



POWER2YOUTH

Linking Social Capital: Political Confidence among Youth in Occupied Palestine (the West Bank and Gaza Strip)

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Rita Giacaman, Suzan Mitwalli and Weeam Hammoudeh¹

Abstract

This is a cross-sectional study of a representative sample of 28- to 29-year-old Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, aiming to uncover youth reports on feelings of exclusion/inclusion. The study reveals low levels of linking social capital among Palestinian youth, that is, a lack of confidence in governmental institutions and political parties, and a reflection of youth feelings of exclusion. Results demonstrate a deep-seated lack of trust, and understandable disappointment with those in power and those who have power over young people's lives. Such views are likely to be relevant to all Palestinians in general. The difference here is that youth are just beginning to build their lives as adults, yet lack the support needed from those in power, and consequently, the ability to properly function as adult humans. Palestinian young people lack the space for active participation within Palestinian society, with no end in sight. This contrasts with Palestinian youth's active participation against Israeli military rule and injustice, and raises the question of what transition to adulthood means in such circumstances.

Keywords: Youth | Palestine | West Bank | Gaza | Domestic policy | Public opinion

INTRODUCTION

Youth Exclusion in the Middle East

Middle Eastern countries are described as having excluded young people economically and socially, as well as limiting their possibilities for civic and political involvement (Silver 2007, Assad and Barsoum 2007, Chaaban 2009). Reports indicate that this exclusion has had major economic costs to society related to youth unemployment, school dropout, youth migration and adolescent pregnancy, and that performance has deteriorated in attempts to reduce youth exclusion (Chaaban 2008). The exclusion and marginalization of large sectors of society, including young people, are identified as manifestations of a combination of post-independence state failure (Murphy 2012), the effects of the global economic crisis (Joffé 2011) and the consequences of three decades of political transformation related to neoliberal economic reforms and neoliberal globalization (Bogaert 2013). Neoliberal globalization has also been identified as the underlying factor prompting protests and the rise of social movements not only in the region (Kaboub 2013, Kuymulu 2013, Bergh 2012), but also in the United States, for example, with the Occupy Wall Street movement (Brown 2011). More recently, the Brexit vote in the UK has been linked to neoliberal economic policies emphasizing market-led development (Rasmus 2016). Indeed, even the International Monetary Fund has recently indicated that instead of growth, "some" neoliberal policies have increased inequalities and jeopardized expansion (Ostry et al. 2016). This constitutes an acknowledgement of at least

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some of the woes of neoliberal economic policies and their impact on especially the poor and marginalized sectors of society, including the region's excluded young people.

Although they are an increasingly educated sector of the population, young people in the region have suffered the consequences of inadequate economic opportunities (Campante and Chor 2012), high levels of unemployment, insecure jobs (Kaboub 2012) and political and social exclusion (Singerman 2013), especially as their proportions within the general population have risen over time (reduction in infant and child mortality rates without a corresponding reduction in fertility rates). Inappropriately called the "youth bulge" by demographers (as if young people were similar to cancerous growths), youth 15 to 29 years old constitute about one third of the region's population, with their transition from education to employment and family formation being hindered by unemployment and social exclusion (Salehi-Isfahani and Dhillon 2008). They are a majority demographically; yet, they form a minority politically as they are excluded from active political participation - an exclusion rooted in inequality (al-Fatafta 2015).

Youth studies have historically posited only partial explanations of the conditions young people experience because the focus has been on the process of transition to adulthood, instead of also including the structures of domination which marginalize young people (Jones 1988) and populations in general - by way of class, race (Chetty 2014), gender relations and neoliberal economic change (Guenther 2015). And although it is rightly argued that young people can develop connections based on a feeling of generational exclusion instead of acting based on their class interest (Jeffrey 2010), the concept of youth as an analytical unit is still problematic in that it lumps young people into one category - as if constituting a class on their own - and obliterates group differences, thus disregarding their varying positions in the power structures and the structural constraints imposed on some groups of young people more than others. Clearly, young people from upper-class backgrounds may not experience the type of poverty or social and political exclusion, including in education and work, which working-class young people withstand (Nayak 2006). Likewise, women in the region continue to experience exclusion given the structure of domination of men over women (Moghadam 2004), the legacy of colonialism and the authoritarianism of many Arab states (Hatem 2013). Women and young people are constrained by patriarchy through seniority and age-based relationships (Joseph 1996), including in political life. In the region in general, and Palestine in particular, the majority of political leaders are men older than 50 years, with minimal space for the active leadership in political participation of women or youth. In other words gender, class/economic status and relations of power are crucial to consider in analyzing data related to young people, rather than solely the biological transition to adulthood.

Palestinians

Palestinians are the descendants of people who lived in Palestine for centuries, going back to Biblical, Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad, Fatimid, Crusader, Ayyubid, Mamluk and Ottoman periods (Khalidi 2010). We identify ourselves as both Palestinian and Arab, by virtue of a shared history, language and culture with other Arab countries. Up until the 19th century, and before European Jewish immigration to Palestine began, Palestinians comprised around 95 percent of the population living between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River (Neff 1995), an area which now encompasses the West Bank (including Palestinian East Jerusalem),

the Gaza Strip and Israel. By 1946, 59 percent were reported as Muslims, 32 percent as Jewish, owing to waves of in-migration of Jews from Europe to Palestine, 8 percent as Christians and 1 percent other (British Mandate Dept of Health 1947).

As a result of the expulsion of Palestinians from their land in 1948 and the creation of the State of Israel, almost two thirds of the indigenous Palestinian population was dispossessed and dispersed, becoming refugees in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where this study was completed; in neighbouring Arab countries such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, where Palestinians are still living in and outside refugee camps waiting for the right to return to the homeland; and all over the world, in addition to internally (within Israel) displaced Palestinians expelled from their villages and cities. An additional 180,000 Palestinians became refugees as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the Israeli military occupation and colonization of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which continues until today (Pappé and Hilal 2010). Some Palestinians have become refugees for a second or even third time, as for example Palestinian refugees fleeing the war in Syria.

Palestinian Young People of Occupied Palestine (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip)

Young Palestinians have not always been “excluded”. They played an important role in public and political life, resisting Israeli military occupation and colonization of Palestinian land, especially during the first Palestinian Intifada (popular uprising) of 1987-1993. At the time, a whole generation of Palestinians had not known life other than as occupied by Israel, economic dependence on Israel, exploitation of Palestinian labour, confiscation of Palestinian land and denial of basic rights. Mass civil disobedience ensued in the form of building the infrastructure of resistance - including separating Palestinian services from Israel, refusing to pay tax to Israeli occupation, boycotting Israeli products, and organizing demonstrations and non-violent campaigns (Nassar and Heacock 1990). Young Palestinians played a major role, including resisting the very well-equipped Israeli army by throwing stones at Israeli army jeeps and tanks. Support and engagement came from all sectors of society. Another important feature of the transformations taking place during this period was a radical shift in the level of participation of women in public political life, as major actors in the field of politics and resistance to the Israeli military (Giacaman 1989).

The first Intifada prepared the ground for negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel, with Palestinians calling for a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As negotiations were taking place in Madrid beginning 1991 (Mansour 1993), secret talks were also taking place between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) abroad, ending with the signing of the Oslo “Peace” Accords between the PLO and the Israeli government (Shlaim 2013:270), and the return of Yasser Arafat and other PLO officials to the occupied Palestinian territory. As a result, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Quasi-state formation under the PA took a neo-patriarchal centralized form whereby extended family structures were strengthened while organizations of civil society weakened, and law making was replaced by customary law, among other features (Frisch 1997). This inevitably led to the fragmentation and decline of the mass movement and popular

grassroots organizations of the Intifada period (Jad 2008), and the demobilization and disenfranchisement of civil society organizations, including women's and youth groups - and in effect, the general population. The shrinking space for public debate and collective agency, coupled with a systemic crisis facing the Palestinian authority with the continual expansion of Israeli settlements on the West Bank, and the continuation of negotiations with Israel over time with no resolution in sight, led to the gradual collapse of the Oslo negotiations between the PA and Israel (Hammami and Tamari 2001). By September 2000, the second Intifada had erupted, fuelled by widespread discontent over the shortcomings of the PA and the acceleration of Israeli confiscation and colonization of Palestinian land in defiance of international law (Hammami and Hilal 2001).

However, compared to the first Intifada, the 2000-2004 second Intifada had markedly different features. The first Intifada involved the civilian population at large in clashes with the Israeli army and border police, and was widespread and more difficult to control; the second Intifada was largely composed of clashes at Israeli army checkpoints stationed at the entrance of Palestinian towns or to control Israeli settlement roads in the West Bank. The Israeli army was therefore able to contain the revolt to specific sites, with increased militarization and use of helicopters, missiles, tanks (Hammami and Tamari 2001) and even F16 jet fighters aiming bombs at civilian areas. The experience was dehumanizing, with severe exposure of civilians to political violence and serious violations of human rights, including destruction of property - with Israeli army invasions of five West Bank towns with curfews for up to 45 consecutive days, resulting in the lack of water, electricity and access to medical care - with schools shut down or children schooled at gunpoint (Giacaman et al. 2002) - with homes and offices invaded and pilfered by the Israeli army, villages and refugee camps raided, indiscriminate shooting of tear gas, sound bombs and rubber as well as live bullets at innocent civilians and passers-by - and with individual and collective violation and humiliation (Giacaman et al. 2004, Giacaman et al. 2007a, Giacaman et al. 2007b). The Second Intifada was also a glaring reminder of how the women's and youth movements were excluded from the locus of political power (Johnson and Kuttub 2001). Poverty and continued dependence on aid remained features of life.

By 2007, a national unity government was formed which included representatives from Fatah and Hamas, the two main Palestinian parties, with the Islamic Hamas having won democratic elections in 2006. However, the national unity government was boycotted by Israel, most European countries and North America, and consequently collapsed, with Hamas taking control of the Gaza Strip. Although Israel withdrew its settlements from the Strip in 2005, it maintained control over access to the Strip by land, sea and air. This Gaza Strip Siege (Sayigh 2007) remains in effect today, blocking access to food and other vital items, as well as access to health, educational and other services in the West Bank or abroad. In addition, Israel has launched several military operations on the Strip in the past decade: two in 2006; two in 2008-2009; one in 2012; and the most recent 2014 summer war on Gaza, leaving thousands killed, injured and disabled, including children and women (AFP 2015). These circumstances will help explain the worse conditions of Gaza Strip youth as compared to those from the West Bank.

While some analysts have recently maintained that Palestinian youth are reluctant to engage in politics (Ahmad 2013), evidence points to the contrary, although the form and shape of participation have changed over the years. By early 2011, with the so-called Arab Spring as a backdrop, Palestinian youth were protesting in the streets of the West Bank and Gaza Strip against the divisions between Fatah and Hamas, in contrast to the usual protests against Israeli military occupation and colonization (Høigilt 2013). But such actions although evident were not sustained, leading to impressions of the continued demobilization of youth due to the triple constraints on activism imposed by the Israeli military as well as the oppression of Fatah and Hamas. Several other nonviolent mass mobilization initiatives led by youth have also taken place during the past few years, albeit sporadically and in unsustainable ways, and despite the triple constraints imposed on activism and social movements. In fact, such grassroots youth initiatives have emerged without links to or assistance from political factions (Høigilt 2015).

Local analysts describe the sudden and periodic upsurge of Palestinian youth as a third Intifada with a different form (Kuttab 2015), qualifying their description in terms of “lone wolf” or “leaderless actors” notable for their unusual mobilizing methods (“online inciters”). It is maintained that Palestinian youth activists have developed decentralized methods for organizing. The phenomenon of leaderless young people, mobilizing in decentralized ways, is understood to be the result of loss of faith in their political parties and leaders. It is also maintained that the Israeli responses to this youth unrest resemble the way in which the PA and Hamas contained and crushed the nonviolent 15 March movement in 2011, which drew large crowds (Dwonch 2016). In other words, it is the disillusionment with government and political parties that is the issue, rather than the loss of activism among Palestinian youth. This is the context framing the analysis of the P2Y Palestine data, which will focus on one of the elements (or outcomes) of social capital: linking social capital - that is, confidence in governmental institutions and political parties and their associated factors.

Linking Social Capital

The notion of social capital, where participation in group activities is understood as having positive consequences at the individual and community levels, goes back to Durkheim and Marx (Portes 1998). Bourdieu defined social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu 1986:248). The concept focuses on the positive consequences of sociability, and points to non-monetary attributes as important sources of power and influence. Portes rightly notes that social capital has “unattractive” features, also termed the downside of social capital (Portes 2014, Browning 2009). Indeed, in the current Palestinian context of patriarchy and increasing social and political conservatism (Kanazi 2007), social capital can - and does - have negative influences, especially on young people and women.

On the whole, social capital is generally conceptualized as promoting cooperation, collaboration and coordination, with micro- and macro-level outcomes. Political participation is situated in the macro outcomes along with good governance, increased efficiency of the judiciary, reduction in government corruption, and improved economic performance (Jordan and Munasib 2006). The micro level includes cognitive elements such as trust/confidence,

solidarity, reciprocity and social norms, in addition to structural micro-level elements such as horizontal organizational structure, collective/transparent decision-making processes, and accountability of leaders (Krishna and Shrader 1999). The trouble with such conceptualizations is the absence of context and structures of domination in the formula - that is, class, gender (and in the case of occupied Palestine, Israeli military occupation and colonization) as well as the political economy (Schram 2011) of globalization.

Authors of the 2004 version of the World Bank Social Capital instrument intended for use in developing countries concede to the notion that there are various approaches to understanding social capital (for example, the views of Portes versus those of Putnam), acknowledging that measurement is not straightforward and positing social capital as a multidimensional concept. They distinguish “bonding social capital” (ties to people such as family, neighbours, friends and work colleagues) from “bridging social capital” (ties to people who do not share similar characteristics), recognizing that boundaries between the two vary across contexts.

“Linking social capital” refers to ties to people in positions of authority such as the representatives of the public (governmental institutions and political parties) (Grootaert et al. 2004). It assesses the extent of the relations people build with institutions and persons who have relative power over them, and who can provide them with access to work and other resources (Hawkins and Maurer 2010). It can be defined as “norms of respect and networks of trusting relationships between people who are interacting across explicit, formal or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society” (Szreter and Woolcock 2004:655). Linking social capital differentiates between bridging relationships usually developed on equal status and power terms, and relationships linking people to vertical power differentials, especially when accessing private and public services. Linking social capital is therefore about relations of unequal power. It places power, inequality and the role of government into a central position in social capital theory, which helps in understanding how the rich relate to the poor in society, and connects the social and political realms in terms of power and power inequalities (Szreter 2002). Linking social capital can thus be used to assess one of the elements (the internal Palestinian context as opposed to Israeli military occupation, although there are interactions between the two) determining the degree of inclusion/exclusion that Palestinian young people experience.

In this report, analysis will focus on the prevalence among Palestinian young people of linking social capital and its associated factors. Linking social capital was measured using youth responses to questions on the trust/confidence (in Arabic these are the same word: *thiqa*) of young people in Palestinian governmental institutions and political parties.

1. METHODS

This is a cross-sectional study of a representative sample of young people 18-29 years old living in occupied Palestine (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip), with field work implemented between 13 October and 31 December 2015. Fieldwork was carried out by a local team of female interviewers, trained by and under the supervision of Palestinian staff of the Fafo Research Foundation with long-standing experience in conducting household sample surveys and polls in Palestine and elsewhere. All interviews were done face to face. Filled paper questionnaires were edited and computerized locally using a CS-Pro application developed by Fafo in Gaza. Double data entry was used, keeping the need for post-entry data cleaning to a minimum. Data files were prepared in collaboration between Fafo's office in Gaza and its head office in Oslo.

The sample is a stratified two-stage cluster sample of households where clusters were selected with systematic selection with inclusion probabilities proportional to size in the first stage. The sampling frame was that of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), based on the latest census and PCBS updates. In the second stage, households were selected through a random walk process. In households with youth, one youth was selected randomly using a Kish table. At the household level, the response rate was nearly 98.2 percent. Out of the more than 1,930 households in the original sample, 1,423 households were contacted, agreed to participate and comprised one or more eligible young person, i.e., an individual aged 18-29. The final youth data set comprises 1,353 respondents, where the gap includes some young people who chose not to participate, a few who provided unreliable answers (did not take the interview seriously), and some who were not reached even after two call-backs.

The research instrument was developed collectively by all Power2Youth country teams using qualitative work, following initial instrument development by Fafo. The questionnaire contained various sections of interest and relevance to the inclusion/exclusion main theme of this research project, and selected components of social capital.

Because this was an instrument intended for comparison among six Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Turkey), and considering the length of the questionnaire and the limited budget, it was not possible to include Palestine-specific questions related to exposure to the political violence of the Israeli army and Israeli settlers, or of the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. This may have confounded the results found in this report. Questions on public participation were not included in the Gaza Strip survey, where Gazans formed 40 percent of the sample, and have been excluded from the analysis also because the sample size left for the West Bank did not allow for rigorous statistical analysis. In addition, we have reason to believe that the public participation section contained significant under-reporting by West Bank youth because of the sensitivity of the questions, especially given the triple constraints (Israeli military, Fatah and Hamas) on activism which Palestinian youth endure. Giving credence to the suspicion of under-reporting in this section is the contrast between the proportion of West Bank youth who indicated their own participation, compared to the proportion reporting on the perceived influence of young people. There was a significant difference between the reports of activism of youth in general in the perceived influence section, as compared to questions about the activism of the respondents themselves in the public participation section. The confirmatory

focus group discussions also support this interpretation.

Frequency distributions of variables in the data set were inspected for missing data and inconsistencies. Using the weighted data set, recoded variables, initial cross-tabulations and significance testing were completed to check for initial associations. Scales were constructed for questions in certain sections which made socio-political sense and had a Cronbach’s alpha (which measures inter-rater reliability) of 0.7 or more - that is, if the set of questions measured a coherent construct. Scales introduced in the analysis included the “confidence in political organizations” scale (political confidence for short), which was defined as the dependent variable, and addressed the linking component of social capital. Table 1 contains the survey questions included in the political confidence scale. This construct had a very good reliability estimate (alpha of 0.86).

Table 1 | “Confidence in the political organizations” scale (alpha = 0.86)

All variables have two values. Responses of “a great deal” and “quite a lot” of confidence were recoded into “Yes” and responses of “not very much/a little” confidence and “none at all” were recoded into “No”.	
Question #	Item
TR18	The armed forces
TR19	The police
TR20	The courts
TR21	The (central) government
TR22	Local government
TR23	Political parties
TR24	Parliament
TR25	The civil service/public administration

A “discussion of public matters” scale was constructed from the items shown in Table 2, with a very good alpha of 0.81, and was included in the analysis.

Table 2 | “Discussion of public matters with others” scale (alpha = 0.81)

All variables have two values. Responses of “often” and from time to time” were recoded into “Yes” and the response “never or almost never” was turned into “No”.	
Question #	Item
PP35	National politics/current political events/affairs
PP36	Problems of corruption
PP37	Public services (water, waste management, electricity, transportation, etc.)
PP38	Environmental/ecological concerns
PP39	Security in the streets/public safety
PP40	Upcoming elections/party politics
PP41	The war in Syria
PP42	More say for/power to the young in Palestine

A “perceived youth participation in public life” scale composed of the questions listed in Table 3 was included in the analysis and had a good alpha of 0.71.

Table 3 | “Youth participation in public life” scale (alpha = 0.71)

All variables have two values. Some questions already had a dichotomous response, while the answers in other questions were recoded: responses of “very active” and “somewhat active” were recoded into “Yes” and “somewhat inactive” and “very inactive” were recoded into “No”.	
Question #	Item
PP43	In general, what do you think of young people’s participation in voluntary organizations in Palestine? Do you consider young people to be ...
PP44	Overall, do you think voluntary organizations are appreciating the membership and participation of young people?
PP45	In general, what do you think of young people’s political participation in Palestine? Do you consider young people to be ...
PP46	Overall, do you think political parties are appreciating the membership and participation of young people?
PP47	In general, when you consider young people’s level of engagement and activity in their local communities in this country, do you consider young people to be ...
PP48	Overall, do you think people are appreciative of young people’s local engagement?
PP49	Do politicians pay enough attention to issues of relevance to young people?

The scale for feeling safe included in the analysis also had a good alpha of 0.71, and comprised the questions found in Table 4.

Table 4 | “Feeling safe” scale (alpha = 0.71)

All variables have two values: Yes and No.	
Question #	Item
SP07	Do you feel safe from crime in your neighbourhood?
SP08	Consider your wider place of residence. In general, do you think it is safe to go out during the day?
SP09	And, do you think it is safe to go out after dark?

Finally, the “youth influence over various issues” scale used in the analysis had a good alpha of 0.77, and included the questions listed in Table 5.

Table 5 | “Influence of young men and women on various issues” scale (alpha = 0.77)

All variables have two values. Responses of “very much” and “much” were recoded into “Yes” and responses of “not so much” and “very little” were recoded into “No”.	
Question #	Item
OA19	In your opinion, how much are young women generally able to influence family decisions? Is it ...
OA20	In your opinion, how much are young men generally able to influence family decisions? Is it ...

OA21	In your opinion, how much are young women able to influence decisions of importance to their education? Is it ...
OA22	In your opinion, how much are young men able to influence decisions of importance to their education? Is it ...
OA23	In your opinion, how much are young women able to influence decisions of importance to their employment? Is it ...
OA24	In your opinion, how much are young men able to influence decisions of importance to their employment? Is it ...
OA25	In your opinion, how much are young women able to influence the choice of spouse/partner? Is it ...
OA26	In your opinion, how much are young men able to influence the choice of spouse/partner? Is it ...
OA27	In your opinion, how much are youth able to influence national politics? Is it ...
OA28	In your opinion, how much are youth able to influence local politics? Is it ...

Variables and scales were recoded based on their frequency distributions, means, standard deviations, and also our knowledge of the general understanding and distribution of the relevant responses in the country. Cross-tabulations using demographic and socioeconomic and other selected variables as well as the abovementioned scales were completed with the political confidence scale set as the dependent variable. In the cross-tabulations, the political confidence scale was transformed into three categories: no or little confidence in all political institutions; at least some confidence in 1-3 institutions; and at least some confidence in 4 or more institutions.

Following the bivariate analysis, we conducted multivariate analysis using binary-logistic regression. In the regression model, the political confidence variable was recoded into two categories, where the reference category consisted of no or little confidence in all eight political institutions compared to at least some confidence in one or more political institutions. The independent variables included in the analysis consisted of the variables found to be significantly associated with the political confidence scale in the bivariate analyses (the educational level of participants, region - West Bank compared to Gaza Strip - household economic status, the safety scale, importance of *wasta*, and the perceived influence of youth scale), also controlling for age and sex. In the regression analysis, some of the independent variables (age, household economic status, the safety scale, and the perceived influence of youth scale) were further recoded into two categories (Table 6). All statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 22.

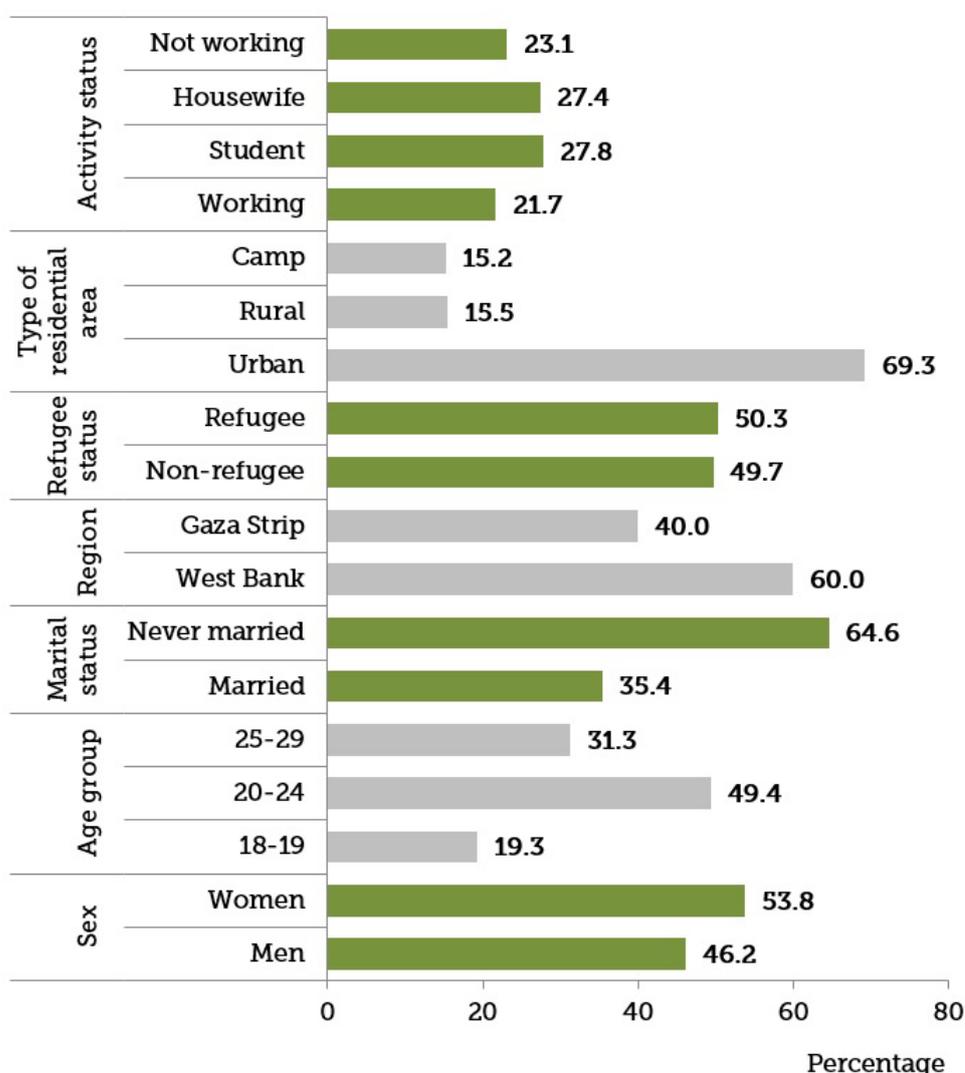
2. RESULTS

2.1 Sample Description

Our study sample consisted of 1,353 young people 18-29 years old, with 46.2 percent young men and 53.8 percent women, indicating an over-representation of women in the sample. Of the participants, 19.3 percent were 18-19 years old, 49.4 percent were 20-24 years old and 31.3 percent were 25-29 years old. The majority were single at 60.5 percent, with 34.2 percent married, 4.2 percent contractually married, 0.2 percent widowed, 0.8 percent divorced and

0.2 percent separated, bringing the total never married to 64.6 percent. About 60 percent were living in the West Bank at the time of the survey and the rest in the Gaza Strip. Fifty percent reported themselves as refugees of the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. Sixty-nine percent were living in urban areas, 15.5 percent in rural areas and 15.2 percent in Palestinian refugee camps in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. For occupation, 21.7 percent reported themselves as working, 27.8 percent as students, 27.4 percent as housewives and 23.1 percent as not working. The large majority had attended government schools at 76.2 percent, 6.6 percent private commercial, 5 percent private non-governmental and 12.1 percent United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) schools (Figure 1).

Figure 1 | Sample characteristics (weighted data) (%)

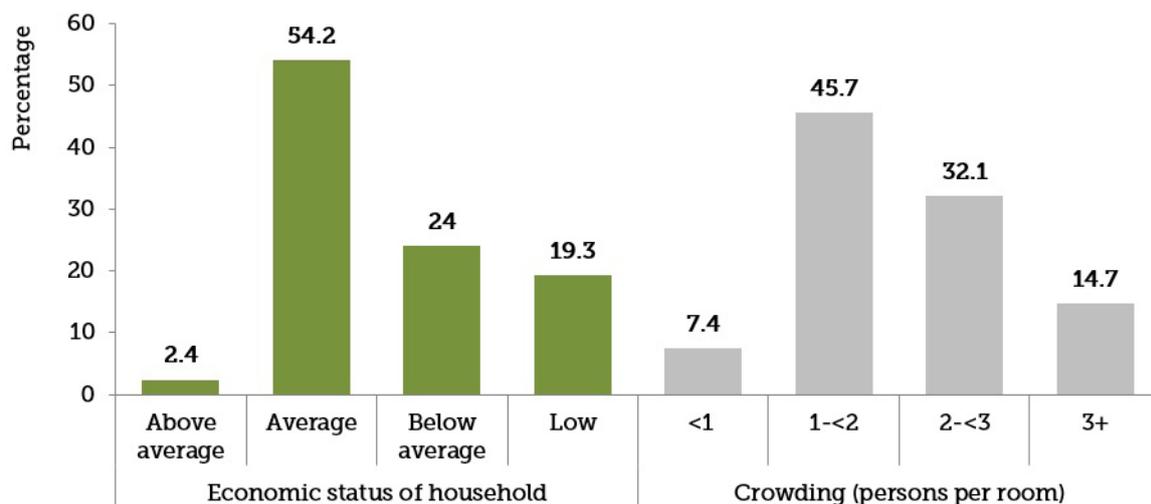


2.2 Dwelling and Household Economy

Of the total, 2.4 percent reported their household’s economic situation as above average, 54.2 percent as average, 24 percent as below average and 19.3 percent as low. For crowding levels at home, 7.4 percent reported living in homes with less than 1 person per room, 45.7

percent with 1 and less than 2 persons per room, 32.1 percent with 2 and less than 3 persons per room, and 14.7 percent with 3 persons or more per room (Figure 2).

Figure 2 | Dwelling and household economy (%)



2.3 Young People’s Views and Perceptions

There were various sections in the questionnaire which sought young people’s views and perceptions regarding a range of issues. These included a section on discussions of public matters which youth engage in, an indicator of their interest/involvement in politics, broadly defined (Table 6). The discussion of public matters scale indicated that 26 percent reported discussing 3 or less issues, 40 percent discussed 4-6 issues and 34 percent discussed 7-8 issues.

Table 6 | Discussion of public matters (%)

Topics	Often or from time to time	Almost never or never
National polices/affairs	64	36
Problems of corruption	64	36
Public services	81	19
Environment/ecological concerns	64	36
Street security/public safety	70	30
Upcoming elections/party politics	40	60
The war in Syria	53	47
More say/power to youth	63	37

Other sets of questions which formed constructs included respondent reports on youth participation in public life (Table 7). The computed construct using these questions revealed that 20 percent of youth reported influence in 2 or less items, 43 percent reported influence in 3-4 items and 37 percent in 5-7 items.

Table 7 | Reports of youth participation in public life (%)

Type of activity and level of appreciation	Yes or somewhat	Little or no
Youth participate in voluntary organizations	84	16
Voluntary organizations appreciate youth membership	50	50
Political participation of youth	82	18
Political parties appreciate youth membership and participation	41	59
Youth engagement in local communities	82	18
People appreciate youth's local engagement	52	48
Politicians pay attention to issues relevant to youth	18	82

A safety feeling scale was also created from the questions shown in Table 8. Combining these questions into one construct, 19 percent reported feeling safe in one item, 19 percent in two items and 62 percent in all three items.

Table 8 | Feelings of safety (%)

Item	Yes	No
Safe from crime	80	20
Safe going out during day	92	8
Safe going out after dark	65	35

Another construct used in this analysis is the respondent's perceived influence of young people on their lives in general (Table 9). Combining these questions, we found that 37 percent of respondents reported young people's influence in 6 or more of these issues, 36 percent reported influence in 7-8 issues and 27 percent in 9-10 issues.

Table 9 | Respondents' perceived influence of young people on various issues (%)

Item	Very much or much influence	Not much, a little or no influence
Young women influence family decisions	49	51
Young men influence family decisions	91	9
Young women influence decisions about their education	67	33
Young men influence decisions about their education	93	7
Young women influence decisions about their employment	55	45
Young men influence decisions about their employment	93	7
Young women influence decisions about choice of husband	66	34
Young men influence decisions about choice of wife	96	4
Youth able to influence national politics	54	46
Youth able to influence local politics	51	49

Finally, young people were asked about the importance of *wasta* (connections and cronyism) in finding work: 78 percent reported that *wasta* was very important, 13 percent important, 5

percent not so important and 4 percent not important at all. That is, the majority reported *wasta* as being important for finding work.

2.4 Political Confidence as Linking Social Capital

We constructed a political confidence scale (a measure of the degree to which young people have confidence in the various Palestinian governmental institutions and political parties on the West Bank and Gaza Strip) as one of the outcomes of macro-level structures and processes, and searched for the possible factors associated with the political confidence scale, the dependent variable (Table 10). Overall, 43.2 percent reported having no or a little confidence in all 8 institutions, 31.4 percent reported some or much confidence in 1-3 institutions and 25.4 percent had confidence in 4-8 institutions.

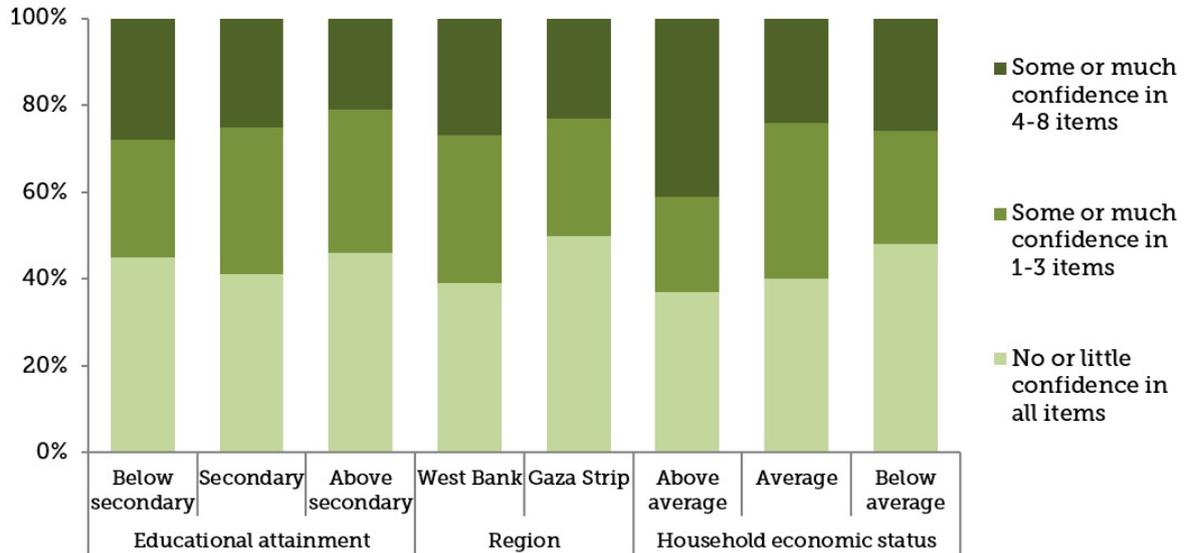
Table 10 | Political confidence (%)

Item	A great deal, a lot	Not much, none at all
Confidence in security forces	30	70
Confidence in police	35	65
Confidence in courts	39	61
Confidence in central government	27	73
Confidence in local government	28	72
Confidence in political parties	9	91
Confidence in parliament	12	88
Confidence in civil service	29	71

2.5 Political Confidence by Selected Associated Demographic and Socio-economic Factors

Cross-tabulating political confidence with the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of participants we found that age and sex were insignificantly associated with political confidence (these will nevertheless go into the regression analysis as is usually done). However, those with more than secondary school education reported significantly lower levels of some or much confidence in 4-8 items in the scale at 21 percent compared to 25 percent among those who have completed secondary schooling and 28 percent who reported having below secondary schooling. Results on employment status (work/schooling/homemaking/unemployment) were of borderline significance and are not reported. There were important differences by region with 50 percent of Gazans reporting no or little confidence in all 8 items, compared to 39 percent among West Bankers, with no differences found for residence or crowding rates at home. There was a strong association with the economic status of the household at 48 percent with no or little confidence among those reporting below average household economic situation, compared to 40 percent among those with average and 37 percent among those with above average household economic status, a result which is likely confounded by the Gaza Strip responses (Figure 3).

Figure 3 | Political confidence scale by demographic and socio-economic associated factors (%)



2.6 Political Confidence by: Discussions of Public Matters; Perceived Youth Participation in Public Life; Safety; General Youth Influence; and *Wasta*

We found no associations between the political confidence scale and some scales we built that measure particular constructs. However, strong associations were found between the political confidence scale and the youth discussions of public matters scale (which suggests that young people are interested in politics in general), with 52 percent of those with no or little political confidence in the 8 items of the scale reporting discussing 3 or less public matters, compared to 39 percent reporting discussing 4-5 matters and 42 percent discussing 7-8 matters.

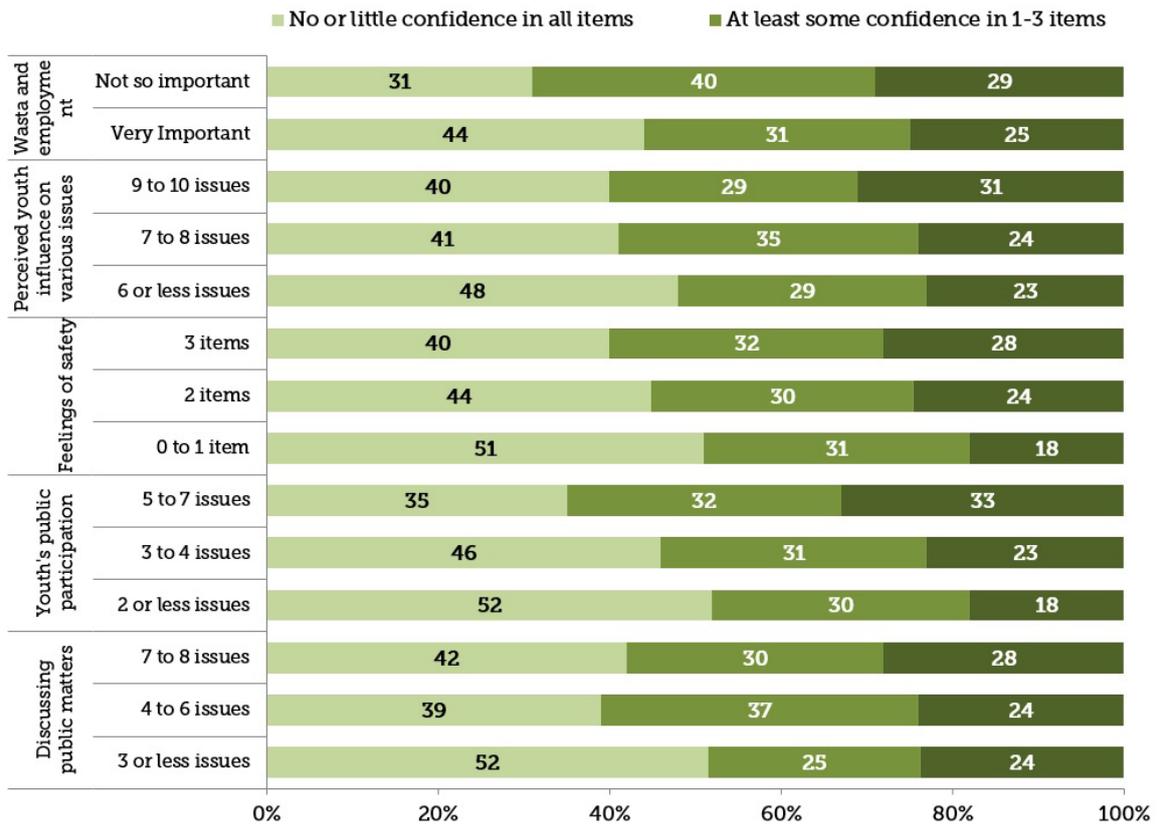
There was also a strong association between the political confidence scale and the perceived youth participation in public life. As one would expect, 52 percent of those who reported youth participation on 2 or fewer issues had no or little confidence in all 8 items of the political confidence scale, compared to 35 percent among those who reported 5-7 items with perceived youth participation.

A strong association was also found between the political confidence scale and the safety scale. Fifty-one percent of those who do not feel safe at all or report feeling safe in one item reported little or no political confidence, compared to 44 percent reporting feeling safe in two items, and 40 percent feeling safe in all three items.

The scale measuring the perceived influence of young people on various issues related to their lives was also associated with the political confidence scale. Here we found that 48 percent of those reporting influence of young people on 6 or less issues reported no or little confidence in the 8 items of the political confidence scale, compared to 41 percent among those reporting 7-8 influences young people have, and 40 percent among those reporting 9-10 influences.

Finally, 44 percent of those reporting that *wasta* (connections and cronyism) is very important for finding employment also reported no or little political confidence in all 8 items, compared to 31 percent among those who reported that *wasta* is not so important or not important for finding employment (Figure 4).

Figure 4 | Political confidence by selected associated factors (%)



2.7 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis revealed no association between the political confidence scale (TR18-TR25) and some of the variables found to be associated with political confidence in bivariate analysis, notably gender. However, regression analysis revealed associations between political confidence and a number of other variables. Compared to those 23-29 years old, those 18-22 years old were 1.29 times as likely to report political confidence (p=0.023). West Bankers were 1.4 times as likely to report political confidence compared to those living in the Gaza Strip (p=0.005). Those reporting above average household income were 1.27 times as likely to report political confidence (p=0.043). Those reporting feeling safe in all 3 safety items on the scale (SP07-SP09) were 1.37 times as likely to report political confidence compared to those reporting feeling safe in 2 or less items on the scale (p=0.007). Those who reported that *wasta* was not so important for obtaining work were 1.59 times as likely to report their confidence in the various arms of government compared to those reporting that *wasta* was important for finding work (p=0.02). Finally, those who reported that they perceived young people to be actively participating in public life and politics in 5 to 7 items (PP43-PP49) were 1.6 times as likely to report political confidence compared to those who reported young

people’s participation in 4 or less items combined in the scale (Table 11).

Table 11 | The political confidence scale by associated factors

Variables		P value	OR	95% confidence interval for OR	
				Lower	Upper
Sex	Male	0.297	0.888	0.710	1.110
	Female	-	1.0		
Age	18-22	0.023	1.294	1.036	1.616
	23-29	-	1.0		
Region	West Bank	0.005	1.396	1.105	1.763
	Gaza Strip	-	1.0		
Economic status	Average or above	0.043	1.267	1.008	1.594
	Below average	-	1.0		
Safety scale	Safe in 2 or less items	-	1.0		
	Safe in all 3 items	0.007	1.367	1.088	1.717
<i>Wasta</i>	Important or very important	-	1.0		
	Not so important or not important	0.023	1.591	1.065	2.377
Participation in public life	4 or less items	-			
	5-7 items	0.000	1.597	1.263	2.018

Variable(s) entered into the model: gender, youth age recoded, region, economic status recoded, *wasta*, and youth participation in public life scale recoded.

3. CONFIRMATORY FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In order to confirm and help explain the findings of the quantitative portion of the study, we conducted two focus groups with youth, one in the North West Bank and one in the Centre West Bank. In organizing the focus group discussions, we were conscious of trying to reach as many youth as possible within the same age groups as the survey participants. Given that older youth are more likely to be employed or have other commitments, more of the participants were from the younger age brackets and were students during the time of the focus group discussions. The focus group in the North was conducted with youth from diverse backgrounds, residing in urban and rural areas in the North West Bank. Many of the participants in this focus group discussion were current or former volunteers with community organizations, including the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programme in the North West Bank, and were recruited for participation through contacts with CBR. While many of these participants were students at the time of the focus group discussion, they were also more heavily involved in community and other activities outside of their university setting, on average. The focus group discussion in the Centre was conducted at Birzeit University, with participation primarily from students from various of the University faculties, as well as one high school student. Students primarily resided in urban areas in the Centre, with

one participant residing in a village. We obtained assistance from the university student council in recruiting participants, and consequently we had a larger share of participants who were affiliated with political parties at the university level. As is often the case with qualitative research, the sample does not necessarily reflect the general population in terms of distribution and general characteristics. However, participants did come from diverse backgrounds and reflect various strata and characteristics that are part of Palestinian society more broadly. Table 12 and Table 13 provide an overview of the age and gender distribution of the focus group participants.

Table 12 | Characteristics of participants, North focus group discussions

	Gender	Age	Education/work status	Specialty	Area
1	F	19	Student	Sociology	Deir Sharaf village/ Nablus
2	F	19	Student	Accounting	Huwwara town/Nablus
3	F	20	Student	Sociology	Huwwara town/Nablus
4	M	18	Student	Media	Jamaeen village/ Nablus
5	M	18	Student	Accounting	Jamaeen village/ Nablus
6	F	15	Student	-	Nablus city
7	F	17	Student	-	Nablus city
8	M	15	Student	-	Deir Sharaf village/ Nablus
9	M	22	Student		Qabalan village/Nablus
10	F	18	Student	Speech therapy	Nablus city
11	M	24	University graduate		Asira al-Shamalya village
12	F	20	Student	Health administration	Salfeet town
13	F	20	Student + work	Development studies	Salfeet town
14	F	27	University graduate	Math	Sarra/ Nablus
15	M	17	Tawjihi student + work		Sabatia village/Nablus
16	M	17	Tawjihi		Sabatia town/Nablus
17	F	20	Work		Beita village/Nablus
18	F	20	Student	History	Till village/Nablus
19	F	20	Student		Till village/Nablus
20	F	22	University graduate	Business administration	Burqa village/Nablus
21	F	21	Student	Graphic design	Burqa village/Nablus

Table 13 | Characteristics of participants, Centre focus group discussions

	Gender	Age	Specialty	Member of student council
1	M	21	Accounting	Yes (Fatah)
2	M	20	Accounting	Yes (Fatah)
3	M	20	Mechanical engineering	Yes (Left)
4	M	21	Civil engineering	No
5	F	20	Speech therapy	Yes (Hamas)
6	F	20	Media	Yes (Hamas)
7	F	19	Law	No
8	F	19	Computer science	No
9	F	19	Math	No
10	F	17	Visitor high school student	No political affiliation - not University student

The focus group discussions lasted for about an hour and a half. We began the discussion with an overview of the study and the aims of the focus group discussion, and then followed up with more general questions to gauge what youth know about political and government institutions and their confidence in these institutions. During the second half of the discussion, we presented key findings from the statistical analysis and asked participants for their feedback.

3.1 Knowledge of and Confidence in Political Institutions

Most participants were aware of at least one type of political institution included in the political confidence scale (see Table 5). Participants in the North had closer working relationships with political and governmental institutions through their community work, and often drew on these experiences in their discussions of these institutions. Participants from the Centre focus group, which consisted primarily of full-time university students who were not very active in community work outside the university, discussed these institutions more generally in terms of what they saw or heard about from the experiences of others. In some ways, their understanding was more theoretical, and drew less on concrete personal experiences. In general, participants noted that they had little confidence in political institutions, especially political parties, and national governments.

In both groups, participants explained that especially since the political split between Fatah and Hamas in 2006/2007, people have generally lost confidence and trust in political parties. In the focus group in the North, participants noted that political parties are mainly concerned with their image, as exhibited through commemorations and parades or during elections, and play a minimal role on the ground otherwise. One respondent noted: “There are no political parties except during their festivals/ commemorations”. This critique of the effectiveness of political parties was also noted in the focus group in the Centre, and is consistent with the survey results where only 9 percent of youth surveyed had confidence in political parties (Table 10).

While participants generally had little confidence in political organizations/institutions, there were some exceptions, particularly with some public service sectors. Given that many of the participants in the North are volunteers and have had closer working relationships with local government and municipalities, many of them drew on these experiences in their assessments. Many participants noted that there was a lot of corruption in these institutions, citing *wasta* (connections) and other forms of nepotism, as well as corruption stemming from political leaders focusing on their personal interests above the common good. However, some participants noted having had positive experiences with their local municipalities and governorates, and having generally found them to be receptive to and interested in the needs of youth volunteers. Participants noted that the range of responses depended on individual experiences with public institutions/organizations, which varied locally. More generally, there appeared to be greater confidence in certain segments of public service, including education, and health to some extent (although there was more of a critique of the health sector), as well as customs enforcement and civil defence (including the fire department). Participants noted that especially with public service institutions, people's confidence in these institutions depends primarily on their personal experiences with the services that are provided. The overall confidence in these institutions was relatively low, with various critiques of the ineffectiveness of the public service sector, but was higher than the confidence young people expressed in political parties. These results are consistent with the overall low levels of confidence in public institutions, based on the survey results, albeit with more confidence in some organizations compared to others, e.g., the lowest confidence in political parties (9 percent) and the highest levels of confidence in courts (39 percent).

3.2 Explaining the Statistical Results

During the second part of the focus group discussions, we highlighted the key results from the statistical portion of the study and asked participants for their opinions and explanations of these findings. In what follows, each main statistical finding is italicized and followed by explanations and reactions to the finding.

No gender variation in confidence in political/governmental institutions among youth. In both focus group discussions, youth were not surprised by this finding, and explained that they would not expect to see any gender differences in terms of political confidence because, as they saw it, youth were impacted by current conditions irrespective of their gender. Some youth also noted that the gender differences that were more prominent in the past are less prominent now, especially as women have been playing a more active role in public society, government and the labour force.

Younger youth (aged 18-22 compared to youth aged 23-29) have more confidence in political/governmental institutions. This finding was also unsurprising to youth participating in the focus group discussions, and was mainly explained in terms of the length of time youth have actually had to interact with political and governmental institutions. The general sentiment was that with time, youth become increasingly bitter with these institutions. Here, youth in both groups stressed employment opportunities, and the problem of unemployment. Youth explained that between ages of 18 and 22, most youth would be studying or in some form of training, but after that, and especially when they are looking for employment, their confidence in these institutions is likely to decrease, given the very high unemployment rates, especially

among youth. Furthermore, as youth get older, they are more likely to be trying to secure their future and establish themselves, and would have greater need of these institutions. The participants in the focus group discussions expected that given the inability of these institutions to meet the needs of youth, they will likely prove increasingly disappointing as youth get older.

Youth who reported that their household income is average or above have more confidence in political/governmental institutions compared to youth who reported less than average household income. When we asked youth more generally about whether they thought that economic status would have an impact on youth's confidence in political institutions, many participants noted that they do not see a clear connection because all youth are affected by the overall political conditions, irrespective of their own financial status. However, when we presented them with this finding, many of the participants explained that during interactions with these political institutions, youth coming from higher socioeconomic backgrounds may be treated differently, and youth from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face greater discrimination. Others also explained that those with higher socioeconomic status are also more likely to be well connected and may be more likely to feel that these institutions are looking out for their interests, while those from poorer backgrounds may feel that these institutions have not done enough for them or have turned their backs on them.

Youth in the West Bank had more confidence in political/governmental institutions compared to youth in the Gaza Strip. This finding was explained by youth largely in terms of the poor living conditions in the Gaza Strip. They explained that youth in the Gaza Strip lead very difficult lives, and would likely have less confidence in the ability of political institutions to improve overall living conditions. Furthermore, the restrictions imposed by the siege on the Gaza Strip was seen to place greater obstacles on existing political and governmental institutions to improve living conditions in the Gaza Strip. Many also noted that even when political and non-political organizations build infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, the great insecurity stemming from the increased warfare there in recent years would leave youth expecting this infrastructure to sustain damage or to collapse under bombing. Some youth also explained that during war, people in the Gaza Strip are probably closer together, despite their own political leanings or affiliations, with greater emphasis being placed on safety, the public good and support for the resistance. However, in the aftermath of these wars, the population has had to face increasingly difficult living conditions, and a deepened sense of insecurity. At the same time, political institutions are unable to remedy the root causes of the poor conditions in the Gaza Strip.

Youth who reported that they felt safe in their neighbourhoods had more confidence in political/governmental institutions. The participants in both focus group discussions thought that this finding was logical. They explained that if people feel safe in their neighbourhood, they are less likely to have negative impressions of the political institutions in their area. Conversely, when youth have positive experiences with certain political institutions, like the police or fire department, they are more likely to have greater confidence in these organizations and feel safe where they live.

Youth who reported that *wasta* was not important or not very important had more confidence in political/governmental Institutions compared to youth who thought that *wasta* was important. As mentioned previously, youth in both focus group discussions felt that *wasta* was omnipresent in their society, and especially within political and governmental institutions. In one focus group discussion, two youth noted: "If they don't think *wasta* exists, they're benefitting from it". Most participants thought it would be unlikely to find anyone who did not think that *wasta* exists, especially since all the participants felt it was very present and visible in various aspects of life. Most youth had a negative view of *wasta* and saw it as a major impediment to development and to equitable distribution of resources. One participant noted: "There is a lot of aid that comes into Palestine, but it does not make it to most of the population". Participants thought that survey respondents who answered they did not think *wasta* was important were likely in a privileged position and did not have to worry about access to political and governmental institutions.

Youth who thought that youth participated actively in society (in local community, volunteer organizations and political institutions) had more confidence in political/governmental institutions. The participants in both focus group discussions mentioned that they did not feel there was adequate representation of youth in political and governmental institutions, especially given the lack of turnover in important positions and the lack of new opportunities and openings for youth, particularly in the aftermath of the political division/conflict between Fatah and Hamas. In terms of this specific finding, participants in the focus group discussions thought that respondents who thought that youth were active in society were likely to be more active themselves. They explained that when youth are actually more closely involved in these institutions, they are more exposed to the scope and breadth of their work, and may have more respect for them as a result. Some participants noted that youth have a more generalized idea of these institutions, and are likely to have negative views of them, especially in light of the challenges youth face in their daily lives and in trying to establish themselves. However, when they have closer interactions with these institutions, they are more likely to see the specificities of their work, especially when it comes to public service institutions that interact with people on a closer level. It is worth noting that there was general consensus that greater visibility and inclusion of youth in political and governmental institutions is likely to increase the confidence of youth in these institutions.

4. DISCUSSION

This study is part of a multi-country study examining youth reports indicative of their views regarding their inclusion/exclusion from participating in political, economic and social life and associated factors. This report pertains to responses from Palestinian young people 18-29 years old living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A total of 1,353 persons were included, with some over-representation of young women at 54 percent, given that the PCBS reported that the ratio of males/females among youth 20-29 years old was 104.1 males per 100 females in 2015 (PCBS 2015:1).

With this report focusing on young people's linking social capital as one of the measures of their views of their inclusion/exclusion, a political confidence scale was created with 8 questions asking them about the degree of confidence they have in the Palestinian security

forces, police, courts, central government, political parties, parliament and civil service. Importantly, the research instrument did not include questions on the Israeli occupation measures of exclusion, siege and suffering related to war. A total of 32 percent reported having no or little confidence in any of the 8 Palestinian institutions, another 32 percent reported some or a lot of confidence in 1-3 institutions and the remainder reported some or much confidence in 4-8 of these institutions. Thus a total of 64 percent reported no, little or only some confidence in up to 3 governmental institutions.

These simple frequencies are indicative of a generalized dissatisfaction and alienation on the part of young people regarding the Palestinian governmental institutions and political parties - that is, those in power and with power over their lives - thus reflecting a strong sense of exclusion and low linking social capital. It must be remembered that the qualitative investigation which we completed prior to completing the statistical survey had indicated that in general, young Palestinians did not feel particularly excluded in the face of the exclusion of all of Palestinians living in occupied Palestine with Israeli military occupation, siege and blockades. However, questions related to the internal Palestinian political domain included in this survey specifically reveal that there are different ways (domains) in which inclusion/exclusion operates in our context. While all may be excluded because of the Israeli military occupation, there is another sphere of exclusion that young people suffer from related to the internal workings of the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Thus, the exclusion that Palestinian young people endure is compounded because of both external and internal constraints on participation.

The low linking social capital revealed in this survey - lack of confidence/trust in governmental institutions and political parties - has not stopped young people from participating politically by resisting Israeli military rule, and despite its serious constraints. Quite the contrary: as stated in the introduction, young people have been sustaining what some call a third Intifada, but with a different form. This form reflects their lack of confidence in government and political parties. They are active in the streets and at Israeli army checkpoints, refusing to take orders from anyone, including government and political parties. The results of this study confirm what was reported based on a literature search of published and grey reports about Palestinian young people's disillusionment with government and political parties, but their continued activism against Israeli military occupation (Bailey and Murray 2009).

Examining the factors associated with young people's linking social capital, we find that there are no significant differences in the level of linking social capital by gender, suggesting that disillusionment is all-encompassing. Our confirmatory focus group discussions also revealed that youth believed that gender difference in linking social capital is not to be expected because all young people's lives have been negatively affected by the current conditions irrespective of their gender. In fact, local analysts have noted that the Palestinian population overall, not only young people, is disillusioned and does not trust political parties or governmental institutions, with activism sidestepping traditional politics. The absence of leadership especially during crises, the continued Israeli military occupation and colonization of Palestinian land with no reprieve in sight, the continued division between Fatah and Hamas, also with no end in view (Tartir et al. 2015), and the generally vulnerable situation of most Palestinian communities make for a painful living reality characterized by increasing loss of trust and hope for reducing the suffering which Palestinians endure.

Although initially the educational attainment of young people was associated with their linking social capital, regression results revealed age as the determinant instead, with youth 18-22 years old found to have more confidence in governmental institutions and political parties compared to those 23-29 years old. This is an expected result as younger participants may have had less experience in looking for work and not finding it, may have still been studying, and not yet at the age where it is expected of them to earn income, get married and form their own family. Older youth would be facing these experiences and pressures more often than younger ones, which can explain the finding in terms of disillusionment over time, which is likely cumulatively. PCBS reported that the unemployment rate among university graduates reached 52 percent in the second quarter of 2015 (PCBS 2015:3), which can partially explain our results. Additionally, the PCBS' Youth Survey of 2015 indicates that young people report an average age of 25.4 years for men and 21.1 years for women as the appropriate age for getting marriage and forming their own family (PCBS 2016:95). These findings support our interpretation that older youth are more likely to face the challenge of social pressures to get married and form a family in a situation of high unemployment, with a consequent decline in linking social capital with age. The confirmatory focus group discussions explained these results in similar terms, focusing on the very high unemployment rates among young people who are trying to establish themselves in society. And with the inability of governmental institutions to meet the needs of youth, youth were seen as likely to become increasingly disappointed with governmental institutions and political parties as they get older.

Young people from poorer households reported less political confidence compared to the better off. These results are understandable given the link between the political and economic domains, especially in relation to governmental and political party social policies and how those affect living standards and finding work. In a 2014 study conducted with Palestinians 30-40 years old, it was found that respondents integrally linked the political domain (composed of Israeli military occupation, the Fatah and Hamas split and corruption) to the economic domain which included housing, work, marriage and education (Barber et al. 2014). And although at first youth included in the confirmatory focus groups did not see a clear connection between political confidence and household income, once our findings were presented to them many thought that youth from better-off families are likely better connected and may benefit from these institutions more than poorer young people; and that youth from better-off families may be treated differently by governmental institutions, with youth from poorer backgrounds perhaps facing discrimination, all of which can explain our results.

The finding that youth from the West Bank have more political confidence compared to those in the Gaza Strip is not surprising, given the dire conditions in the Gaza Strip imposed by the siege, and the economic and social strangulation people there endure. And it is likely - in the Gaza Strip especially - that the confounding effect of the Israeli measures and siege on the Gaza Strip is pronounced, compounded by the inability of the Hamas government to address siege conditions, and the negative effects of the Fatah-Hamas split on Palestinian resistance to injustice and the calls for freedom. In fact, in 2015 the UN reported that Gaza could become uninhabitable in less than five years due to ongoing "de-development" (UNCTAD 2015). Youth included in the confirmatory focus group discussions were not surprised at all by these findings, and described life in the Gaza Strip as very difficult. But they also added that the restrictions imposed by the siege make it difficult for governmental institutions to improve

living conditions. Moreover, some noted that as soon as infrastructure is rebuilt following warfare, it is likely to be damaged again by bombing. This reality leads to the assumption that there is no point in rebuilding infrastructure, an outlook which contributes to the misery experienced in the Strip and to the people's lack of confidence in government institutions and political parties.

Regression results also revealed that youth who reported feeling safe in their neighbourhoods had more confidence in political/governmental institutions than those who did not feel safe. Confirmatory focus group participants reported that this finding was logical as safety is linked to political institutions such as the police and fire department. While safety and security are normally directly linked to and are the responsibility of government, in this context the Israeli military occupation plays an important role. This is because of periodic Israeli attacks, nightly raids, choking siege and other forms of aggression which Palestinian governments are unable to address because of a severe power imbalance with Israel. These results recall those of the study conducted on 30- to 40-year-old persons in Palestine, where safety/security/stability was identified as part of the political domain and as, in the Palestinian context, central to the ability of people to function (Barber et al. 2014). Indeed, feeling unsafe, afraid and threatened is very much part of daily life, more so in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank, but relevant to both. Our lived experience as researchers on the West Bank has prompted us to develop a human security measure - focusing on fears and threats to safety and security - from the bottom upwards utilizing Jennifer Leaning's conceptualization of a sense of home, a link to community and a positive and hopeful sense of the future (Ziadni et al. 2011); and demonstrating the consequences of social, economic and political exclusion on life quality and health. We also argued for the need to include a political domain in the World Health Organization's Quality of Life BREF instrument, relevant not only to Palestine but likely other conflict-affected zones (Mataria et al. 2009).

As one would expect, results indicate that youth who reported that *wasta* (connections, cronyism) was not important or not very important had more linking social capital than those who thought that *wasta* was important. It is interesting to note that confirmatory focus group discussions emphasized the notion that if young people think *wasta* does not exist, then they must be benefiting from it; and that *wasta* is visible in various aspects of life, constituting a major impediment to development and the equitable distribution of resources. Much has been written about cronyism and corruption in the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank (Brynen 1995, Sayigh 2007), with recent polls indicating that as many as 81 percent of Palestinians living in occupied Palestine believe that there is corruption in the Palestinian Authority institutions on the West Bank and the Hamas institutions in the Gaza Strip (Dana 2015), and further that *wasta* and corruption are endemic in both regions, and contribute to public dissatisfaction. This is confirmed by the results of our study on young Palestinians.

Finally, young people who reported that youth participate actively in society were found to have more confidence in political/governmental institutions than those who thought youth were not active. This result, although to be expected, should be interpreted with caution, as it may be a reflection of youth reports on their own activism but deflected towards youth in general. In truth, it would have been risky and dangerous for young people to divulge information on their own activism, given the toxic combination of Palestinian government and Israeli occupation restrictions on basic freedoms, including the freedom of speech and

participation. Our confirmatory focus group discussion results endorse our interpretation that those reporting an active role for youth in society were likely to be more active themselves, to have more interactions with governmental/political institutions and to perhaps have more respect for these institutions as a result.

CONCLUSION

This study builds on previous understandings and research conducted by the authors of this report as well as several others who have been researching Palestine and the Palestinians under Israeli military occupation. It tells of an intricate and interrelated mix of internal political, economic and social conditions which reduce the capacities of Palestinian youth to participate actively in society. It reveals the low levels of linking social capital - a measure of exclusion and an aspect that has not been systematically and sufficiently studied, as the focus of research on Palestinians by and large has been on the effects of Israeli political violence on the occupied population in general and on youth, adolescents and children in particular. Thus what this study demonstrates is a deep-seated lack of trust, and understandable disappointment with - or even resentment of - those in power and those who have power over young people's lives: Palestinian governmental institutions and political parties. Such views are likely to be relevant to all Palestinians in general. The difference here is that youth are just beginning to build their lives as adults, yet lack the necessary support of those in power, and consequently the ability to properly function as adult humans. Stated differently, Palestinian young people lack the space for active participation within Palestinian society. This contrasts with Palestinian youth's active participation against Israeli military rule, which continues through the writing of this report.

This lack of trust in governmental and political institutions is not merely about the internal workings and the corruption of government and political parties. It is also about these institutions' ineffectiveness in finding solutions to the main obstacle facing Palestinians: Israeli military occupation and colonization of Palestinian land - that is, the struggle for freedom, sovereignty and self-determination - as well as the divisions between Fatah and Hamas and the power dynamics behind such divisions. In this sense, Palestinian youth survive under a triple captivity (Israeli occupation, the Palestinian Authority and Hamas) which to some extent is similar to the triple captivity endured by the wives and mothers of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails (Giacaman and Johnson 2013). Paradoxically however, it is precisely these circumstances which have also propelled Palestinian young people to action against Israeli military rule in a leaderless revolt.

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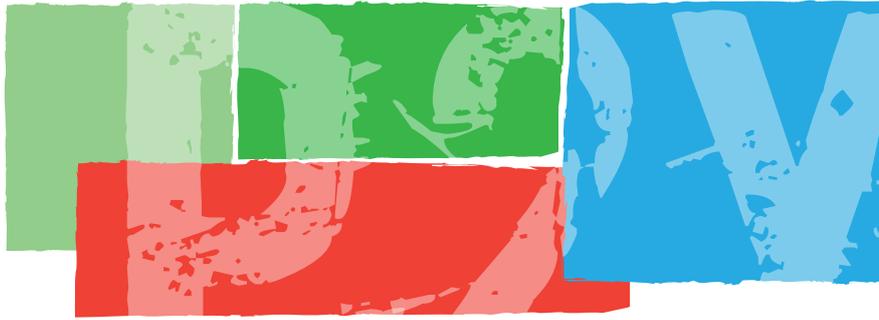
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POWER2YOUTH is a research project aimed at offering a critical understanding of youth in the South East Mediterranean (SEM) region through a comprehensive interdisciplinary, multi-level and gender sensitive approach. By combining the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres and a macro (policy/institutional), meso (organizational) and micro (individual) level analysis, POWER2YOUTH explores the root causes and complex dynamics of the processes of youth exclusion and inclusion in the labour market and civic/political life, while investigating the potentially transformative effect of youth collective and individual agency. The project has a cross-national comparative design with the case studies of Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories and Turkey. POWER2YOUTH's participants are 13 research and academic institutions based in the EU member states, Norway, Switzerland and South East Mediterranean (SEM) countries. The project is mainly funded under the European Union's 7th Framework Programme.

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