

## **The Collective Memory of the Catastrophe –Nakba- and Resilience among Palestinian Refugee Youth in the West Bank**

**Jawad A. Dayyeh**

### **Abstract**

The present dissertation aims to investigate the collective memory of the Catastrophe –Nakba- and resilience among Palestinian refugee youth in the West Bank. The study approached the literature as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which addressed both theoretical and applied research. The significance of this study is that it is the first, to the author knowledge, which deals with this theme, in the seventy-one years following the Nakba. The study will be an important reference point for those concerned with the Palestinian question in general and the area of collective memory in particular.

To achieve this end, the study adopted the descriptive method using a triangulation quantitative and qualitative design approach, which is appropriate to the exploratory nature of the research, and has provided more meaningful, in-depth data. The target population consisted of 15974 Palestinian refugee youth residing in the refugee camps of the West Bank in 2018. The overall sample was constituted of 1000 youth (508 males and 492 females) selected in a stratified method, according to gender and region. Collective memory of the Nakba was evaluated using an index of a 27-item scale. The researcher approached the participants at the refugee camps in the West Bank, and they were asked to complete the questionnaire; however, the interviews with young persons between 10–14 years of age were conducted in their homes. Data were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), and the resulting high scores indicated a high level of collective memory.

The findings indicate that Palestinian refugee youth preserve a very strong collective memory of the Nakba. Collective memory is based on the affected individuals' shared values, norms, experiences, common destiny, and their common history, all of which are more widespread among Palestinians, taking into consideration their extremely tragic experiences of the Israeli occupation, through the seventy years following the Nakba; these are stored in the Palestinians' collective memory and are inerasable, indicating that they know of their hometown, which their forefathers were forced to leave. Their right of return is sacred and imprescriptible, and they will not hesitate

to sacrifice their lives if that helps the Palestinian people return to their homeland.

Moreover, the findings reveal that the variables of gender, exposure to Israeli violence, parents' level of education, and GPA are significant predictors for the collective memory of the Nakba.

Furthermore, the findings confirm that the traumatic events of the Nakba have become imprinted upon the collective memory of Palestinian refugee youth. It is a fact that refugees may age and die, but the youth can never forget. Since we are Palestinians, we were Palestinians, and we are still Palestinians, we will stay like this for ever; we shall return to Palestine, sooner or later. This determination means one thing; as the refugees continue to be denied the right of return, the collective memory of the Nakba continues to burgeon in the Palestinians' collective consciousness. This is the story of the Palestinians, the story of the persecution of a people, the expropriation of their land, and the reproduction of the collective memory of the Nakba.

In light of the study results and the discussion, the study recommends giving the concept of collective memory of the Nakba the utmost importance in the curriculum and in the output of different media outlets. Further research is essential to expand the understanding of the collective memory of the Nakba aspects among Palestinian refugee youth, within different methodological contexts. More research in the area of the traumatic experiences of the Nakba among generations of Palestinians is essential. A comparative study of the collective memory of the Nakba among Palestinian youth in the diaspora is also recommended.

**Keywords:** Collective memory, Catastrophe, Nakba, resilience, Palestine, refugee, youth.

### **Additional information**

Alcázar, Javier Rodríguez. Committee President, Professor of Moral and Political Philosophy, Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, University of Granada, Spain.

Macías Amoretti, Juan Antonio. Internal Examiner, Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, University of Granada, Spain.

Banat, Bassam. External Examiner, Associate Professor of Sociology (Statistical Methods and Research Techniques), Department of Applied Sociology, Al-Quds University, Main Campus, Jerusalem- Abu Dies, Palestine.



Ramos Tolosa, Jorge. External Examiner, Professor of Contemporary History, Faculty of History, University of Valencia, Spain.

Comins Mingol, Irene. External Examiner, Professor of Philosophy and Sociology, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, University of Jaume I, Spain.

López Martínez, Mario. Supervisor, Professor of Contemporary History, Institute of Peace and Conflict, University of Granada, Granada, Spain.

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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Jawad A. Dayyeh, Assistant Professor, Institute of Migrations, Doctoral School of Humanities and Social and Legal Sciences, Line of research, Social, Legal and Political Analysis of Migration and Human Development: Welfare State and Diversity Management, University of Granada, Spain. Independent Researcher, United State of America. Email: [jdayyeh@gmail.com](mailto:jdayyeh@gmail.com)