independent Variable) leads to a contraction of the public sphere, forcing collective consciousness to retreat into "safe," banal interests (Dependent Variable). Furthermore, the study critiques current Da'wah methodologies for failing to address these structural roots. It proposes a revitalized, interventionist Da'wah framework grounded in "Critical Consciousness" and "Media Literacy." By shifting from normative preaching to an educational model, the proposed methodology aims to reclaim the intellectual integrity of the Muslim mind and counter the systematic spread of manufactured triviality.

Keywords: Political Coercion; Culture of Banality; Islamic Da'wah; Critical Consciousness; Public Sphere; Media Literacy; Digital Asceticism; Social Re-engineering.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, Islamic societies face a dual challenge: the external pressure of political coercion and the internal erosion of intellectual depth, a phenomenon often referred to as the "Culture of Banality." Traditionally, academic inquiry has frequently separated political structures from cultural outcomes, treating them as independent spheres. However, this study posits that the rise of triviality is not an accidental byproduct of modernity, but is strategically facilitated by restrictive political environments (Kawakibi, n.d.).

When political coercion limits critical engagement and suppresses dissent, the collective consciousness often retreats into "safe," banal interests and superficial discourses. This environment causes public discourse to mirror the vacuous echo chambers of fleeting digital trends, effectively leading society to "amuse itself to death" (Postman, 1985). Ultimately, this pervasive triviality is not merely a collection of individual failings; it represents a systemic re-engineering of collective consciousness, designed to neutralize the intellectual vigor essential for communal flourishing and reform.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The relationship between the variables in this study is established as a systemic causal link. Drawing on the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt (1958), the study argues that the contraction of the public sphere—driven by political pressure—inevitably leads to a loss of meaningful human agency. In our proposed model, this interaction creates an intellectual vacuum that is strategically filled by superficiality.

The framework is operationalized through the following variables:

- **Independent Variable (IV): Political Coercion.** This includes institutional mechanisms such as censorship, the systematic marginalization of dissent, and the restriction of academic and intellectual freedoms.

- **Dependent Variable (DV): Culture of Banality.** This manifests as the proliferation of viral trends, consumerist media habits, and a general state of intellectual superficiality.
- **Proposed Intervention (Moderating Factor): Revitalized Islamic Da'wah.** A methodology grounded in "Critical Consciousness" and "Media Literacy," aimed at restoring intellectual integrity (Al-Attas, 1993) and breaking the cycle

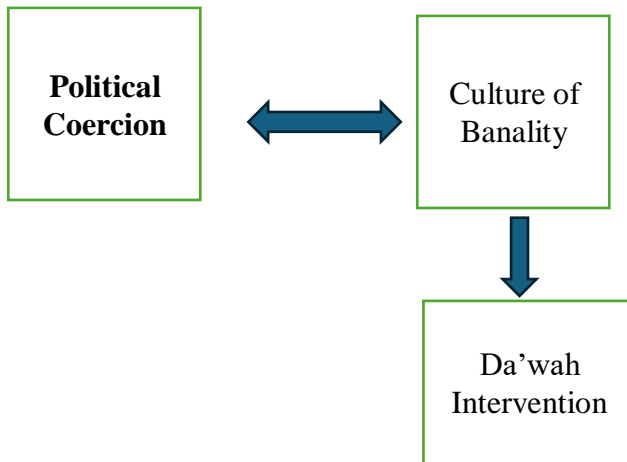


Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework showing the causal link and the proposed intervention

CASE STUDY: VIRAL TRENDS AS A DISPLACEMENT FUNCTION

The phenomenon of the "**Viral Trend**" serves as a primary empirical indicator of the culture of banality. Observations suggest that these trends often peak during times of significant political shifts or social crises, serving what this study terms a "**displacement function**." This dynamic aligns with Baudrillard's (1994) theory of simulation, where manufactured triviality and hyper-reality replace genuine engagement with socio-political reality.

The findings indicate that the embrace of banality is not necessarily a sign of inherent ignorance among the populace, but rather a structural byproduct of a restricted environment where serious intellectual discourse is marginalized or penalized. This "**opiate of the spectacle**" ensures that the public square is occupied by ephemeral noise rather than critical inquiry, effectively diverting collective energy away from substantive reform and toward the consumption of the inconsequential.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that contemporary Da'wah efforts have largely been ineffective in curbing the tide of superficiality because they focus predominantly on "**symptoms**" (such as moral decay or individual piety) rather than addressing the "**root causes**" embedded in political structures (Al-Ghazali, 2005). Based on the conceptual analysis, the study presents the following key findings:

- **Engineering Apathy:** The proliferation of triviality is not an organic cultural decline but serves a strategic function for restrictive regimes. By facilitating an environment of manufactured distraction, these structures ensure public disengagement from substantive civic and intellectual life.
- **The Interventionist Model:** To counter this engineered apathy, the study proposes an Integrated Da'wah Methodology grounded in "**Critical Conscientization**" (Freire, 2000). This model empowers the Muslim mind to navigate contemporary socio-political challenges by shifting from traditional, normative preaching to an interventionist educational framework (Soroush, 2000).
- **Intellectual Emancipation:** The discussion highlights that the ultimate goal of this methodology is to foster intellectual emancipation and media literacy. This enables individuals to deconstruct the "spectacle" of banality and reclaim their role as active, thinking agents within the *Ummah*.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that reclaiming a vibrant intellectual tradition within Islamic societies hinges upon a direct and conscious confrontation with both political repression and the manufactured triviality it promotes. The "Culture of Banality" must be recognized not as a mere social trend, but as a structural barrier to intellectual and spiritual flourishing.

By fostering "Digital Asceticism" (as a means of cognitive protection) and promoting rigorous critical inquiry, Islamic discourse can effectively restore the agency of the Muslim mind. The proposed interventionist Da'wah methodology moves beyond the superficial treatment of moral symptoms, addressing instead the structural roots of intellectual decay. Ultimately, the restoration of the Ummah's intellectual integrity requires a transition from passive consumption of the "spectacle" to an active, emancipated engagement with reality, guided by the foundational Islamic principles of reason' Aql (and justice') Adl.(

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