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# Happiness, Sadness, and Hope for the Future in Narratives of Palestinian Refugee Children

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## Abstract

Hope, as the measurable factor of how a young person perceives the future and their ability to be successful within their cultural context over time, is associated with a variety of positive outcomes including increased perceptions of happiness, positive academic achievement, and even lower risk of death. However, for children embedded in long-lasting geo-political conflicts that affect negatively individuals, families, and communities, and over which they have no ability to affect resolution or progress, hope is an illusive concept. The purpose of the current study was to test self-reported measures of happiness, sadness, and hope for the future in narratives of internally displaced Palestinian refugee youth across the West Bank. The sample consisted of 30 youth aged 14–16 years; they were selected from 5 Palestinian internally displaced (IDP) refugee camps (Balata, Askar, Ein Beit al-ma', Nur Shams, and Jenin) in the West Bank of Palestine. Results demonstrated that factors related to youth-perceived happiness were the belief in freedom and peace for the future, interactions and activities with other youth, summer and winter camps, and material and emotional rewards they receive from caretakers (parents and teachers). Results also showed that factors contributing to self-reported sadness were occupation of their homeland, negative school conditions such as overcrowding and lack of resources, living conditions such as, and specific incidents of loss and traumatic experiences. Results also indicated that the hope for the future for Palestinian refugee children was based on their stated desires to continue their education, live in freedom and peace, return to their homeland, and get married and have a family. This work supports the ongoing inability of Palestinian youth to gather positive affect from the strengthening factors in their families and communities and maintain a belief in a better future via pro-social behaviors such as education, the establishment of families, and the return of their homes and lands.

**Keywords** Happiness · Sadness · Hope for the future · Palestinian refugee children

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The research presented in this paper centers on the theme of hope among Palestinian internally displaced refugee youth between the ages 14 and 16 years who reside currently in the occupied West Bank. The internally displaced (IDP) camps were established early in the Palestinian occupation, for the populations forced off their ancestral lands in the creation of the state of Israel. Entire communities have been forced to live over six decades in camps where the population continues to grow, but the land and resources are highly restricted. It is well documented that residents residing in camps lack critical aspects to promote positive growth including clean water sources, appropriate shelter, safe play areas, and adequate education facilities (UNRWA, n.d-a). Connectedly, Palestinian refugee children living in internally displaced people's camps experience higher-than-average levels of trauma, abuse, and marginalization (UNRWA, n.d-b).

Traumatic stressful events in camps including targeted violence from soldiers, physical assault, sexual abuse, and neglect increase the risk of symptoms of depression and anxiety such as difficulties interacting with peers, reduced educational achievement, and emotional disorders in children and youth as well as ongoing stigma in the general community. Moreover, caregivers and service providers who may also be traumatized by war and migration have a diminished ability to provide psychological and emotional support for clients (Gusler et al. 2018).

It is well documented that refugee children and youth living in Gaza and West Bank of Palestine are at high risk of developing different types of psychological, emotional, and social symptoms, including Posttraumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) and Depression and Generalized Anxiety Disorder; it has also been well indicated that PTSD is related to psychological symptoms of sadness and lack of hope (Abed et al. 2004).

Palestinian children living in internally displaced camps are permanently at risk of developing physical, emotional, and cognitive disorders over their development, given the climate of spiraling threat and political conflict to which they are unavoidably subjected (Khamis 2015; Miller and Jordans 2016; Antenucci et al. 2018). Some studies reported that children and refugee youth are more vulnerable to the actual development of psychological disorders such as major depression, anxiety disorders, and PTSD (Atallah 2017; Anagnostopoulos 2018).

Sack et al. (1996) have argued that while earlier refugee experiences are related to PTSD, sadness is most strongly correlated with stressful events after migration while living in refugee camps. All of the children currently in internally displaced camps in Palestine are post-migration, having been born in the camps. Post-refuge factors put individual at risk for continuing and increasing psychological distress as a result of low services provided to refugees, obstacles to employment, lack of hope, discrimination, and loneliness (Heptinstall et al. 2004).

There is little doubt that Palestinian internally displaced refugee children and youth have been exposed to a wide variety of violent triggers, and it is likely that this exposure has affected them negatively and that they may display some or all symptoms correlated with psychological disorder such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, a lack of hope, sadness, and other emotional disorders (Giacaman et al. 2014).

The literature features a number of studies on sadness and traumatic events among children who live in Palestinian internally displaced camps. For example, Thabit and Vostanis (2017) found that the average number of traumatic experiences noted for parents of refugee children was 8.42 and the prevalence of PTSD in parents was 60% and for anxiety disorder, 26.5%. For children, the mean number of traumatic events was 7.88. The prevalence of PTSD in children was 70.1%, anxiety disorder 33.9%, general psychological problems rated by parents 42.7%,

Oppositional disorders 36.8%, sadness 22.8%, emotional problems 24.4%, peer problems 60.1%, and pro-social problems 20.2%. Giacaman et al. (2014) mentioned that Palestinian refugee children expressed a variety of complaints, the highest endorsed were fear (20.5%) and sadness (16.4%).

Thabet and Thabet (2018) mentioned that children residing in IDP camps commonly reported traumatic events such as watching pictures of killed and wounded people on TV (90.7%), hearing the shootings and bombardment due to fighting in the streets (85.2%), and hearing about the arrest or kidnapping of a friend or known other by soldiers (77.8%). In reporting emotional symptoms, the study found that the average of stressful events was 25.04, mean intrusion was 6.89, sadness was 9.46, and mean arousal was 8.69. Results of the Alduraiddi and Waters (2017) study indicated that 43% of refugee children suffer from severe sadness, 42% live in poverty, and 20% had fair or poor health. In the same study, it was found that around 60% were hopeful regarding returning to their home land in historical Palestine. Children who had good perceived self-efficacy and the hope of returning were less likely to have symptoms of sadness and depression.

Happiness and sadness are basic feeling states for all people, including refugee children and youth. Regardless of living conditions, refugee children may find both happiness and sadness in several situations during the course of their lives (Maager and Sunde 2016).

According to positive psychology, happiness is identified as a positive internal resource; a major life aim; and one of the most important factors for the optimal functioning of children, groups, and institutions (Carr 2004; Fredrickson et al. 2003; Gable and Haidt 2005). Studies have defined happiness as a frame for constructing good environmental relations (Keyes and Ryff 2000; Ryff 1989).

Keyes and Ryff (2000) proposes that happiness combines the two abilities of achieving well-being through expressing positive feelings and achieving positive functioning toward ourselves and others. Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007) indicated that in order to become a happier person, you must gain hope for the future, sense of control, self-awareness, and self-acceptance.

Being happy does not mean that individuals do not experience stressful events, lacking hope, crisis, or sadness; indeed, happiness is the key to coping with painful and distress situations such as trauma and losing experiences by thinking that despite stressful events existed, happiest days and moments will return, so the individual will withstand frustration to achieve more happiness (Abuelaish et al. 2013).

There are some studies that provided empirical estimates of how wars and refugee experiences affect happiness; for example, Welsch (2008) indicated in his cross-sectional study that as the severity of refugee experience and conflicts increases, the level of happiness among children goes down. Shemyakina and Plagnol (2013) found that war trauma and refugee experiences have negative, significant, and lasting impact on subjective well-being and happiness. Obrizan and Coupe (2016) studied how war and conflict affect happiness using data from populations exposed to continuous conflict in Ukraine. The study found that the degree of happiness regressed significantly in areas where children experience conflicts directly. Conversely, Van Praag et al. (2010) demonstrated that children who were asked about their happiness during or after the Israel-Lebanese war in 2006 did not have significant differences in happiness from those who were asked about their happiness before the war.

Hope, which includes a positive expectation for the future as well as a self-evaluation of a capacity to achieve success, may have a significant role in strengthening a refugee community's resilience and social well-being. Hope has been related to coping, overcoming

distress, and success in living under unusual and painful life experiences (Yohani 2010; Snyder et al. 2000). Some studies found that self-reported measures of hope were related to overcoming distress related to pre-refuge experiences, PTSD, adaptation, and post-refuge stressors among refugee children (Goodman 2004; Hardgrove 2009; Hosin 2001; Luster et al. 2009; Miles 2000).

Hope building, in general, has been identified as a key component of healing for those who have experienced trauma, distress, and loss (Hutchinson et al. 2014). The importance of providing continuous intervention and support for refugee children and their families to increase hope for the future is increasingly being recognized, especially in refugee camps and in the early and post years of migration. Hope is consistently associated with positive adjustment and successful outcomes for refugee children ranging in age from childhood to middle adulthood (Lareson and Yohani 2009).

The literature features a number of studies on the importance of hope for the future in refugee children; for example; Yohani (2010) highlighted the importance of hopeful attitudes for service providers who work with traumatized refugee children and the role of hope in helping children to deal with traumatic and distress experiences. Lareson and Yohani (2009) indicated that hope for the future among refugee children facilitated emotional and psychological connections to others, to self, and to the environment. Hutchinson et al. (2014) indicated that reinforcing hope among refugee children is very essential in improving their social adjustment, and results highlighted the need for early intervention in improving hope among children.

## The Study

Despite the importance of hope for the future functioning of refugee children to help them deal positively with daily stressors and challenges they may face, few service providers such as teachers, counselors, and social workers understand the need of reinforcing hope among refugee children. Likewise, little attention has been given to measuring happiness, sadness, and hope for the future from the perspective of the youth living in internally displaced camps in Palestine.

The current study endeavors to find an answer to the following questions:

1. What is the experience of Palestinian refugee children living in internally displaced people's camps under occupation (including the feelings and thoughts that accompany the daily life events of these children (traumatic and otherwise)?
2. How should the third generation of Palestinian youth and born displaced children create and maintain hope for the future? Do the traumatic experiences faced by Palestinian refugees negatively affect the perception of hope and the possibility of a positive future among third generation of Palestinian youth living in Palestinian internally displaced people's camps in the West Bank of Palestine?
3. What factors contribute to the perception of sadness of Palestinian youth residing in internally displaced camps in the West Bank?
4. What factors do refugee youth living in Palestinian refugee camps identify with happiness?

Moving from the premise that hope for the future in youth is a critical component for the further development, this study attempts to fill the gap and examines self-reported perception

of happiness, sadness, and hope among children in Palestinian internally displaced people's refugee camps.

## Methods

### Participants

The participants in the study were 30 Palestinian youth from five Palestinian camps (Balata, Askar, Ein Beit al-ma', Nur Shams, and Jenin) in West Bank of Palestine. Six children from each camp were selected, (17) females and (13) males, aged between 14 and 16 years (mean age males = 14.92 years, SD = 0.75; mean age females = 14.76 years, SD = 0.75). All the participating youth were currently residing in Palestinian camps operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. All were able to write and speak in Arabic.

### Instruments and Procedures

The interview data consist of 30 semi-structured interviews with Palestinian children in five camps; all participants (interviewees and interviewer) were native Arabic speakers.

The first step in collecting the data was interviewing activities committee to explain the aims and the purposes of the study and informing them about the research activities. Committees passed the information to interested parties. Those who met the age and literacy requirements were selected and interviewed. The interviews were written to avoid emotional distress. The researchers informed participants that they had the option at any time to discontinue participation in the study. The investigator (a licensed mental health professional) was available for any participant that had an immediate negative response. In addition, all participants were given contact information for mental health services if symptoms were to appear any time after the completion of the survey. The study was submitted for Institutional Review Board (IRB) review by the An-Najah University IRB and received approval before data collection was initiated.

The interviews were designed to gather information about happiness, sadness, and hope in youth residing in Palestinian internally displaced people's camps. All interviewees were provided with an information sheet detailing the research agenda after the interview was completed. All interviews were conducted in psychosocial/mental health service centers in Palestinian camps. The shortest interview was about 40 min and the longest was 60 min, most were around 50 min.

### Data Analysis

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in Arabic by a native speaker. Written interviews were analyzed following a thematic content analysis (TCA) methodology (Parker, 2005). To identify the main themes emerging from the written material, a bottom-up data-driven text analysis was applied to extract categories from the raw data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each interview was carefully analyzed, so that concepts were identified as well as statements containing similar words. The process of analysis included the following steps: (a) the researchers completed an open coding analysis moving from the participants' narratives to create the main themes of research, (b) the themes were coded and organized into structure, (c)

the categories or sub-codes were discussed and agreed by 5 judges, and (d) interviews with participants were analyzed using the MAXQDA 18 program.

### **Coding Reliability**

A reliability test of the coding was carried out. Around 93% of consistency was achieved with the author's original coding (Cohen's kappa = 0.931). Cohen's kappa is a statistical test to find the inter coder reliability, and a coefficient of 0.80 or over is considered acceptable.

## **Theme Analysis**

### **Results**

Based on the analysis of the interviews, three major themes and fifteen sub-themes were identified:

#### **Theme One: Hope**

Different sub-themes emerged from the analysis. Participants demonstrated some differences in their responses regarding hope. Hope is defined as an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large (Jackson 2018).

Participants in research indicated that they have a hope for the future as youth who live in Palestinian IDP camps. Most of participants' responses focused on continuity of their education, being successful in the society, and living as other people in the world.

Hope was expressed in narratives of Palestinian refugee children in the following manner:

**Continuing Education** Palestinians in general place great importance on education, not only as a mean to increase employability and standards of living but also to counter attempt to erase the Palestinian identity and the Palestinian culture. Youth in Palestinian IDP camps have a desire to be successful and beneficial people through education.

A 15-year-old male from Jenin Camp stated:

I have a hope to continue my education and help my society in the future, people in the camp need me more than others, the situation in the camps is very difficult, I have a hope to continue my education to be a teacher who could teach children in the camp.

Another said:

I want to be a successful and beneficial person to make my family proud of me; I want to continue my education and become a doctor who can treat people freely, especially people in the camp as they are very poor (14-year-old female; Askar Camp).

**Returning to Their Homeland** The majority of youth who participated in this study have a hope to return and repurchase the homes and lands of their families and consider returning as



one of their most important rights. A 16-year-old female who lives in Balata Camp close to the Nablus region recalled:

I have a dream to return to my home land in Aka, it's a very beautiful city, I consider Aka as my home town not Balata camp or any place around the world, I will keep that hope a live till the last day of my life and I will never forget my home land.

Another youth stated: “The right of returning should be guaranteed for all refugees in Palestinian camps, I have a hope to return to our home in Yafa, my father still have the key of our home till this moment” (15-year-old female; Ein Beit al-ma' Camp).

**Freedom and Peace** Participants in research describe hope to be freed from the occupation which has lasted for more than 71 years; they have a hope to live in peace and justice same as other individuals around the world.

A 14-year-old female stated “I have a hope to live in freedom same as other children around the world. We have been displaced from our original home land for decades and now we are living in a refugee camp under very difficult conditions” (14-year-old male; Nur Shams Camp).

Another pointed out “we hope to live in peace and do not see fighting between Palestinians and Israelis, and also see Palestinians from all political movements live in peace and do not fight each other” (14-year-old female; Balata Camp).

**To Get Married and Establish a Family** Participants in research demonstrated hope to get married and to have families; they have a dream to live with their families in peace and freedom.

Participant stated:

I hope to marry in the future and travel with my family in a journey around the world to discover historical places, it's really nice to get married and to have children, children should receive love and empathic from their parents and I will love my children (16-year-old female; Ein Beit al-ma' Camp).

## Theme Two: Factors Related to Sadness

The majority of sample stated that they feel sad as a result of traumatic experiences they have suffered. Participants pointed out the following sub-themes:

**Loss and Traumatic Experiences** A traumatic event is one in which a person's life or safety is threatened or there is a risk of serious harm or injury; in some situations, loss can also involve trauma, but this is not always so (Wilson 2004). Participants of research stated that they feel sad because they have suffered loss and traumatic experiences.

A participant stated that:

I feel sad because soldiers arrested my brother last year, it's difficult to visit him in jail, and I really miss him so much. From the moment of his arrest, all of my family members are very sad, my mother cries all of the time (16-year-old male; Jenin Camp).

Another child explained:

\ I feel sad because I am a child who lives in a refugee camp, we lost our homeland and relatives and family members as a result of migration experience. Our relatives live in a refugee camp in Lebanon, The future seems sad and mysterious to me (15-year-old female; Nur Shams Camp).

**Lack of Space and Shelter** Participants in the research indicated they feel sad because of difficult conditions in Palestinian camps. Majority of respondents indicated that they live in unhealthy and small homes.

A 16-year-old child reported: “I feel sad because we live at inappropriate house with bad services, we don’t have any privacy in the camp, I can see what happens at our neighbour’s house and they can easily see what is happening inside our house” (16-year-old male; Askar Camp).

Another child expressed: “I don’t have an independent room same as other children, we are ten persons who live only in two rooms; this really makes me cry and feel sad; we live in a big Jail” (14-year-old female; Jenin Camp).

**Occupation** The majority of study sample mentioned that they feel sad because they live in occupied territories and they do not have freedom same as other children. The occupation imposes restrictions that increase the suffering of all Palestinians in general, and residents of camps in particular. A 14-year-old female from Ein Beit al-ma’ Camp expressed:

I am sad because of the occupation; they occupied our beautiful villages and cities and transferred us to live here in these camps. Living in a camp is very difficult and complicated. People do not have the basic levels of everything they need. I am sad and hate the occupation who stole our homeland.

Another child stated:

Soldiers and settlers always make us sad and we do not like them. They enter our homes at night in very violent way, this increase my sadness and horror. I am sad because soldiers have arrested many of my colleagues at school and they arrested my teacher (16-year-old female; Balata Camp).

**Inappropriate Under-Resourced Schools** Participants indicated they feel sad because of difficult conditions at schools in Palestinian IDP camps which do not meet the standards of an appropriate educational environment.

A 16-year-old interviewee from Nur Shams Camp mentioned:

I am unhappy at my school because we don’t have a good playground. There are also many students in my class. I feel I can’t learn in this crowded class. I feel sad when I go to the city of Tulkarem and see students learning at beautiful schools with big classrooms (16-year-old male; Nur Shams Camp).

Another child reported:

I am sad because there are no playgrounds in my school that enable us to play and practice our various hobbies, schools in my camp are unhealthy, seats that students use are very old and the bathrooms are not clean and unhealthy too (15-year-old female; Ein Beit al-ma’ Camp).

### Theme Three: Factors Related to Youth Happiness

Happiness is defined as positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy; it is also used in the context of life satisfaction, subjective well-being, flourishing, and well-being (Perales 2014). Participants of the study stated that the things that make them feel happy are experiences of freedom and peace, rewards from parents and teachers, summer and winter camps, and social interaction with other youth.

Participants expressed these sub-themes as the following:

**Freedom and Peace** Peace is defined as freedom from war and violence, and people living and working together happily without disagreements (Pilon 2017). Respondents of this study indicated that experiences of peace and freedom make them feel happy.

One child confirmed:

I feel happy when I do not see violence and shooting in the camp, I hope that children in the camps will live in peace all of the time, when there is a quiet in the camp, I can move between places and play freely, it is true happiness (14-year-old male; Nur Shams Camp).

Another respondent indicated:

As a Palestinian child, freedom is what makes me happy, I feel happy when I visit our relatives in Aida camp in the city of Tulkarm without checkpoints, but our happiness cannot be complete without our independence and returning to our homeland (15-year-old female; Balata Camp).

**Rewards from Parents and Teachers** Participants stated that they feel happy when they receive rewards from their parents and teachers. A 16-year-old male from Jenin Camp echoed the sentiments by stating:

I feel am a lovely person when I receive a reward from my parents or my teachers. Youth in the camp do not receive much rewards from their parents, since they are very poor, they can't offer rewards for their children all the time.

Another youth expressed:

When my teachers reinforce me I feel really very happy. I need someone who can support me in my difficult conditions. When I receive reinforcement from my teachers I feel happy and I work hard in my studies to receive another reward (16-year-old female; Askar Camp).

**Summer and Winter Camps** Participants in research stated that they feel happy when they participate in summer and winter camps, where they are exposed to activities including drawing, dancing, and singing.

A 15-year-old from Asker Camp expressed her feeling regarding summer and winter camps: "In summer camps we express our feelings and talk about difficult situations we have faced as refugees. We draw, sing and play. I also learned many things during summer camps; like responsibility, friendship and respect" (15-year-old female; Asker Camp).

Another stated:

\ During summer camps we do a lot of cultural, recreational and social activities. Every year I tell my friend to register in a summer camp. I feel very happy when we start the summer camp and I feel sad when we finish. I wish if the summer camp could continue for four months not only for a month (15-year-old male; Balata Camp).

**Social Activities with Youth** Play is the universal language of childhood. It is through play that children understand each other and make sense of the world around them. Children learn so much from play; it teaches them social skills such as sharing, taking turns, self-discipline, and tolerance of others (Webb 2007). The majority of participants expressed that they feel happy when they socialize and play with other children.

A 16-year-old male respondent expressed:

I feel very happy when I play with other children, we play a lot of beautiful games, many of our games in the camp depend on physical activities. Every day when I return from school I play football with other children in the road in front of our home. Sometimes we play army and youth or thieves and police (16-year-old male; Nur Shams Camp).

Another child stated:

I like to play with other girls in the camp. Most of our games use dolls. At schools we act, sing and dance. Girls do not have the freedom to play in the roads same as boys. I like visiting activities in the women's association in camp, They have many folklore and heritage activities (14-year-old female; Nur Shams Camp).

## Discussion

This study aimed at identifying factors relating to happiness, sadness, and hope for the future among third-generation children in Palestinian IDP camps. Participants identified factors that make them happy as experiences of freedom and peace, rewards from parents and teachers, summer and winter camps, and playing with other children. Youth in Palestinian IDP camps live under challenging conditions including violence, raids, checkpoints, familial separation, limited access to movement, and imprisonment of family members and friends, as well as limited access to needed resources (water, shelter, medical care, etc.), under-resourced schools (over-crowded, inexperienced teachers, lack of books, lack of technology, etc.), and general issues of poverty and family conflict.

The youth report feeling happy when taking part in summer and winter camps because they offer the opportunity for youth to be active and express themselves using art and narrative activities. The camps (which are usually sponsored by the UN or other NGOs) provide good opportunities for youth to talk about the negative experiences they have been facing in their daily lives.

Youth indicated that they feel happy when they take part in activities with peers. Play and social interaction are essential for development, because it contributes to cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being. Unfortunately, there is markedly reduced time for social interaction and free play for children who live in Palestinian IDP camps due to the lack of space, safety concerns, and the lack of recreational activities/resources. Participants expressed in their narratives that their experiences of freedom and peace, usually away from the IDP

camps, make them happier than anything else compared with their daily existence of restriction.

The current findings are in line with those reported by Veronese et al. (2012) who investigated positive and negative affect, self-perceived life satisfaction, and happiness in a group of 74 Palestinian children exposed to political violence. Results showed that children in the sample displayed generally satisfactory well-being and functioning in the areas of positive affect, life satisfaction, and happiness, despite their negative life conditions.

Maager and Sunde (2016) tested things that make Palestinian refugee children happy. A main finding of the study is that there are several things that made them happy like a bright sun, members of the family or friends, and trees were often drawn, and play activities.

The result of the current research showed that youth in Palestinian IDP camps feel sad because of loss and traumatic experiences, insufficient space, the concept and reality of occupation, and under-resourced schools. Palestinians in IDP camps live in an ongoing and collective trauma for over 71 years, since they were displaced from their original homes and land. First- and second-generation Palestinian refugees transfer feelings and thoughts related to Nakba and their continued state of displacement to their children through narratives and stories. Youth also are affected by the lack of space, which limits their shelter, leisure, and the ability to engage in recreational activities.

Occupation was stated as a complicating factor in the lives of youth living in IDP camps, it's responsible for that they are removed from their homes, family, and land as well as the practical restrictions of travel, construction, victimization from soldiers, and arrests.

Participants of the research indicated that they feel sad also because of the lack of appropriate schools and academic institutes in Palestinian IDP camps. All schools in Palestinian camps are under the management and coordination of UNRWA. Most of those schools lack in infrastructure, human resources, and physical resources. Children and youth in IDP camps study in very crowded schools and classes compared with Palestine children who live in villages and cities. Recently, the cut of US aid to UNRAWA deeply affected the functioning and standards in IDP camp schools without real alternatives to reduce the shortfall resulting from a lack of financial aids.

The current findings are in accordance with outcomes obtained by Baubet et al. (2009), who studied the occurrence of emotional disorders in the Palestinian refugees in Gaza Strip and Nablus districts in the West Bank of Palestine. Among 1254 patients, 23.2% reported PTSD, 17.3% anxiety disorder, and 15.3% depression. PTSD was more frequently identified in children  $\leq 15$  years old, while depression/sadness was the main symptom observed in adults.

Our findings are keeping with those reported by Álvarez et al. (2018), who investigated the characteristics of memories concerning both traumatic events (war-related memories) and positive life events (happy memories) in a group of Palestinian students who were victims of war and military violence. Traumatic memories were observed to be richer in sensory characteristics, more vivid, and generally more detailed; the emotions associated with sad episodes were more intense and played a key role in recall, as did recurrent thoughts and discussion of events and post-event autobiographical memories. Pedersen and Montgomery (2006) examined how the experiences of sadness become important events in the lives of a Palestinian youth. On the basis of a narrative analysis, the study demonstrated that the adolescents' experience of being a refugee is greatly influenced by the stories of the past narrated by the family.

Most respondents expressed that they have hope to establish families in the future; although they live in difficult environments and faced many stressful events with their families, it

appears that the youth of the IDP camps are looking forward to live in peace and freedom and have not “given up” the idea of a normal life.

Participants expressed that they have a hope to return to the homes and lands taken from them. Most of their families still hold the keys of their original homes. The children in IDP camps are reminded daily that they are not at home and have a continual focus on the right and the dream of returning to their original lands. They consider themselves as visitors who are living in the West Bank temporarily. It is this basic understanding of the situation of occupation that makes it hardest to maintain hope and move forward for IDP camps in Palestine, as they continue to wait for the resolution of a problem that most in the world have forgotten.

Participants of research expressed their hope to continue their educations to help people in Palestine and people who live in IDP camps in particular. Education however is a double-edged sword, while it has helped Palestinian refugees to adapt to the new life of exile, it also keeps alive the prospects of returning home.

The current results are in line with studies, such as Antenucci et al. (2018), who analyzed the source of agency as related to psychological adjustment to trauma as a protective factor against the effects of political violence in children living in Palestinian refugee camps. Despite facing serious challenges in their daily lives, in 56% of their written narratives (and 25% of their drawn narratives), children in the sample expressed feelings of hope for a better future. Marshall (2012) examined the ways in which Palestinian refugee children transform trauma and suffering that have come to dominate representations of Palestinian childhood. Results showed that hope for just and equitable future, strong social and family relations, and education are the main strategies used by Palestinian refugee children in dealing with trauma.

The present study contains several basic limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed. First, the sample is a convenience sample of defined geographic areas and not a random sample. Secondly, the study was based on the use of qualitative data collected through the use of semi-structured interview. Thirdly, study instruments and their psychometric characteristics have not been tested for this population specifically and may produce atypical results.

## Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. No funding was received for this study.

**Ethical Approval** All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of University’s Research Ethics Board, the American Psychological Association (APA, 2010), and the 1975 Helsinki Declaration.

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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