

Multiple faces of trauma in Palestine

ABSTRACT

This recent study aimed to explore the long-term effects of war and occupation on the Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip during Intifada II(2000-2006). In our 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 research found that every child in Palestine had been exposed to at least three traumatic events. Importantly, it 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) suffered from moderate levels of PTSD, and 58% (180,058) suffered from low levels of PTSD.

In addition, our current study revealed that the support of family, friends, relatives, teachers, and spiritual leaders can be of great help. However, children whose parents had low educational levels received less support and therefore suffered more often than others from PTSD. Governmental and NGO institutions can also help to mitigate the effects of the difficult living conditions and chronic trauma suffered by the Palestinian children. In addition to this, positive traits of personality can reduce the effects of post-traumatic disorders.

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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