

## **The Traumatic Experiences Of The Catastrophe –Nakba– After 72 Years As Perceived By The First Generation**

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### **Abstract**

The current dissertation aims to investigate the traumatic experiences of the Nakba as perceived by the first generation. The study approached literature as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which tackled both theoretical and empirical research. The importance of the study is that it is the first topic, which proposes trauma among the first generation of Palestinian refugees and with large sample size, covering all refugee camps in the Palestinian territories following 72 years after the Nakba. The study is a vital reference for psychologists and sociologists in general and those interested in refugee memory narratives and the impact of trauma on individuals (i.e., those interested in the Palestinian cause) in particular.

To achieve this end, the study adopted the descriptive approach using the quantitative questionnaire design method, which is appropriate to the research and provides in-depth data in the narratives of those who experienced the traumatic events in the Palestinian context. The target population consisted of 12182, the first generation of Palestinian refugees residing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip refugee camps in 2020. The overall sample was constituted of 1365 the first generation of Palestinian refugees (539 males and 826 females) selected in a stratified method, according to gender, region, and camps.

Traumatic experiences of the Nakba were assessed using an index of a 46-item scale of Checklist of Traumatic Experiences (CTE), with international measurement standards; it was suitable as to psychometric properties, transcultural validity, and conciseness of previous use in refugee populations. The researcher approached participants in refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and asked them to complete the questionnaire. However, interviews with older persons aged 75 and above were conducted in their homes inside the camps. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-20).

The findings revealed that Palestinian first generation reported a moderate level of the traumatic experiences of the Nakba (M 3.44 SD 0.81). The study explored the demographic breakdown over

the traumatic experiences of the Nakba with the aim of identifying any differences. Findings showed that gender, religion degree, social status, number of children, education level, and age are significant predictors of the traumatic experiences of the Nakba as perceived by the first generation. However, it was found that region do not indicate any statistically significant differences.

Moreover, the study reveals that there is an inverse statistically significant correlation between the number of children and the traumatic experiences of the Nakba as perceived by the first generation. However, a statistically significant positive correlation was found between age and the traumatic experiences of the Nakba as perceived by the first generation. Additionally, there are differences in the traumatic experiences of the Nakba as perceived by the first generation according to gender and the region, from one hand, and according to the region and place of residency on the other hand. Also, statistically significant differences in the traumatic experiences of the Nakba as perceived by the first generation were found according to gender and religion degree.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that the narratives of the first generation of the Nakba refer to many traumatic experiences, including arrest and humiliation, being stuck in camps and diaspora, helplessness, anxiety and fear, insecurity and uncertainty, death and mourning, loss of dignity and the right to return, and loss of everything (land, human, properties, dream of the return, identity, and dignity).

In light of the study results and the discussion, the study recommends demanding international organizations to pressure Israel to release information about Palestinians missing since and after the Nakba, both those who have been deported by Israel to other countries, and those who have been killed and buried in mass graves or cemeteries of numbers for its tragic effects on the life of their families in particular, and Palestinians in general. Further research is essential to expand the understanding of the collective memory of trauma of the Nakba among Palestinian refugees in general within different methodological contexts and within determinants in the Palestinian context. More research is needed on traumatic experiences among Palestinian generations and tracking of subsequent traumas. It is also recommended a comparative study of the traumatic experiences of the Nakba among first and second-generation forcibly displaced in the diaspora. As well, perceived effectiveness of coping strategies and manage stress, especially when faced with several tragic events.

**Keywords:** Traumatic experiences, Catastrophe, Nakba, refugees, Palestine.

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