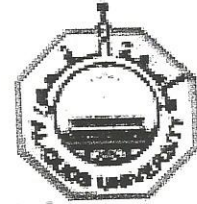




وزارة الصحة

كلية الصحة العامة الفلسطينية

Palestinian College of Public Health



جامعة القدس

## ENDORSEMENT

### Thesis Title

# THE EFFECT OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE ON WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH IN GAZA- PALESTINE

Supervisor:

Dr. Fadel Abu Hein

Title: Associate Professor- Al Aqsa University

Signature:

Date:

15-10-2002

Advisor:

Dr. Dina Abu Shaaban

Title: Director of Women's Reproductive Health

Department

Signature:

Date: 15/10/2002

Internal Examiner:

Dr. Abdel Aziz Thabet]

Title: Assistant Professor of Psychiatry.

Coordinator of Community Mental Health  
Program. Al- Quds University.

Signature:

Date:

15-10-2002

Title: Research officer at Gaza Community

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## ABSTRACT

The present work is case control random sample study in Gaza Strip Palestine, in the year 2000-2001.

**Overall aim:** The study examines the effect of political violence on women's mental health among Palestinian women who were exposed directly or indirectly to traumatic events during Al-Aqsa events on 29.9.2000 to 29.5.2001. The study examines the relationship between psychological functioning and exposure of Palestinian women to traumatic events and political violence. It investigates the rates of psychological symptoms and mental problems among Palestinian women of different age's 18-50 years old and determines whether specific measures of psychological functioning were associated with the violence that the Palestinian women were exposed.

**Methods:** A total of 180 Palestinian women between the age of 18 and 50 years, were included in the study sample. The samples were collected from all areas in Gaza Strip regions (North, Gaza City, Mid Zone, Khan younis, and Rafah). The 180 women in the study sample were derived from randomly drawn households from each of the communities covered by this study, 9 women 's of martyrs, 9 women's of causalities, and 18 women as a case control. Data for this study were collected by using questionnaires (SCL-90- R).

**Result:** Our result indicated that, in the 90 control cases there we complaining of the 9 psychological symptoms, there complaine range from high number among cases of martyrs, while less number oamong injured, and few number of control.

The following will show the level of complain the (P value) between the control group ( C ) and the women of martyres (M), injured(I), according to the 9 psychological symptoms:

- \* *Somatization:* M = .001. , I = .001
- \* *Obsessive- Comulsive:* M=.001, I = .002
- \* *Intepersonal Sensitivity:* M=.021, I = .080
- \* *Depression:* M= .001, I = .001
- \* *Anxiety:* M= .014, I = .191
- \* *Hostility:* M= .001, I = .016
- \* *Phobic Anxiety:* M= .001, I = .004

\* *Paranoid Ideation*: M= .049, I = .021

\* *Psychoticism*: M= 1.000, I= 1.000

Both socio-economic, personal difficulties and political violence use frequently have their onset in presence of psychosocial problems, therefore, examination of random sample in different areas in Palestinian society may shed lights on the relationship between mental disorder and political violence.

**Conclusion:** We can conclude from our study that stressful events related to political violence from military occupation were produced more stresses in Palestinian women than socio-economic and personal difficulties. Both socio-economic, personal difficulties and political violence use frequently have their onset in presence of the relationship between mental disorder and political violence.

ملخص  
تأثير العنف السياسي على الصحة النفسية للمرأة الفلسطينية  
غزة - فلسطين

تم إجراء هذه الدراسة في قطاع غزة - فلسطين 2000-2001 م حيث جمعت عينة ضابطة عشوائية. وتهدف تلك الدراسة لمعرفة مدى تأثير العنف السياسي على الصحة النفسية للمرأة الفلسطينية، سواء قد تعرضت بشكل مباشر أو غير مباشر لتلك الأحداث الصادمة خلال انتفاضة الأقصى في الفترة ما بين 2000/9/29 حتى 2001/5/29 م، و تلك الدراسة فحصت العلاقة بين تعرض المرأة الفلسطينية للأحداث الصادمة و حدوث الأعراض النفسية و المشاكل النفسية بين النساء الفلسطينيات بمختلف أعمارهم للعنف الذي تتعرض له المرأة الفلسطينية خلال انتفاضة الأقصى .

الأدوات: ولقد تم استخدام ورقة الاستبانة للقياس النفسي والذي يظهر الأعراض النفسية والمشاكل النفسية من عدمها، أجريت الدراسة على 180 امرأة فلسطينية متوسط أعمارهن 18-50 سنة حيث جمعت العينة عشوائي. وتضمنت العينة مجموعة مكونة من (90) امرأة كعينة دراسية تحتوي على (45) امرأة لأمهات أو نساء الشهداء و (45) امرأة من نساء أو أمهات الجرحى ، و عينة ضابطة (90) امرأة ، بحيث تكون العينة الضابطة من نفس المكان الذي أخذت منها العينة الدراسية وبنفس العمر تقريبا ولا يكون قد أستشهد أو جرح زوجها أو أحد أبنائها.

النتائج: كانت نتائج البيانات التي جمعت في هذه الدراسة علي النحو التالي:  
إن الحالات الضابطة والتي عددها (90) حالة تعاني من أعراض نفسية بشكل قليل . وأيضاً أظهرت النتائج بأن 45 حالة دراسية لأمهات وزوجات الشهداء ، أكثر الحالات معاناة من الأعراض النفسية وبنسبة عالية. كما وأظهرت النتائج أيضاً بأن 45 حالة دراسية لأمهات وزوجات الجرحى يعانون بشكل أقل نسبياً من أمراض نفسية. بينما الحالات الضابطة تعاني بشكل قليل مقارنة بحالات الدراسة. تلك النسب توضح مدى المعاناة النفسية للمرأة الفلسطينية بشكل عام. أما النتائج التي أظهرتها الدراسة للأعراض النفسية والبالغ عددها تسعاً من الأعراض النفسية حسب علاقة العينة الضابطة بين المجموعات كانت كالتالي:

الأعراض	أمهات الشهداء	أمهات الجرحى	العينة الضابطة
1. الأعراض النفسجسمية	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة
2. الوسواس القهري	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة
3. الانفعالات والحساسية الشخصية	علاقة تامة	لا يوجد علاقة	لا يوجد علاقة
4. الاكتئاب النفسي	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة
5. القلق	علاقة تامة	لا يوجد علاقة	لا يوجد علاقة
6. العدوانية	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة
7. مخاوف القلق	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة
8. العظمة	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة	علاقة تامة
9. أعراض ذهانية	لا يوجد علاقة	لا يوجد علاقة	لا يوجد علاقة

الاستنتاجات: الضغوطات النفسية كانت موجودة بنسبة مرتفعة خلال الانتفاضة وتعرض المرأة بشكل مباشر أو غير مباشر للعنف أدى إلى حدوث ظهور أعراض وأمراض نفسية بين الحالات الدراسية بنسبة مرتفعة، وبنسبة قليلة بين الحالات الضابطة، كما أن زيادة ممارسة العنف الموجه من قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلية ضد أبناء الشعب الفلسطيني أدى إلى حدوث ضغط نفسي لدى المرأة الفلسطينية بشكل أكثر كما أحدث العامل الاجتماعي والاقتصادي والمصاعب الفردية إلى زيادة تلك المضغوطات النفسية مما أدى إلى ظهور الأعراض النفسية بشكل واضح لدى المرأة الفلسطينية.

## Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

Nowadays political violence increasingly affects civilian populations, as a result of armed conflict. The Israeli- Palestinian conflict is not exception. As victims, women and children appear to carry the brunt of chronic violence.

The long term psychological effects of such evidence are often so serious, making the prospects of peace and normalcy more difficult than ever before in the eyes of Palestinian women. Consequently, there is social and economical deprivation, which has severe effects on women's psychological state. They include profound alterations in pattern of behavior such as aggressive and/or depressive behavior, changes in attitudes and beliefs, personality changes and stunted moral development.

Klein (1984) Pointed out that the aftermath of war on women, claiming that "war experience" might reinforce women's altruistic sentiment, empathy for human suffering, and the commitment to serve victims of violence. It is clearer in the rural societies and communities where there are intimate social and moral relationships and ties, exactly as in ours.

As a matter of fact, Palestinian society, including women, live the various conditions of Israeli-Palestinian historical conflict and its consequences. Al-Aqsa Intifada 29, September 2000, is the most critical aspect of this conflict, it results in a lot of sufferings and bad experiences on the part of women.

Women constitute half of the Palestinian society and are victims of such conflict, both mentally and psychologically. Women are mothers and sisters of Martyrs, injured, detainee, and exiled individuals, and these experience directly or indirectly burden women's mental,

psychological and physical abilities

It is no surprise that a study of the mental health of Palestinian women in Gaza Strip comes at this stage of changes and transition in the turbulent history of the Palestinians that can not be separated from the physical health. When economic, political, physical, and other social factors constitute major determinants of health, the Palestinian woman indirectly become seriously vulnerable to the unstable political and military events throughout the Palestinian history in general and Al- Aqsa Intifada in particular. These indirect events include the exposure of Palestinian woman to loss of dearest relative such as husband, brother, father and son who are civilian subjects to arrest and shooting by the Israeli Occupation Forces, and continual attacks by settlers. Also whose houses and properties are targets of demolition by the Israeli tanks and gun-machines. Because of the direct effects of economical deterioration, either by the above mentioned events, or frequent closures and loss of jobs, this economical and social instability leads the Palestinian woman to bear more apparent responsibilities towards ensuring the minimal of daily life requirements.

The past and current factors powered in Al- Aqsa events 29, September, 2000, constitute a big burden on the women mental health, that in need to be studied closely and precisely in order to identify the effects of political violence specifically on women's mental health of Palestinian society. Which live through condition of chronic war and violence that led to victimized the Palestinian women and there fore need assistance to help them to adapt.



## **1.2. Purpose of the study:**

This study highlights the mental health status of the Palestinian women living in Gaza Strip. By examining the severity and identifying the types of mental health problems and other factors that affected by political violence among Palestinian women.

## **1.3. Objectives:**

- 1- To determine the most common psychological problems that affect Palestinian women.
- 2- To explore the severity of exposure to political violence and its relation to women's mental health status.
- 3- To come up with suggestions as to how best to address the problems that may be identified at the local and national level.

## **1.4. Research Questions:**

This study addresses the following research questions:

- 1- What are the main psychological problems among Palestinian women of martyrs and injured?
- 2- Is there relationship between severity of exposure to political violence and degree of psychological symptoms?
- 3- Are there any differences in psychological symptoms between the two groups?

### 1.5. Justification of the problem and feasibility of the study:

- 1- This study will through light of psychological problem of the Palestinian women who were exposed and affected by political violence.
- 2- This study will demonstrate the traumatic events and turbulent factors in Al Aqsa Intifada that affect on the women's mental health.
- 3- This study will clarify the effect of social instability affect to traumatic events, which lead the Palestinian woman to bear more apparent responsibilities toward ensuring the minimal daily life requirements for family.
- 4- The result will be source of valuable information on women's psychological problems in Gaza Strip.
- 5- This study will facilitate better planning of women mental health education and intervention programs.
- 6- In addition, the study will define the extent of psychological problems, which will improve the future for suitable treatment and rehabilitation programs.

## Chapter II

### Situational analysis

#### 2.1. Geography

Gaza strip is a narrow piece of land lying on the coast of Mediterranean Sea. Its position on the crossroads from Africa to Asia made it a target for occupiers and conquerors over the centuries. The last of these was Israel who occupied the Gaza Strip from Egyptians in 1967. Gaza Strip is a very crowded place with area 360 sq. km, the population is mainly concentrated in the cities, small villages, and eight refugee camps that contain two thirds of the population. The main income sources for Gaza population was work in Israel. In addition to the poor agriculture products that have to be exported via Israel. Part of the refugee population was moved from camps to new areas. Apart from the weak economic situation and its consequences for the public health, the populations of Gaza as all Palestinian population have lived through several consecutive wars (1948, 1956, and 1967) and long stressful period (the Israeli occupation). During the years from 1987 to 1992, Intifada the Palestinian uprising- erupted spontaneously. It was led by children and youth, which chose to face the Israeli occupation force and tanks with stones, burning tires and roadblocks.(Omer 2001).

#### 2.2. Palestinian economy

According to the Palestinian Monetary Authority (PMA) the gross national product (GNP) in Palestine has been subjected to high fluctuations during the last five years. The GNP per capita, decreased from 1,938.6 US\$ in 1998, to 1,771.5 in 2000. GNP per capita in Gaza Strip is half of that of West Bank (World Bank 1998). Gross domestic product (GDP) IN 2000IS 4,450.8 while it was 4,218.3 in 1998. GDP per capita was about 1,540

US\$ in 1998 and 1,484.5 in 2000. The number of workers in Israel (in thousands) decreased from 126.1 in 1999 to 112.9 in 2000. And the workers in Palestine (in thousands) also decreased from 667.0 in 1999 to 575.9 in 2000 due to the political situation prevailed in Palestine. The PMA reported the unemployment rate at (14.1%) in 2000, it is unstable and with constant fluctuation due to political situation and the occupation's practices including closure of Palestinian regions and cities, and other constraint's activities. In Gaza Strip the unemployment rate is actually double that of West Bank.

### **2.3. Demographic characteristics**

#### **2.3.1. Population sizes and structure**

The mid year population size of Palestine in 2000 is estimated at 3,150,056. Out of which 1,590,945 (50%) are males and 1,559,111 (49.5%) are females. The total population in Palestine is nearly equals the total population in Lebanon, which is estimated at 3,236,000.

#### **2.3.2. Age and sex distribution**

Age distribution of the population has important implications on the health status of the population, due to the different health needs, the differential patterns of health care utilization and the different health status among the various health group.

Population pyramid shows age and sex distribution of population, (46.9%) is under 15 years. This pattern is more pronounced in the Gaza Strip, where (50.2%) are under 15 years, while it is (45%) for the West Bank. The age group under five years old still constitutes the largest proportion with percentage (18.5%) of population. The age 60 years and over constitute (4.7%) of population.

### **2.3.3. Distribution by refugees status:**

According to the (UNRWA) report in 2000 the total number of refugees is (1,428,891), where (837, 750) are residencies in Gaza Strip, at percentage (58.6%) and (591,141) residencies in West Bank with percentage (41.4%). Refugees make up a much larger percentage of the population in Gaza Strip than West Bank (65.1% Vs 26.5%). Most refugees still live in overcrowded camps substandard dwelling and sanitation conditions, which have a negative impact on health status.

### **2.3.4. Population Density:**

Population density in Gaza Strip is very high compared with the density in West Bank and the neighboring countries. Density rate is about 3,161 inhabitants per one square kilometer in Gaza Strip, and about 347 inhabitants per one square Kilometer in West Bank. Actually, it must be taken into consideration area of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank is still occupied by Israeli settlers. Therefore, the actual density rates are higher the estimated figures.

### **2.3.5 Dependency**

Dependency ratio is calculated as the number of persons below fifteen and above sixty-five per 100 persons aged (15-64) years. In 2000, the dependency ratio for Palestine is 100.6% (112.8% for Gaza Strip Vs 94.3% for West Bank). The dependency ratio in Palestine is the highest among all other neighboring countries.

### **2.3.6 Population Growth**

The estimated population growth in Palestine has been declined from (5.2%) in 1995 to (3.1%) in 1997 and 1998. In 2000, it is (3%) for Palestine.

### **2.3.7 Crude birth rate (CBR):**

CBR is the number of live birth per 1000 population per year. Despite progressive decline over the years in CBR, it is still high in Palestine compared to other countries. CBR declined from 46.5\1000 in 1995 to 34.5\1000 in 1998 and 33.2 in 2000.

### **2.3.8 Life expectancy**

According to PCBS the average life expectancy at birth of the Palestinian population is 71.82 years in 2000, while it was 71.50 years in 1998. As in most countries, the life expectancy in 2000 for women is higher than for men (73.43 Vs 70.27 year).

### **2.3.9 Socioeconomic characteristics**

Gaza strip is considered as poor area with low income. The economy of it is mainly depends upon agriculture and the employment inside Israel. The economic situation is usually unstable because of the frequent closure, security curfew, and the restriction of private commercial imported and exported materials from agriculture and industrial sectors.

Until now Palestinians share the Israeli's with different daily life events, which indicate that there is an interdependent and common relationships like marketing working. Nearly half of the Palestinian community is under the age 15 years, and also the percentage of working females is not so high which in turn reflect that this community is mostly

dependent on a low percentage of working force. It will not be surprising when you see an old man who passed 60 and a young boy who is still considered child are working either inside Gaza strip or in Israel. The unstable economic condition, the limited income, and the scarcity of work opportunity lead to drop in the standard of living. Health problems in the lower income groups are often social welfare system in Gaza strip, and employment is the main source of household income. The annual income is 1,700 US\$ (MOH1997).

As a result of recurrent occupations, stress is inherited in the Life of Palestinians, particularly in Gaza Strip, which is characterized by small geographical boundaries, high unemployment rate, travel restriction and other stressful events that place people in a relatively higher level of stress than any other areas. Therefore we would suggest that such *stressing climate could increase the prevalence of CHD among the Palestinian community.* However this area is beyond the current study.

#### **2.4. Historical and political feature:**

The Palestinian woman's involvement in the National Liberation Movement since the early 1900s and in the ensuing struggle against military occupation has placed her in a unique position. Her involvement in the liberation movement has afforded her rare power and authority.

Organized Palestinian woman began to take part in the National Liberation Movement since the early part of this century, although there were reports of Palestinian woman participating in the struggles and demonstrations as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (*Kazi, 1987; Giacaman and Odeh, 1988*).