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Research Article

Emotional Stability among the Ex-detainees Palestinian Children from Israeli Prisons

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Abstract

The objectives of the study were to identify the emotional stability among the ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons. Emotional stability scale was administrated to 299 children using the stratified random sampling method. The findings revealed that the ex-detainees Palestinian children experienced a low level of emotional stability. These results confirmed the traumatic experiences on the personality of the ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons. The consequences of the findings for practice are highlighted.

Keywords: Emotional stability, detention, Israeli prisons, Palestinian children

1. Introduction

One's emotional life constitutes a vital aspect of one's personality. In fact, it influences the course of the individual's behavior and interferes largely in one's safety. However, the study of emotions has received the attention of psychologists only after the turn of the last century and following the development of Instinct theory and the focus of the analytical psychology school on the emotional aspect of individual's life (Duheik, 2004).

Emotions represent an essential aspect of the human behavior, and they give forth more strength and meaning to life. Individual's emotions are closely connected with happiness or sadness. Emotions differ according to personality and behavior of the individual. Some people are distinguished for emotional maturity that makes them capable of achieving harmony and agreement with the society where they live while others cannot. While the daily life needs are responsible for

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satisfying or rejecting emotions, their role might be negative or positive. First, they anticipate dissatisfaction and unrest like fear, anger, anxiety and crying. Second, they could reveal whether current conditions are suitable for ones desires as well as fulfill his needs like pleasure and happiness as a result of attainment of goals (Shehada, 1989).

Emotion is crucial for the process of comprehensive and integrated growth since it is one of the foundations of a sound personality. It identifies and guides the right developmental track of this personality with all its emotions and thoughts as well as the different actions and behaviors it achieves (Wani et al., 2016; Smita et al., 2017).

2. Background

2.1 Emotions

Emotions can be defined as a complex sensational state accompanied by a distinct physical and physiological activity. Emotional behavior is a complex behavior that expresses emotional stability or emotional instability (Zahran, 1999; Kumar, 2012). However, Duheik (2004) defines emotions as a spontaneous or vigilant response to a stimulus targeting a human with all of his physical and psychological components causing the emergence of implicit or explicit responses within the human to express his condition with regard to stability or instability.

Emotion has several aspects which can be summed up as follows: (1) The stimulus which causes the emotion whether internally as stomach ache, tooth ache or a painful incident or externally like seeing a ferocious monster attacking this person or a fire encircling him. (2) Subjective aspect in the psychological composition of the individual who experiences an emotional instability which is primarily felt by the individual. He can also, through subconscious, realize it if the feeling is moderate. However, if the emotion is extreme, the individual might lose consciousness or perception stability. (3) Expressive external emotion causes the individual to utter words, make facial gestures and expressions. This aspect helps us to identify other's emotions by comparing them with others. (4) An internal physical aspect inside the individual's inner organs as manifested by vital changes in the activity of the heart, blood, respiration, pressure and glands. This aspect can be observed using specialized scientific equipment (Duheik, 2004).

2.2 Emotional Stability

Emotional stability is considered as one of the most important aspects of human life, and one of the seven important indicators of mental health (Scott, 1968; Matheen, 2011). According to Smitson (1974), emotional stability is the process in which the personality is continuously striving for greater sense of emotional health, both intra-physically and intra-personally.

Emotional stability can be defined as the ability of the individual to modulate his emotions and express them in a socially acceptable manner to establish good social relationships and appreciate other's feelings, self-image and self-worth. Those emotions are characterized by their relative stability and steadiness (Ikhrebi, 2002; Serebryakova et al., 2016).

Sharawi (2003) indicated that emotional stability is synonymous to moderation. The flexibility of the person is an expression of this moderation. Thus, it is to be moderate in the areas of emotions and moderation in the fulfillment of the biological and psychological needs. It is to achieve the spiritual aspect of the personality, which others neglected. However, Abdel Fattah (1984) indicates that emotional stability is the way in which the individual could perceive the different aspects of a situation he faces, connect between these aspects and his motives, experiences, and nature. It would harmonize with the requirements of the present situation and allow him to adequately his responses. Eventually, the individual would become harmonious with the environment and positively contribute to its activities. At the same time, the individual would experience a state of luxury and happiness.

In light of the significance of emotional stability, most theories of psychology considered it one of the important goals which psychology seeks to precipitate in the individual's personality. James-Lange theory of emotions (1884) states that "emotions are a set of different sensations that are

triggered by physiological changes which vary according to different sensations. This theory indicates that physiological (bodily) manifestations and symptoms are not the result of emotions. In fact, they are the cause for triggering this emotion and causing the individual to lose his stability (Daheri, 2008).

However, Cannon-Bard theory of emotions (1927) indicated that physiological responses are not adequately distinctive to trigger different emotions, which cause the individual to lose his emotional stability. There is not a time difference between emotional experience and changes. Both take place at the same time. We react to a stimulus and experience the associated emotion at the same time. It evolves from the fact that emotional trigger heads to brain skull causing self-consciousness of the emotional experience. At the same moment, it sends to the nervous system triggering the physiological (bodily) response and causing the individual to lose his stability (Remawi, 2004).

As for the cognitive theory of emotions, it indicates that thinking about something and what the individual feels towards this thing are closely related since an inner stimulus is considered part of the emotions. Consequently, the nature of emotions, which is triggered by the individual, relies on the way the individual perceives an encountered situation as well as his identification of this situation. This process of identification is a cognitive one. Therefore, the individual will be able to interpret his feelings. In light of this interpretation, the individual decides how to behave towards the situation he encounters. If he is able to control his emotions according to his interpretation, he will achieve an emotional stability and positively face the situation (Waqfi, 1998).

The behavioral theory of emotions sees that an emotion evolves as a result of the conflict that is facing the individual. This would lead to responses or inconsistent reactions, which might contribute to loss of control over ones behavior and thus causing him to lose his emotional stability. Therefore, this theory states that the feelings evolve from the conflict that is facing an individual. This indicates that the basis of an emotion is the conflict in which the individual finds himself in (Sayyid, 1998).

Environmental factors have an important role in the process of emotional stability. Response patterns, whether partial or total, are referred to the environmental pressure on the individual and the acquired response to such factors as well as its influence on the individual's perception of the stimulus, which triggers his emotion and judgment (Namourah, 2006).

Furthermore, Watson (2000) in behaviorism stressed that a satisfactory behavior is evolving from the learning of the individual. Whereas, Maslow (1954) emphasized that the reason which makes the individual nervous is the surroundings environment due to ignorance and social diseases. He would become confused and his internal nature would become entangled. However, Cattell (1943) stressed that frustration is a direct cause of emotional instability.

Physiological factors play a significant role in the interpretation of emotional stability. This prevails in the form of one or multiple factors. In this context, Eysenck (1967) argued that neuroticism or emotional stability is greatly determined by heredity while the environment only determines a small percentage. One cannot imagine the personality traits of a happy and delightful person without having a physiological basis. That is why it is closely associated with the degree of the stimulus in the central nervous systems (Uon & Shalaan, 2017).

An emotionally stable person enjoys a number of traits most important of which are: (1) Ability to modulate emotions and self-control in situations that arouse emotions. (2) Ability to persist and exercise restraint as well as having a calm temper in crises. (3) The individual's emotional life is steady and does not fluctuate due to different reasons and stimuli. (4) The individual does not have any inclination towards aggression. He is capable of holding responsibility, doing work and willing to persevere for the longest period. (5) Stability of all emotions into an individual's self-integration that binds aspects of situation, motives and experience. (6) Ability to live in social harmony and adaptation with the surrounding environment as well as contribute positively into   social activities to make the individual feel happy and content (Smitson, 1974; Namourah, 2006).

Emotional stability is influenced by number of factors. Some of these might be associated with the individual's own personality. Others may be associated with the surrounding environment including its different daily encounters. There is also the impact of internal physiological disorders. Therefore, these factors perform a significant role in the ability of the individual to achieve emotional

stability (Faramawi & Hasan, 2009; Atyyeh & Rabee, 2016). Additionally, emotional stability affects every psychological aspect including learning of the students. Emotional control may impair performances in situations, which required flexibility and adaptability part of the adolescent student (Matthews et al., 2004).

2.3 Previous Studies

Several studies that have been published, researched emotional stability as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which addressed both theoretical and applied research. In a recent study, Pandey et al. (2017) concluded that emotionally stable child is capable to make effective adjustment with their environment, since emotional changes during adolescence includes anxiety, agitation, fear, anger, pleasure, love, envy and competitions.

The study of Smita et al. (2017) indicated that the sampling population experiences a moderate level of emotional stability, although emotional stability is the process in which the personality continuously striving for greater sense of emotional health, both intra-physically and intra-personally. Serebryakova et al. (2016) indicated that the developmental level of emotional stability as personal formation is consider the base of social-psychological adaptation.

Wani (2016) concluded that boys are more emotionally stable than girl's also general category students are more emotionally stable the SC category students. However, Brose (2013) argued that contexts in which affective experiences emerge require more attention when aiming to explain inter-individual and age group differences in emotional stability.

3. Aims and Scope

The current research aimed to study emotional stability among the ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons. The significance of the study stems from the importance of the topic and the important sector in the Palestinian society it targets since there is a flagrant violation of the rights of the Palestinian children in Israeli prisons. In light of the increased phenomenon of detention of Palestinian children by occupation forces over the last three years (2016-2018), the study seeks to obtain a better understanding of the emotional stability of Palestinian ex-detainees children in Israeli prisons in the West Bank with regard to circulation, indicators, and impact on the different aspects of their lives. The fulfillment of a common understanding of emotional stability among Palestinian ex-detainees children from Israeli prisons in the West Bank may assist local institutions to develop effective responses.

The current study is considered a documentation of the Israeli crimes against Palestinian children. What makes it more important is that children detainees are suffering from psychological disorders as a result of being arrested. They would experience cases of anxiety, insomnia, isolation and withdrawnness and all of these are considered basic indicators of their emotional stability.

4. Hypothesis

The study proposed the following hypothesis:

There are no statistical significant differences at α≤0.05 in emotional stability among the ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons according to age, gender, school enrollment, place of residency, detention year, and duration.

5. Methodology

5.1 Approach

The study adopted the quantitative research approach using the sampling survey method. The questionnaire is appropriate for the exploratory nature of the research.

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5.2 Population and Sampling

The population of the study was limited to the ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons in the West Bank between 2016 to 2018 years, which included five hundred and ninety-five children (Defence for Children International-DCI, 2018).

The study used the stratified random sampling method, which included two hundred and ninety-nine children (279 males and 20 females) in the West Bank. The sample size was calculated using an online tool: http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm, sample size calculator, with a margin error of 0.04.

5.3 Instrumentation

Emotional stability was assessed using a 15-point scale index introduced by Gupta & Singh (1994), taking into account the cultural appropriateness of the Palestinian community. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the responses (always, often, neither, rarely, never). The interview was conducted with the children in the household by a skilled research team, who were asked to complete the questionnaire.

5.3.1 Instrument Validity

The instrument validation was measured in implementation of a pilot study (N=30) using exploratory factorial analysis. Factor loading for all items exceeded 0.65 (from 0.68 to 0.87), which implied that these elements were capable of measuring each element of emotional stability among the sampled population.

5.3.2 Instrument Reliability

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and Split-Half Coefficients that were (0.94; 0.92) respectively, demonstrating excellent reliability and consistency.

5.4 Sample Socio-demographic Characteristics

The participants' socio-demographic distribution was as follows: age, gender, school enrollment, place of residency, detention year, and duration. Overall, the sample contained 299 children. The respondents' age was between 10 and 18 years of age (M 16.08, SD 1.76). The males represented 93.3% of the participants, while the remaining 6.7% were males. Almost (62.9%) of the participants were rural, 21.7% urban, while the remaining 15.4% from refugee camps; and the majority (76.6%) were in school. The children' detention duration was between 2 and 730 days (M 87.54, SD 116.24); nearly (44.1%) were imprisoned during 2016, while 30.1% in 2017, and 25.8% during 2018.

5.5 Data Analysis

The questionnaire items were evaluated on a 1-5 Likert scale (1=never to 5=always), the highest score indicated a high level of emotional stability. Descriptive statistics measured emotional stability among the sampled population using T.test, One way analysis of variance, Regression, Pearson correlation, Cronbach's Alpha, Split-Half Coefficients, and Factor Analysis through SPSS.

6. Findings

The results revealed that ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons indicated a low level of emotional stability. The mean scores and standard deviation were (M 1.93, SD 0.64).

Furthermore, the findings revealed the emotional stability indicators ranked in descending order as follows: I have cases of apathy and indifference (M 3.22, SD 0.83); I find it difficult to solve

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the problems that I am facing (M 3.15, SD 0.72); I feel agitated (M 3.08, SD 0.59); I feel scared and dreadful of new situations (M 2.98, SD 0.66). Moreover, the ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons are suffering from insomnia (M 2.88, SD 0.50).

Moreover, the study investigated the socio-demographical breakdown of emotional stability among the ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons with the aim of identifying differences. The findings revealed that age, place of residency, school enrollment and detention year do not signify any difference. However, it was found that gender, and detention duration are significant variables. In relation to gender, the differences favored males (M 2.45, SD 0.95) compared to (M 1.89, SD 0.59) for females: T.test value was (-2.556, P=0.019).

The findings also denoted that there are statistical significant inverse correlations between detention duration and the average score of emotional stability among the ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons, Beta was (-0.130, P=0.027).

7. Discussion and Recommendations

The findings revealed that ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons had a low level of emotional stability. The above result reflect the traumatic experiences on the personality of the ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons.

The Palestinian people in general are living under the yoke of arbitrary occupation measures and the Palestinian children in particular are exposed to the policy of systematic detention, which poses a constant threat on their lives. Thus, it would create an environment of fear and anxiety as well as inability to think (Hasanin, 2004).

Instances of Palestinian children detention have increased over the last three years. According to human rights institutions, more than 500 children are being arrested annually (DCI, 2018). This violates article 26 of the International Human Right Declaration and article 28 of Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In addition to arrest, there are arbitrary measures and flagrant violations of the rights of these children. This usually leads to considerable deformities in the child personality structure due to their low potentials and capabilities compared with those of adults. Childhood in particular is distinguished by psychological and social characteristics that make it the most important stage in the life of a human. This is in relation with characteristics of self-maturity and growth, ability to make decisions, realization of a set of psychological attitudes and future goals and integration into the society (Ashwal, 1982).

The study's results showed that, the ex-detainees males' children scored a higher level of emotional stability than females. This linked to the socialization process in the Palestinian patriarchal society. According to this process, males are directed towards an affirmation of masculine qualities like manhood, chivalry, bravery, gallantry, daring and stamina. However, females are directing towards feminism, decency, decorum, virginity, love of children, home economics and stability (Barakat, 1993; Banat, 2010; Banat et al., 2018).

Moreover, this can be explained by the fact that males are more involved and engaged into confrontations with the occupation. They are also more up to date of the daily incidents in the Palestinian society, which affect positively their emotional stability and psychological hardiness, as opposed to girls who are used to keep abreast of political matters through listening and participating at a lesser level than males due to the conservative customs and traditions of the Palestinian society. In addition, detention have a traumatic experience on the personality of the children especially females which affect negatively their emotional stability and psychological hardiness.

Finally, an inverse relationship was found between detention duration and the average score of emotional stability among the ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons.

Palestinian children detainees in Israeli prisons suffer from harsh and inhumane detention conditions. These prisons lack United Nations standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners. Some children are exposed to beating, torture, punishment, deprivation of sleep, food, family visits and medical care as well as threats and intimidation. All of this is practiced against them according to a systematic policy that aims to break down morale and shatter their self-esteem. Undoubtedly, the impact of this policy on the children's personality is not restricted to detention

period, but it exceeds it to longer stages in their lives by having grave consequences on them. It might even lead to a change in their lifestyle and course of life like losing any interest in education and just opt for the cheap labor market. Feelings of frustration, isolation, lack of desire to interact with others, avoidance of participation in-group activities, all lead to affect negatively their emotional stability (Pandey et al., 2017; DCI, 2018). Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The need to provide legal protection for the Palestinian children and fight all arbitrary measures of Israeli occupation against them.
2. The need for a rapid therapeutic and counseling intervention to avoid any problems that may cause significant distortions in the children personality.
3. Further research is essential to develop an understanding of emotional stability among the ex-detainees Palestinian children from Israeli prisons using the case study and qualitative research design is recommended.

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