

THE EFFECTS OF CHRONIC TRAUMA IN THE GAZA STRIP

ABSTRACT

Altawil, M.(2008). The effects of chronic trauma in the Gaza Strip. In Mental Health Services in Post War Iraq. Current & Future Focus (Abu Dhabi, UAE 18th -22nd February 2008).

The recent study aimed to explore the long-term effects of war and occupation on the Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip during second Intifada(2000-2006). In this sample, 1,137 children aged between 10 and 18 years were randomly selected from all parts of the Gaza Strip to participate in the study. The participants completed a Checklist of Traumatic Experiences (CTE), a Symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Scale (SPTSDS) and Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ).

This study found that every child in Palestine had been exposed to at least three traumatic events. Importantly, our recent study found that 41% of children suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). Of the 41% of children with PTSD, the levels of symptoms were as follows: 20% (57,606) children suffered from an acute level of PTSD, 22% (67,531) children suffered from moderate levels of PTSD, and 58% (180,058) suffered from low levels of PTSD. Overall, the exposure to chronic traumatic experiences led to an increase in the symptoms of PTSD among Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip

The findings indicates that there are 305,195 of (742,200) children in the Gaza Strip in need of urgent psychological, social, and medical services in the areas of prevention, counselling, rehabilitation, and therapeutic treatment.

We concluded that having a normal childhood in Palestine is unlikely in the current circumstances and the psychological well-being future of Palestinian children is at risk of being compromised by on-going traumatic experiences.

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