

## **Abstract**

In this research, two studies were conducted in order to examine the psychological, social, somatic and educational effects of chronic traumatic experience on Palestinian children over the six years of the Al-Aqsa Intifada (2000-2006).

Firstly, a quantitative study was conducted which aimed to explore the long-term effects of war and occupation on the Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip. The sample consisted of 1,137 children aged between ten and 18 years 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), a Network of Psycho-Social Support (NPSS) and a Personality Assessment Questionnaire (PAQ). This study found that every child in Palestine is likely to have been exposed to at least three traumatic events. Importantly, this study also found that 41% of the participants suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD). This indicates that there are potentially more than 300,000 children in the Gaza Strip in need of psychological, social, and medical services in the areas of rehabilitation and therapeutic treatment. The study revealed that the support of family, friends, relatives, teachers, and spiritual leaders can be of great help. In addition to this, positive traits of personality can reduce the effects of PTSD.

Secondly, a qualitative study aimed to explore, in more depth, the moderating factors relating to Palestinian children who have been exposed to chronic traumatic experiences, particularly the children who show low levels of PTSD. The sample consisted of six children interviewed in Arabic by using a semi-structured interview. They were aged between 13-18 years. The participants were selected according to the amount of traumatic events and level of PTSD experienced by the children who took part in the first study. This study found that the moderating factors and levels of influence which protected them from developing PTSD are positive personality traits and ideological commitment, psychosocial support, entertainment and adaptation or acclimatization.

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

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