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Human insecurity, chronic economic constraints and health in the occupied Palestinian territory

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Human insecurity, chronic economic constraints and health in the occupied Palestinian territory

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Research on the effects of political conflict has focused predominantly on the association between violence exposure and psychological trauma. This paper expands that focus. We broaden the assessment of health beyond the conventional spotlight on trauma-related stress to include culturally derived measures of health, and we assess the association between a broad array of political and economic conditions and health. Household interviews were conducted in 2011 with a representative sample of 508 30–40 year olds in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt; response rate = 97%). The four dependent variables were limits on functioning due to health, feeling broken or destroyed (both culturally derived measures of health), feelings of depression and trauma-related stress. Twenty-four predictor variables assessed multiple dimensions of political conflict and background characteristics. All four measures of health and suffering were associated with human insecurity and resource adequacy. Exposure to political violence was associated only with trauma-related stress. These findings support the increasing recognition that human insecurity and chronic economic constraints in the oPt broadly threaten health, perhaps more so than direct exposure to violence. Ultimately, a political solution is required, but in the meantime, efforts to reduce insecurity and improve economic conditions may improve health and reduce suffering in the oPt.

Keywords: political conflict; human insecurity; chronic economic constraints; parental loss; occupied Palestinian territory

Introduction

It is not known how many people are affected by political conflict, but the numbers reach the hundreds of millions (Harbom & Wallensteen, 2010). Many conflicts are protracted and create extended suffering for millions. Perhaps the most intractable example is the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, which has existed for most of the past century and continues with no foreseeable resolution. Since the outbreak of the first *intifada* (uprising) in 1987, more than 6200 Palestinians have been killed, more than 60,000 wounded and more than 65,000 detained or imprisoned by Israeli forces. During that same period, 681 Israelis have been killed by Palestinians (B’Tselem, 2013). The cohort of Palestinian adults aged

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30–40 is particularly important to study because it had exceptionally high levels of political activism and violence exposure during the first *intifada* (1987–1993; Barber, 2001; Barber & Olsen, 2009) and has since endured steady economic decline, increasing political constraints and protracted political violence.

Research on political conflict and health generally treats conflict as a set of exogenous exposures – much like vectors of disease – that have an impact on individual health. The exposure most frequently studied is individual exposure to violence, and the health outcome most studied is mental health, in particular trauma-related stress. This research paradigm misses two fundamental features of political conflict (Barber, 2013). First, political conflict typically arises from competition for power and resources, including both material and political resources (e.g., access to economic resources, self-determination and national identity). As such, conflicts have *societal* consequences such as devastation of economic infrastructure, mass restrictions on employment and mobility, loss of lands, militarisation of daily life, widespread human rights violations and changes in cultural value systems (Roy, 2007). In this way, conflicts cause not only individual suffering, but also collective and social suffering (Giacaman et al., 2011; Miller & Rasmussen, 2010; Panter-Brick, 2010; Pederson, 2002). Although several researchers and practitioners have expressly called for the consideration of the impact of the political and economic dimensions of conflict on health, there is little empirical work to date (Barber, 2009a, 2009b; Betancourt et al., 2013; Khamis, 2012; Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013; Tol et al., 2011).

The second related feature often overlooked by extant research is the breadth of the potential health consequences of political conflict. The majority of studies investigate negative psychological functioning, most often trauma-related stress (typically referred to as post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD]), as the primary indicator of health (Barber & Schluterman, 2009). Findings from such studies may provide useful information about the correlates of trauma-related stress but they fail to inform about the broader health consequences of extremely taxing conditions, such as political conflict. Accordingly, and in line with research that has begun to move beyond the narrow focus on trauma-related stress (Giacaman et al., 2007; Mataria et al., 2009; Teerawichitchainan & Korinek, 2012), the current study tested the associations between multiple aspects of political conflict and four dimensions of health and suffering among a representative sample of Palestinian adults.

Methods

The project began with a concerted effort to discern how well-being is conceived among Palestinians ages 30–40 who have experienced chronic bouts of conflict throughout their lives (Barber, McNeely, & Spellings, 2012). All fieldwork was conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), Ramallah, West Bank. We began by conducting group interviews with a purposive sample of 68 Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, selected to ensure diversity of gender, refugee status, and, in Gaza, political affiliation (33 men, mean age 34.8 years, range 21–53; 35 women, mean age 32.2 years, range 20–49). Fourteen groups were comprised of five same-sex individuals each: four groups in the West Bank (refugee and non-refugee males, refugee and non-refugee females), two in East Jerusalem (females, males), and eight in the Gaza Strip (refugee and non-refugee Fateh males, refugee and non-refugee Fateh females, refugee and non-refugee Hamas females, refugee and non-refugee Hamas

males). Interviews lasted for 60–90 minutes and were conducted in Arabic in rented rooms of office buildings by PSR field supervisors.

To assess how functioning is conceived in Palestine, the respondents were asked a series of questions. First, they were asked: ‘Think of two people who you know well; one who you think is doing relatively well in life and the other who you think is not doing well in life. Please describe both of these people’. Participants were asked to use a pseudonym and to reveal no identifying information about the individuals they described. After each participant described two persons, they were asked to free list elements or domains of what it meant to do well in life. They were then asked to prioritise the top three domains of those free lists. The transcripts were translated to English and content analysed with ATLAS.ti 6.2.27 by the first three authors. First, immediately after the group interviews, the second and third authors, who had sat in during the interviews, established a provisional list of main domains of functioning that were apparent in their recollections and notes of the interviews. Next, the first three authors independently open-coded sections from 8 of the 14 interviews to confirm or adjust the preliminary list of domains. In a series of interpretive sessions (Stake, 1994), the first three authors finalised the set of main domains to include economic, education, employment, family, health (mental and physical), personal characteristics, political and religious functioning. The first three authors then open-coded a subset of the interviews to develop sub-codes for each domains and, in further interpretive sessions, refined the sub-codes to between 1 and 22 sub-codes per domain. The full set of interviews was then coded using this coding structure. The coding structure with accompanying quotations from interviews (in English and Arabic) was regularly shared with the other authors, all Palestinian, to verify the validity of the coding scheme.

Based on these interviews, over 600 survey items were written and gathered from existing literatures to represent all elements of functioning identified from the interviews. Items were then systematically reduced in several interpretative sessions with multiple key informants. The final survey of 229 items (the Multi-Domain Adult Functioning Inventory [MDAFI]) was administered in May 2011 via household interview to a representative sample of Palestinians aged 30–40 in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip ($n = 508$). The clustered probability sample was drawn from all Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) enumeration areas from updated 2007 PCBS census maps. Kish tables were used to select one eligible adult per household. The response rate was 97%.

Dependent variables for the current study

Limits on functioning due to physical health was derived from the group interviews. It is assessed by the question ‘How often does your physical health limit your ability to meet the other demands in your life such as financial, education, or family responsibilities?’ Responses range from ‘never’ (1) to ‘regularly’ (5). It is a broader measure than existing assessments of functional limitations that focus on daily functioning (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992).

Feelings of depression was measured with eight items of the nine-item depression module of the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (suicide item removed; $\alpha = .84$; Kroenke & Spitzer, 2002). *Trauma-related stress* was measured with the 17-item PTSD Checklist (Foa, Riggs, Dancu, & Rothbaum, 1993). We describe these sets of items as feelings of depression and trauma-related stress intentionally to stem any implication that we have measured mental *disorders*. The feelings captured by these scales are interpreted by Palestinians themselves to be symptoms not of mental dysfunction but of social suffering

associated with the injustice and violence of the occupation (Giacaman et al., 2011). Moreover, this position is consistent with criticisms more broadly that diagnostic categorisation of disorders using these measures medicalise and pathologise normative sadness and suffering (Horwitz & Wakefield, 2007).

While references to feelings of depression and trauma-related stress occurred in the group interviews, more frequently participants described feeling *broken*, *shaken up*, *destroyed*, *crushed* and *exhausted*. Exemplar quotes follow:

Because he does not have a Jerusalemite ID, he has a West Bank ID, so he spent all his time here in Ramallah area, he couldn't go anywhere else, and even when he wants to travel abroad he had a big problem, he even tried to immigrate to the States, he couldn't because his father in prison, you know how, it affects negatively on the sons because of their father's name, they prevented him from traveling or emigration. So, he stayed here, his spirit is broken and his mode is always bad, he is not married and he is 36 years old. [West Bank refugee woman]

Moreover, people who in the past were able to pursue their education could not do it during the intifada because of lack of money. The situation destroyed the morale. The same applied to people who wanted to build homes. It broke our morale and character and we still suffer from this until now. [West Bank non-refugee man]

Accordingly, three new items were written to tap these sentiments and were labelled *feeling broken or destroyed*: 'Over the past two weeks, how often have you felt: (1) that your spirit or morale is broken or destroyed, (2) that your ambitions and hopes for the future are destroyed and (3) emotionally or psychologically exhausted?' Response options range from 'never' (1) to 'regularly' (5). Principal components analysis produced a single factor with loadings of .88, .86 and .83, respectively ($\alpha = .82$), and factor loadings were consistent across gender and regional subgroups.

Independent variables

Table 1 lists the independent variables. *Demographic characteristics* included whether the respondent lives in the Gaza Strip (vs. East Jerusalem/West Bank), gender, number of children and education level, measured as greater than high school. *Violence exposure* variables included whether the respondent was ever injured due to the conflict; imprisoned due to the conflict; had heard or experienced the effects of a bomb; was hit, kicked, shot at or verbally abused by Israelis; had their home raided by Israeli forces; or witnessed their father or someone else close to them humiliated by Israeli forces. *Family loss* variables included whether the respondent lost or was permanently separated from a parent or sibling due to the conflict or to another reason and whether the respondent had a parent or sibling injured due to the conflict or to another reason.

We included indicators of recent *political constraints* similar to Khamis's (2012) political stressors, such as being denied: a permit to travel outside the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), a building permit, access to construction materials, a work permit, an identity card and having one's land confiscated; being delayed, humiliated or denied passage at a checkpoint in the past month; and having electricity cut-off. An additional political constraint was the extent to which respondents feel freedom to express ideas and opinions outside one's home. We included two measures of *perceptions of the Palestinian government*: satisfaction with government services and perceived stability of the government.

Table 1. List of independent variables and *p* values for bivariate associations with health and suffering.

		<i>p</i> values			
		Functional limits	Feeling broken or destroyed	Feelings of depression	Trauma-related stress
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>					
Region	Respondent lives in Gaza (vs. West Bank and East Jerusalem)	.78	.08	.15	.23
Male	Respondent is male	.18	.40	.64	.20
Number of children	Sum of two questions asking about the number of sons and number of daughters	.01	.65	.11	.43
Education level	Respondent reports more than high school education	.68	.50	.54	.22
<i>Political variables</i>					
Exposure to political violence					
Injured in political conflict	Any report: throughout the course of your life so far, how often have you been	.10	.20	.06	.00
	1. Severely injured or disabled due to the struggle against the occupation				
	2. Severely injured or disabled due to fighting among Palestinian political parties				
Detained or imprisoned in political conflict	Any report: throughout the course of your life so far, how often have you been	.76	.87	.40	.01
	1. Detained or imprisoned by the Israelis				
	2. Detained or imprisoned by Palestinians for political reasons				
Lifetime exposure to bomb	Any report	.45	.30	.03	.00
	1. How often have you experienced the following at the hands of the Israelis: heard or felt effect of bomb?				

Table 1 (Continued)

		<i>p</i> values			
		Functional limits	Feeling broken or destroyed	Feelings of depression	Trauma-related stress
	2. How often have you experienced the following at the hands of the Palestinians: heard or felt effect of a bomb?				
Lifetime exposure to being hit, kicked, shot at, or verbally abused by Israelis	Mean of three items: How often have you experienced the following at the hands of the Israelis 1. Shot at with bullets? 2. Hit or kicked? 3. Verbally abused Response categories: never, once, 2–3 times, up to 10 times, more than 10 times ($\alpha = .83$)	.58	.92	.04	.00
Lifetime exposure to home raided by Israelis	How often have you experienced the following at the hands of the Israelis: home was raided? Response categories: never, once, 2–3 times, up to 10 times, > 10 times	.28	.05	.03	.00
Lifetime exposure to close person humiliated	Single item: how often have you experienced the following at the hands of the Israelis: father or other person close to you was humiliated? Response categories: never, once, 2–3 times, up to 10 times, more than 10 times	.05	.10	.04	.00
Family loss					
Parent died or separated in conflict	Any report: throughout the course of your life so far, did either your mother or father experience the following things 1. Died (or otherwise permanently separated from you) due to the struggle against the occupation	.01	.04	.02	.00

Table 1 (Continued)

		<i>p</i> values			
		Functional limits	Feeling broken or destroyed	Feelings of depression	Trauma-related stress
	2. Died (or otherwise permanently separated from you) due to fighting between Palestinian political parties				
Sibling died or separated in conflict	Same question as above asked for siblings	.10	.03	.02	.00
Parent died or separated due to other cause	Any report: throughout the course of your life so far, did either your mother or father experience the following things: Died (or otherwise permanently separated from you) due to other causes	.51	.08	.01	.09
Sibling died or separated due to other cause	Same question as above asked for siblings	.95	.33	.08	.02
Parent injured in conflict	Any report: throughout the course of your life so far, did either your mother or father experience the following things 1. Severely injured or disabled due to the struggle against the occupation 2. Severely injured or disabled due to fighting between Palestinian political parties	.00	.61	.09	.03
Sibling injured in conflict	Same question as above asked for siblings	.61	.29	.09	.01
Political constraints					
Israeli Government denied permits/confiscated land	Any report: during the past year 1. I was prevented from traveling outside of Palestine 2. My family's land was confiscated 3. I was refused or received a delayed building permit 4. I was denied access to construction materials	.70	.06	.44	.02

Table 1 (Continued)

		<i>p</i> values			
		Functional limits	Feeling broken or destroyed	Feelings of depression	Trauma-related stress
Constrained by checkpoints	5. I was denied a work permit				
	6. I was denied an identity card				
	Any report of event in last month	.35	.35	.48	.04
Electricity cut-off to home	1. I was delayed for a long period of time at an Israeli checkpoint				
	2. I was refused to pass through an Israeli checkpoint				
	3. I was humiliated when stopped at an Israeli checkpoint				
Electricity cut-off to home	Electricity was cut-off to home in the past month	.52	.01	.00	.01
Freedom of expression	Mean of two items: to what extent do you feel freedom in the following ways?	.59	.04	.05	.12
	1. To express your ideas and opinions outside of your home				
	2. To express your political opinions				
<i>Perceptions of government</i>	Response options: not at all, a little, moderately, a lot, completely (<i>r</i> = .52)				
	Mean of five items: How satisfied are you with how well the Palestinian Government in your area is currently providing:	.68	.01	.01	.00
	1. Education				
Satisfaction with Palestinian Government	2. Health care				
	3. Employment				
	4. Freedom of expression				

Table 1 (Continued)

		<i>p</i> values			
		Functional limits	Feeling broken or destroyed	Feelings of depression	Trauma-related stress
	5. Security and safety Response options: very dissatisfied to very satisfied ($\alpha = .80$)				
Perceived stability of Palestinian Government	Single item: how stable do you feel that the Palestinian Government is in your area right now? Response options: very unstable, unstable, sometimes stable/sometimes unstable, stable, very stable.	.22	.29	.13	.05
<i>Human insecurity</i>					
Human insecurity	Mean of five items: to what extent do 1. You fear for yourself or your family in your daily life? 2. You worry/fear that you will be displaced or lose your home or land? 3. You worry/fear for your future and your family's future? 4. You worry/fear the chaos in Palestinian society? 5. The events in Palestine make children in your family feel frightened? Response options: not at all, a little, a moderate amount, very much, an extreme amount ($\alpha = .80$)	.00	.00	.00	.00
<i>Economic variables</i>					
Adequacy of employment	For males and unmarried females, use report for self. For married females, use report for spouse on single item: which statement describes you/your spouse? 1. Not working 2. Looking for work or not working as much as would like	.00 ^a	.00 ^a	.00 ^a	.00 ^a

Table 1 (Continued)

		<i>p</i> values			
		Functional limits	Feeling broken or destroyed	Feelings of depression	Trauma-related stress
Inadequacy of resources	3. Working as much as would like to work				
	4. Working more than she would like to work				
	Mean of five reverse-coded items: Considering the past 6 months, how true are the following statements? I have	.00	.00	.00	.00
	1. Had adequate food				
	2. Had adequate clothing				
	3. Had adequate housing				
	4. Had adequate transportation, such as to school and work				
	5. Been able to afford adequate recreation or entertainment				
	6. Been able to afford new things like a refrigerator, stove, furniture, etc.				
	Response options: regularly, often, sometimes, rarely, never. ($\alpha = .84$)				

^a*p* values reported for the association between looking for work/not working as much as would like (vs. working as much as would like).

Human insecurity is the perception of fundamental threats to life and security. We employed the five-item version used in previous research in the oPt ($\alpha = .80$; Giacaman et al., 2011; Mataria et al., 2009). We selected this measure, developed specifically for use in the oPt, based on responses in the qualitative surveys indicating that fear of attack and fear for the safety of one's family pervaded Palestinians' experience, e.g.:

Even if there is some happiness, living in Gaza is bad because even if one has money and owns a home or if one has kids, fear will remain inside him; he will feel afraid for his kids and he fears for his business and he fears from the siege imposed on Gaza. [Gazan refugee man affiliated with Fateh]

Finally, we included two measures of *economic constraints*: adequacy of employment and resource inadequacy, a six-item scale ($\alpha = .84$) assessing the adequacy of food, clothing, housing, transportation, recreation and household amenities. This quote from a group interview with West Bank refugee men typifies the economic constraints experienced by many Palestinians.

I want to get money and I want to work and I want to have my own house so my family and I can become stable. I want to take my family out for lunch sometimes, because right now I don't have the ability to. I want to travel. This is the basic needs that everyone should have.

Principal factor analysis of the six items measuring resource inadequacy produced a single factor with loadings ranging from .67 to .84.

Analysis

Bivariate associations were estimated using Pearson correlations and chi-square tests. Independent variables associated with any of the outcomes at the level of $p < .01$ were maintained in the multivariate models. Ordered logistic regression models were used to predict functional limitations, and ordinary least squares regression models were used for the psychological suffering outcomes. All analyses were weighted, and standard errors were adjusted to account for the complex sampling design using svy procedures in Stata 11.0. Less than 1% of the data was missing.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Forty-two per cent of respondents reported functional limitations due to their health 'sometimes', 'often' or 'regularly', with females reporting greater *functional limitations* (see Table 2). The mean of feeling broken or destroyed was 2.7 (s.d. = 0.87; range 1–5 scale), with Gazans reporting higher levels than those in the West Bank or East Jerusalem. The mean scores for feelings of depression and trauma-related stress, both of which ranged from 0 to 3, were 0.90 (s.d. = 0.60) and 0.76 (s.d. = 0.59), respectively. There were no differences between genders or region for either of these measures. The three emotional suffering variables were moderately correlated, indicating they are distinct constructs. Feelings of depression was correlated with trauma-related stress ($r = .39, p < .001$) and feeling broken or destroyed ($r = .55, p < .001$). Trauma-related stress and feeling broken or destroyed were also moderately correlated ($r = .34, p < .001$). The correlation between functional limits on health and feelings of depression, trauma-related

Table 2. Weighted descriptive statistics of health and suffering reported by adults in the oPt ages 30–40.

	Range	Min	Max	Per cent or mean (s.d.)				
				Total (<i>n</i> = 508)	Males (<i>n</i> = 254)	Females (<i>n</i> = 254)	West Bank (<i>n</i> = 322)	Gaza (<i>n</i> = 176)
Physical health limits ability to meet demands								
Never				35.9	41.4*	30.3	37.3	33.5
Rarely				22.6	19.8	25.6	19.8	27.3
Sometimes				26.2	21.4	31.0	26.1	26.4
Often/regularly				15.3	17.4	13.2	16.8	12.8
Feeling broken or destroyed	1–5	1	5	2.74 (1.05)	2.71 (1.02)	2.78 (1.07)	2.68 (1.11)	2.86 (0.92)
Depressive symptoms	0–3	0	3	0.90 (0.60)	0.91 (0.64)	0.88 (0.56)	0.86 (0.62)	0.96 (0.56)
Trauma-related stress	0–3	0	2.75	0.76 (0.59)	0.79 (0.59)	0.73 (0.60)	0.73 (0.64)	0.80 (0.52)

**p* < .05.

stress and feeling broken or destroyed was somewhat lower: $r = .22$, $r = .21$ and $r = .18$, respectively ($p < .001$ for all correlations).

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for the independent variables. Nearly 80% had heard the effects of a bomb, 14% had been injured due to the conflict and 19% had been detained or imprisoned for political reasons. These numbers mask large gender differences, with men more likely to have been directly exposed to political violence. Approximately 5% of the full sample had lost or been permanently separated from a parent due to the conflict (e.g., via deportation). This percentage rose to 13% for siblings. Similarly, 7% had a parent injured in the conflict and 18% had a sibling injured. The loss and injury of siblings were greatest in the Gaza Strip.

As for political constraints over the past year, 27% had land confiscated or were denied permission to travel, to build, to work or to obtain an identity card. (This percentage was 36% for men.) In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, where there are Israeli checkpoints, 41% of participants reported having been delayed, refused or humiliated at a checkpoint in the past month. (Israeli checkpoints in the Gaza Strip were removed in 2005.) Nearly 80% of the residents in Gaza reported having their electricity cut-off in the past month, compared to 29% in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The mean score for freedom of expression was 2.8 (s.d. = 1.0; range 1–5), with men feeling more freedom than women. The mean scores for perceived stability of and satisfaction with the Palestinian Government were each 2.8 (s.d. = 1.0 and 0.8, respectively; range 1–5). The mean score of human insecurity was 3.2 (s.d. = 0.9; range 1–5), with women feeling more insecure than men.

As for economic constraints, 28% reported they (men reporting on self) or their spouse (women reporting on spouse) were currently working as much as they would like to work and significantly less so in the Gaza Strip. The mean score of resource inadequacy was 2.5 (s.d. = 0.9; range 1–5).

Bivariate results

The last four columns of Table 1 show the p values for the bivariate tests of the associations between the independent variables and each of the outcomes. Trauma-related stress was significantly associated with most of the independent variables, and feelings of depression were associated with approximately half of the variables. Feeling broken or destroyed was associated with parental and sibling loss due to the conflict, satisfaction with government services, human insecurity and political and economic constraints. Functional limits due to health were associated with parental injury during the conflict, human insecurity and economic constraints.

Multivariate results

To conserve degrees of freedom in the multivariate models, we excluded all variables with zero-order associations with each of the health outcomes at the level of $p \geq .01$. This resulted in the exclusion of six variables: detention or imprisonment, loss of parent and siblings due to non-political reasons, sibling injured in the conflict, constrained by checkpoints in the last month, perceived freedom of expression and perceived stability of the Palestinian Government.

The pattern of multivariate findings in Table 4 reveals both pervasive and specific associations between the independent variables and the outcomes. As for pervasive associations, human insecurity (controlling for the other predictors) was associated with

Table 3. Weighted descriptive statistics of demographic, political and economic variables from the MDAFI as reported by adults in the oPt ages 30–40.

	Range		Percent or mean (s.d.)				
	Min	Max	Total (n = 508)	West Bank/East Jerusalem ^a (n = 176)	Gaza (n = 322)	Males ^b (n = 254)	Females (n = 254)
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>							
Male	0	1	50.0	50.0	50.0		
Lives in the Gaza Strip	0	1	37.8			37.8	37.8
Number of children	0		4.38 (2.6)	4.0 3 (2.6)***	4.97 (2.5)	4.11 (2.4)**	4.66 (2.7)
Education greater than high school	0	1	23.9	23.1	25.3	28.2*	19.6
<i>Political variables</i>							
Lifetime exposure to political violence							
Ever injured in political conflict	0	1	14.3	14.3	14.3	24.0***	4.6
Ever detained or imprisoned for political reasons	0	1	19.2	21.5	15.5	36.8***	1.7
Ever heard or felt effects of a bomb	0	1	79.0	73.1**	88.6	82.5*	75.5
Hit, kicked, shot at, or verbally abused	1	5	2.0 (1.1)	2.0 (1.2)**	1.8 (0.9)	2.6 (1.2)***	1.3 (0.5)
Home raided	1	5	2.7 (1.4)	2.6 (1.4)	2.7 (1.4)	3.0 (1.3)***	2.3 (1.4)
Witnessed father or close person humiliated	1	5	2.3 (1.4)	2.3 (1.5)	2.2 (1.3)	2.4 (1.4)*	2.1 (1.3)
Family loss							
Parent died or separated due to conflict	0	1	5.3	5.5	5.0	5.0	5.5
Parent died or separated due to other cause	0	1	32.6	30.7	35.6	34.0	31.1
Sibling died or separated due to conflict	0	1	13.4	9.1***	20.4	12.2	14.6
Sibling died or separated due to other cause	0	1	11.8	13.1	9.8	13.5	10.2
Parent injured in conflict	0	1	7.4	6.8	8.4	8.7	6.2
Sibling injured in conflict	0	1	18.2	12.1***	28.3	19.4	17.0
Current political constraints							
Denied permit or land confiscated, past year	0	1	27.2	29.1	23.9	35.8***	18.5
Delayed, refused or humiliated at check point, past month	0	1	27.2	40.6***	5.1	32.8**	21.6

Table 3 (Continued)

	Range		Percent or mean (s.d.)				
	Min	Max	Total (<i>n</i> = 508)	West Bank/East Jerusalem ^a (<i>n</i> = 176)	Gaza (<i>n</i> = 322)	Males ^b (<i>n</i> = 254)	Females (<i>n</i> = 254)
Electricity cut-off, past month	0	1	47.8	28.8***	78.9	49.6	45.9
Freedom of expression	1	5	2.8 (1.0)	2.8 (1.0)	2.7 (0.9)	3.0 (1.0)**	2.6 (1.0)
Perception of Palestinian Government							
Perceived stability of government	1	5	2.8 (1.0)	2.8 (1.0)	2.7 (1.0)	2.8 (1.0)	2.8 (1.0)
Satisfaction with government	1	5	2.8 (0.8)	2.9 (0.8)	2.7 (0.8)	2.8 (0.8)	2.9 (0.8)
<i>Human insecurity</i>							
Insecurity	1	5	3.2 (0.9)	3.2 (0.9)	3.3 (0.8)	3.2 (0.9)*	3.3 (0.8)
<i>Economic variables</i>							
Employment							
Not working			14.8	12.2*	19.3	4.1***	25.6
Not working as much as would like			57.0	55.4	59.6	67.7	46.3
Working as much or more than would like			28.2	32.4	21.2	28.2	28.1
Resource inadequacy	1	5	2.5 (0.9)	2.4 (1.0)	2.6 (0.9)	2.5 (1.0)	2.5 (0.9)

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

^a p -value significance levels presented for tests of differences between West Bank/East Jerusalem and Gaza.

^b p -value significance levels presented for tests of differences between males and females.

Table 4. Multivariate regression models of demographic, political, and economic predictors of health and suffering among adults in the oPt ages 30–40.

	Functional limits		Feeling broken or destroyed		Feelings of depression		Trauma-related stress	
	Odds Ratio	95% C.I.	<i>b</i>	95% C.I.	<i>b</i>	95% C.I.	<i>b</i>	95% C.I.
<i>Demographic characteristics</i>								
Male	0.77	(0.48, 1.26)	0.00	(−0.25, 0.26)	−0.02	(−0.14, 0.10)	−0.07	(−0.19, 0.05)
Lives in the Gaza Strip	0.72	(0.50, 1.05)	0.03	(−0.18, 0.25)	−0.03	(−0.13, 0.07)	−0.02	(−0.13, 0.09)
Number of children	1.07*	(1.01, 1.14)	−0.03	(−0.06, 0.00)	0.00	(−0.01, 0.02)	0.01	(−0.02, 0.03)
More than high school education	0.88	(0.59, 1.31)	0.01	(−0.18, 0.20)	0.01	(−0.09, 0.11)	0.10*	(0.02, 0.19)
<i>Political variables</i>								
Lifetime exposure to political violence								
Ever injured in political conflict	1.38	(0.89, 2.14)	−0.19	(−0.43, 0.05)	0.12	(−0.07, 0.30)	0.06	(−0.07, 0.19)
Ever heard or felt effects of a bomb	1.10	(0.65, 1.86)	−0.03	(−0.22, 0.16)	0.05	(−0.05, 0.16)	0.13*	(0.00, 0.25)
Hit, kicked, shot at, or verbally abused	1.02	(0.80, 1.28)	−0.03	(−0.17, 0.11)	0.01	(−0.06, 0.08)	0.08**	(0.03, 0.14)
Home raided	1.00	(0.87, 1.14)	0.05	(−0.01, 0.12)	−0.01	(−0.05, 0.04)	−0.04	(−0.08, 0.00)
Witnessed father or close person humiliated	1.07	(0.92, 1.24)	0.01	(−0.07, 0.09)	0.01	(−0.05, 0.07)	0.06**	(0.02, 0.10)
Family loss								
Parent died or separated due to conflict	1.62	(0.72, 3.67)	0.23	(−0.14, 0.61)	0.25	(−0.03, 0.53)	0.34**	(0.10, 0.58)
Sibling died or separated due to conflict	1.38	(0.76, 2.54)	0.08	(−0.19, 0.35)	0.10	(−0.07, 0.27)	0.04	(−0.08, 0.16)
Parent injured in conflict	1.99**	(1.19, 3.32)	−0.08	(−0.36, 0.21)	0.04	(−0.16, 0.24)	0.05	(−0.15, 0.25)
Current political constraints								
Denied permit or land confiscated, past year	1.04	(0.71, 1.53)	0.16	(−0.03, 0.36)	−0.02	(−0.13, 0.08)	0.08	(−0.07, 0.22)
Electricity cut-off, past month	0.99	(0.73, 1.36)	0.12	(−0.05, 0.30)	0.10	(−0.02, 0.22)	0.07	(−0.04, 0.18)
Satisfaction with government	1.06	(0.86, 1.30)	−0.01	(−0.13, 0.10)	−0.03	(−0.10, 0.03)	−0.08**	(−0.14, −0.02)
<i>Human insecurity</i>								
Insecurity	1.27*	(1.03, 1.58)	0.33***	(0.21, 0.46)	0.11***	(0.06, 0.17)	0.18***	(0.11, 0.24)
<i>Current economic constraints</i>								
Resource inadequacy	1.30**	(1.06, 1.58)	0.24***	(0.13, 0.35)	0.18***	(0.12, 0.23)	0.09**	(0.03, 0.14)
Employment								
Not working	1.89*	(1.08, 3.30)	0.35*	(0.05, 0.65)	−0.02	(−0.18, 0.15)	0.06	(−0.08, 0.21)
Not working as much as want	1.59*	(1.11, 2.27)	0.22*	(0.02, 0.42)	0.07	(−0.03, 0.18)	0.08	(−0.01, 0.18)
<i>Constant</i>								
<i>R</i> ²			0.85**	(0.27, 1.44)	−0.01	(−0.33, 0.31)	−0.29	(−0.59, 0.02)
			.24		.20		.29	

Note: **p* < .05; ***p* < .01; ****p* < .001.

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poorer status for all outcomes. Resource inadequacy also uniquely associated with poorer status on all four outcomes.

There were also specific patterns for each of the outcomes. Functional limits due to health were associated positively with number of children, having had a parent injured in the political conflict and unemployment or underemployment, in addition to human insecurity and resource inadequacy. Likewise, in addition to being predicted by human insecurity and resource inadequacy, feeling broken or destroyed was associated with unemployment or underemployment.

Trauma-related stress was the only outcome that was associated with the violence exposure variables. Effects were small but consistent across numerous types of exposure (ever having heard or felt the effects of a bomb; being hit, kicked, shot at and/or verbally abused; and witnessing one's father or a close person be humiliated by Israelis). In addition, having a college education and losing a parent due to the conflict were positively associated with trauma-related stress, and satisfaction with Palestinian Government services was negatively associated with trauma-related stress.

Discussion

There is a growing consensus that an ecological understanding of the effects of political conflict on health and suffering is needed (Barber, 2009a; Miller & Rasmussen, 2010; Panter-Brick, 2010; Pederson, 2002). We addressed that need in two ways. First, we broadened the assessment of health and suffering beyond the conventional spotlight on trauma-related stress to include local conceptualisations of suffering (specifically, functional limits on health and feeling broken or destroyed). Second, we extended beyond the common focus on exposure to violence to include a detailed assessment of political and economic variables associated with political conflict. We did so among a group of Palestinians characterised by a history of economic and political constraint and conflict.

Elements of political conflict and the nature of health and suffering

Descriptively, the findings provide a broad, contemporary and empirically extensive view of life amidst chronic political conflict. Data from representative samples of such populations are rare, and have been called for specifically regarding Palestinians (Horton, 2009).

Elements of political conflict

Our findings elaborate the conventional focus on violence exposure and document additional pervasive constraints that plague life under occupation, even during times of low violence (e.g., land confiscations, restricted movement, permit denials, problems at checkpoints, humiliation and access to electricity). Further, these findings recommend a gendered focus, given the evidence of men's particularly high rates of violence exposure and women's higher human insecurity levels – findings consistent with past work on Palestinians (Giacaman & Johnson, 2013).

The nature of health and suffering

Our findings also give a unique view into the range of suffering in the oPt. We included two measures typically used in studying political conflict – feelings of depression and trauma-related stress – although in referring to them we prefer to acknowledge local and professional interpretations of such measures as symptoms of normative, social suffering rather than individual pathology (Giacaman et al., 2011; Horwitz & Wakefield, 2007).

In addition, we developed two emic measures of health and emotional suffering: functional limits due to health and feeling broken or destroyed (the experience of emotional exhaustion and broken spirit or morale). The coherence of the three items created to measure feeling broken or destroyed and the moderate correlations with other measures of emotional suffering suggest that it is a distinct construct and an important dimension of suffering under military occupation.

Linkages between political conflict, health and suffering

The bivariate correlations attest to how multiple political and economic variables are broadly related to health and suffering. These results demonstrate that a diversity of measures is required to capture the complex nature of political conflict and the consequent effects on the population. Beyond this broad evidence of interconnections among political, economic, health and suffering variables, the multivariate analyses identify some unique associations between specific predictors and outcomes. Here we focus on four predictors.

Exposure to violence

We identified with some specificity the dimensions of political violence. Multiple dimensions of political violence (hearing bombs, physical harm and humiliation) are related uniquely to trauma-related stress (consistent with past research), but notably not with feelings of depression, feeling broken or destroyed or functional limitations due to health. The relevance to trauma-related stress of witnessing a father or other close person being humiliated (a practice common to military control and widely reported by Palestinians [Batniji et al., 2009; Roy, 2007], but seldom measured) is consistent with prior work on Palestinians (Giacaman et al., 2007) and recommends that researchers of populations in politically conflicted environments incorporate humiliation and violations of dignity in models of determinants of health.

Parental loss

Loss of a parent due to the conflict was associated with greater trauma-related stress, but loss of a parent for reasons other than the conflict (or loss of a sibling for any reason) was not. The specificity of this finding needs replication, but it is consistent both with findings among civilian populations that loss due to violent events as compared to natural causes is associated with long-term elevations of emotional distress (Currier, Holland, & Niemeyer 2006; Kaltman & Bonanno, 2003) as well as with findings among conflict populations that loss of a parent predicts prolonged grief (Layne et al., 2010; Morina, von Lersner, & Prigerson, 2011; Stammel et al., 2013). Ultimately, the impact of loss depends on the meaning attached to it (Antonovsky, 1987), particularly regarding politically related loss (Barber, 2009c). Making sense of a death due to violence can be more difficult than other types of death (Currier et al., 2006). As for contemporary Palestinian adults, a parent's death that resulted from the conflict may be particularly difficult to endure, given a perception that a lifetime of political efforts may have been wasted as evidenced by the steady economic decline and continued or increased constraints on personal and political freedoms (Giacaman & Johnson, 2013).

Human insecurity

Human insecurity, measured by feelings of fear for the safety of one's self, family and home, was significantly related to all of the outcomes. In other work among Palestinian

(Gazan) adults (Abu-Rmeileh et al., 2011), human insecurity was inversely related to the physical, but not the psychological domain of the World Health Organization (WHO) Brief Quality of Life Survey (WHO QoL Brief). It is possible that the locally derived distress scale included in the study by Mataria et al. (2009) may have mediated the relationship between insecurity and the WHO QoL psychological domain. Our results suggest that human insecurity strongly predicts both physical and emotional suffering.

Resource adequacy

Finally, resource (in)adequacy was associated with all four outcomes, and lack of employment was associated with two health outcomes, functional limits due to health and feeling broken or destroyed. These findings of the salience of economic conditions are noteworthy in that they obtain after controlling for the wide variety of political conditions. The findings are sensible given that the oPt suffers from severe restrictions on economic activity in all regions (as well the economic embargo since 2007 on the Gaza Strip) and that mobility is restricted, particularly in East Jerusalem and the West Bank (The World Bank, 2012). Indeed, access to employment and resources appears to be intentionally manipulated as a strategy of occupation (Batniji et al., 2009; Roy, 2007; The World Bank, 2012). This finding further buttresses the importance of including measures of resource adequacy above and beyond measures of educational attainment and employment in studies of political conflict.

Conclusions

The findings of this study should be interpreted within the context of its limitations, particularly, that all variables are self-reported and the data are cross-sectional, limiting any causal interpretation. These limitations are balanced by several strengths of the study, including a population-based sample, high response rate and the inclusion of emic and etic measures of conflict exposure and health and suffering. Consistent with previous research, we documented significant levels of exposure to political violence, economic hardship, family loss and political constraints in the oPt. The findings confirm the well-documented association between violence exposure and trauma-related stress, but extend them by identifying a broader spectrum of elements of political conflict that are related to both physical health and emotional suffering. The findings argue strongly for the necessity of employing ecological models when studying political conflict, and in so doing they illustrate the particular salience of human insecurity, resource adequacy and localised expressions of suffering. The findings also suggest that interventions should focus on providing security and economic resources, including access to stable employment. Ultimately, a political solution is required, but in the meantime, efforts to reduce insecurity and improve economic conditions will improve health and reduce suffering in the oPt.

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