

**An-Najah National University  
Faculty of Graduation Studies**

**The Lived Experience of Long-Term  
Detention in Israeli Jails and Life after:  
A Qualitative Documentary Analysis**

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Requirements for the Degree of Master of Public Health, Faculty  
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Palestine.**

**2021**

# **The Lived Experience of Long-Term Detention in Israeli Jails and Life after: A Qualitative Documentary Analysis**

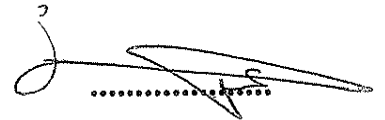
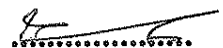
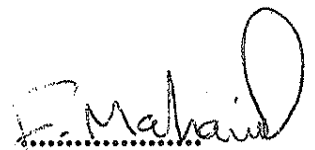
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## ***Dedication***

***“Palestinian prisoners came up with the term ‘the crisis of freedom.’ Being in prison is the most challenging thing in life. It is worse than torture,’ Former prisoner***

***The researcher dedicates this work sincerely to God.***

***To all Palestinian Political Prisoners who sacrificed their years of life and freedom in prison’s darkness and the occupier’s oppression for freedom and liberation of the homeland. God released them all***

## *Acknowledgment*

*To our supervisor, Dr. Adnan Sarhan, I am using this opportunity to express my gratitude to you for supporting me in this research. I am thankful for your guidance, patience, constructive criticism, and friendly advice during this work.*

*To An-Najah National University Faculty of Graduation Studies Department of Public Health, all the respectful teachers I met and taught me during this Journey.*

*Last but not least, to my father, my mother my family, and my beloved ones.*

## الإقرار

أنا الموقع أدناه، مقدم الأطروحة التي تحمل العنوان:

## The Lived Experience of Long-Term Detention in Israeli Jails and Life after: A Qualitative Documentary Analysis

### التجربة الحياتية للاعتقال الطويل في السجون الإسرائيلية والحياة اللاحقة: تحليل وثائقي نوعي

أقر بأن ما اشتملت عليه هذه الأطروحة إنما هو نتاج جهدي الخاص، باستثناء ما تمت الإشارة إليه حيثما ورد، وأن هذه الأطروحة كاملة أو أي جزء منها لم يقدم من قبل لنيل أي درجة أو لقب علمي أو بحثي لدى أي مؤسسة تعليمية أو بحثية أخرى.

### Declaration

The work provided in this thesis, unless otherwise referenced, is the researcher's own work, and has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree or qualification.

Student's names:

اسم الطالب:  بلال سلامة

Signature:

التوقيع: 

Date:

التاريخ: ٣ / ١١

## **List of abbreviations**

<b>PTSD</b>	Post-traumatic stress disorder
<b>OPT</b>	Occupied Palestinian Territory
<b>PPP</b>	Palestinian Political Prisoners
<b>GSS</b>	The General Security Service (in Israel)
<b>IHL</b>	International Humanitarian Laws

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**The Lived Experience of Long-Term Detention in Israeli Jails and Life  
after: A Qualitative Documentary Analysis**

**By**

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**Abstract**

The Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank began in 1967; and resulted in the arrest of (750,000) Palestinians, which equals about (20%) of the Palestinian population. In this conflict, arrests and movement restrictions have increased, leading to the continuous violation of human rights regulations by treating prisoners in the worst manner. The unjust judicial system has deprived the prisoners in the Israeli jails of a fair trial.

Research has suggested that organized violence and torture have long-term psychological effects that persist throughout the lifespan. A study found that many victims of torture need psychiatric treatment. After the prisoners' release, they may suffer from PTSD and depression. According to a study, many released detainees said that they suffer from mental health problems related to depression, worry, and psychological distress

**Aim:** This study explores the influence of detention experience and the adaptation process after prolonged detention of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails.

The researcher used a qualitative design, thematic content analysis, and analyzed the documentary film "Beyond the Wall". Three major

themes came up: The experience of detention, the reintegration experience after release into society, and the long-term effects of captivity.

The analysis of the Palestinian political prisoner's narrations showed those who faces obstacles and poor treatment highlights the need for psychological responses. As the source of tension is political, psychological survival models derive their strength from the political reality. The survival resources were ideological and nationalist.

This study concluded that Prison is a life-controlling experience. Being in prison for a long time could affect the prisoner's psychological state in many different ways, which make it improbable to generalize the impact. Some prisoners may suffer from some Post-traumatic stress symptoms, some may suffers from some symptoms of depression.

**Keywords:** Ex-detainee, Detention, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israeli jails, PTSD, Depression.

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Since the emergence of the Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, over 20% of the Palestinians are illegally imprisoned, leading to the imposing of Israeli control over the Palestinians' life, depriving them of their simple human rights, The Israeli forces keep arresting Palestinians daily. Israeli forces detained many Palestinians for no apparent reasons and punished them collectively by following extreme measures (Latte Abdallah, 2019).

One million Palestinians have experienced detention since 1967. Five thousand seven hundred men and women detainees are currently held in Israeli jails, including 220 minors, 36 minors from Jerusalem are under house custody, 38 women detainees, 500 administrative detainees, and 700 sick detainees. Fifty-six detainees are in jails for over 20 years, 27 were jailed before the Oslo Accords, and 570 detainees have been sentenced to life, and 221 detainees from the captive movement are martyrs since 1967.

**Administrative detention**, meaning incarceration without charge

The Israeli forces detained Palestinians as political hostages, violating the International Humanitarian Laws (IHL). Over 50,000 administrative detention orders against Palestinians were issued. Still, they increased since 1967, reaching 27,000 orders from September 2000 until

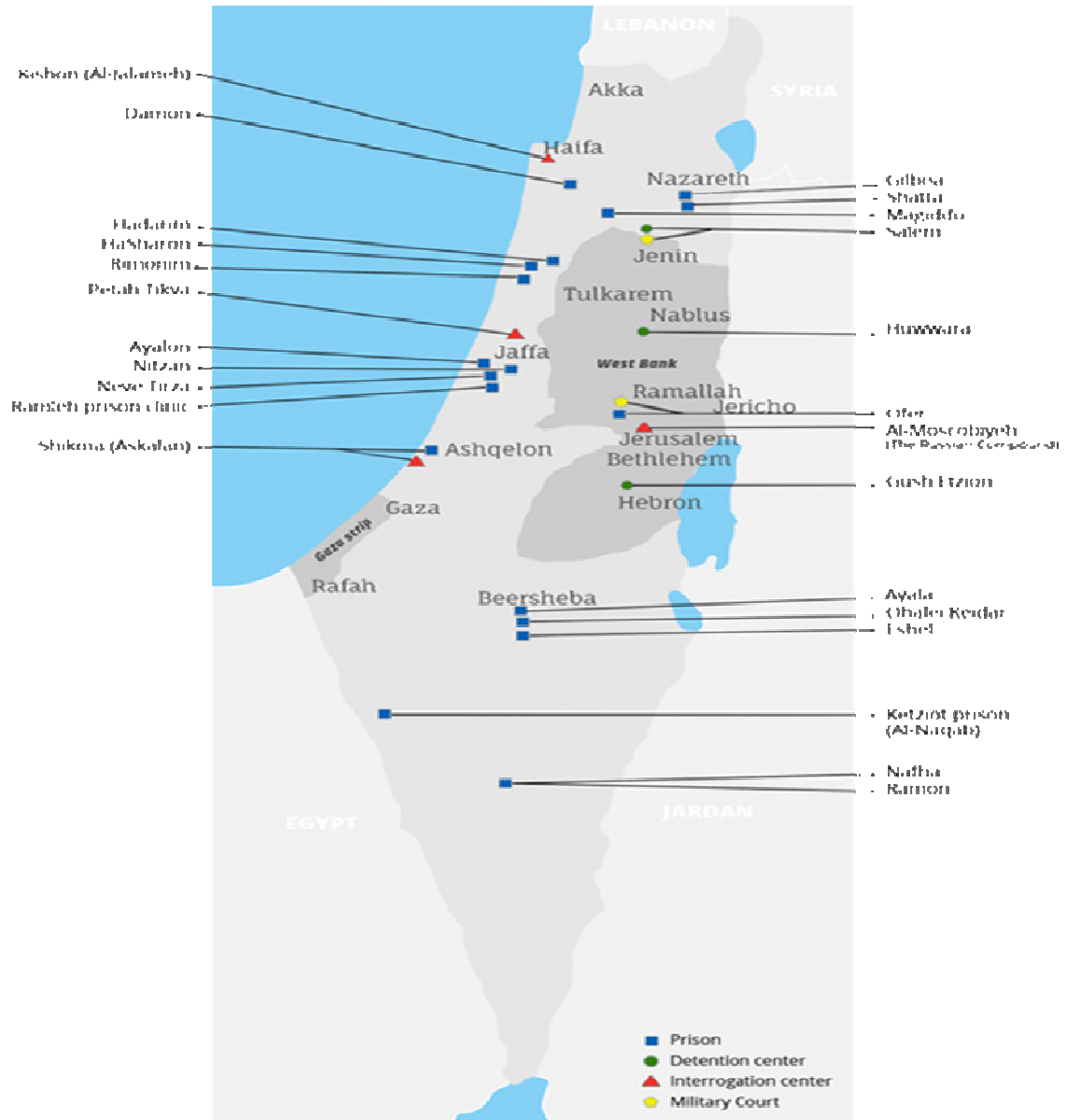
now. Palestinian prisoners held many hunger strikes individually and collectively as last option to end their detention (Ex-DetaineesAffairs, 2019).

### **The Health conditions of Palestinian Detainees in Israeli Jails**

The Palestinian detainees' health keeps deteriorating due to the constant physical and psychological torture. This is done by taking away essential medical care and medicine. Which is a clear violation of the articles (91, 92), of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the articles (31, 30, and 29), of the Third Geneva Convention, which gives prisoners the right to be treated appropriately. Over 700 Palestinian detainee's suffered from medical negligence. Their medical cases range from cancer, shot injury to mental disease (Addameer, 2019a).

### **Distribution of detention centers**

There are about 25 military detention centers and prisons in the Palestinian territories: 4 interrogation centers, 4 military detention centers, and 17 prisons. Israeli uses these places to torture Palestinians physically and psychologically (Addameer, 2019b).



**Figure (1): Distribution of detention centers;**  
**Source: Add Ameer (Addameer, 2019b).**

## **Laws and legislations against detainees' rights**

The Israeli racist laws, which oppose human rights, increased between 2015-2017 to support their occupation and settlements. They drafted 185 laws in 2015, violating detainees' rights and their rights of self-determination (HUMANRIGHTSWATCH, 2019).

Israeli General Security Service investigators have used torture for many years to get information since 1987. The GSS has interrogated Prisoners over the years by using all kinds of torture.

list of alleged interrogation methods that includes: "depriving the interrogee of sleep for a number of days by binding him or her in painful positions; playing loud music; covering their head with a filthy sack; exposing the interrogee to extreme heat and cold; tying them to a low chair, tilting forward; tightly cuffing the interrogee's hands; having the interrogee stand, hands tied and drawn upwards; having the interrogee lie on his back on a high stool with his body arched backwards; forcing the interrogee to crouch on his toes with his hands tied behind him; violent shaking of the detainee, the interrogator grasping and shaking him; using threats and curses, and feeding him poor-quality and insufficient amounts of food

Of course, the Israeli Army Supreme Court allowed it officially by developing new torture styles implemented on 85% of the Palestinians to break their will (B'TSELEM, 2007).

Prisoners' living conditions in the Israeli prisons mirror human rights' utter violation, prisoners are not provided with enough blankets and covers. overcrowded prisons and the lack of enough ventilation (MIFTAH, 2012).

## **1.2 Aim, objectives, and study questions**

This study explores the influence of imprisonment and imprisonment reintegration obstacles after long years of being in prison in the Israeli jails.



## **Objectives**

- To explore the impact of the whole experience of detention and coping style during the long detention period.
- To get an in-depth insight into how ex-detainee deals with their life after release into society and how they cope.

## **Study questions**

How did the ex-detainee explain their life before and after a long period of detention?

How did the ex-detainee express quality of life during imprisonment experience?

How did the ex-detainee express coping style during imprisonment and after being freed in society?

## **1.3 Problem statement**

Recent statistics show that about 6000 Palestinian Political Prisoners (PPP) are currently held in Israeli jails (Ex-DetaineesAffairs, 2019). The Palestinian territory is still under Israeli occupation. For that, the problem of imprisonment and the suffering will continue.

According to a study conducted in 2016, many released detainees said that they suffer from mental health problems related to depression, worry, and psychological distress (Fazel, Hayes, Bartellas, Clerici, & Trestman, 2016).

After the prisoners' release, they suffer from PTSD and depression. A study in 2006 found that many victims of torture need psychiatric treatment (Rights, 2012).

A study aims to examine long-term consequences of political repression during the Soviet occupation of Estonia. Psychopathological variables such as diagnoses of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression as well as positive results were assessed. The strongest predictor for current and lifetime PTSD symptoms was the perceived life threat during imprisonment. Persecution after release also predicted the maintenance of PTSD symptoms. Higher age of participants, higher frequency of traumatic encounters, political activity of the participants prior to arrest and disclosure about traumatic events were related to higher PTSD symptom level. The overall satisfaction with reparation as well as the posttraumatic growth index was high in this sample. These findings suggest that the long-term psychological consequences of political imprisonment which persist into old age are related to a number of factors (Rebassoo, 2009).

Research has suggested that organized violence and torture have long-term psychological effects that persist throughout the lifespan. A survey done in Romania aimed to examining the prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other disorders and symptoms, all present in old age, as long-term consequences of politically motivated violence in a comparison design. Results shows that Lifetime prevalence of

PTSD was 54%. In the case of participants left untreated, PTSD persisted, often over four decades, such that current PTSD was diagnosed still in a third of the survivors. Other clinical conditions such as somatization, substance abuse, dissociative disorders, and major depression were also common among the former political detainees and often associated with current PTSD. Concluded that political detention may have long-term psychological consequences that outlast the changes in the political system (Bichescu et al., 2005).

Considering the evidence presented about political prisoners' imprisonment and torture and the mentioned statistics. The mental health of Palestinian Political Prisoners (PPP) in Israeli jails becomes a significant Palestinian public health problem.

#### **1.4 Conceptual framework**

Palestinian prisoners of Israel (or as used by the Israel Prison Service: Security prisoners) refers to Palestinians imprisoned in Israel in the context of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. The future of Palestinian prisoners detained by Israel is considered central to progress in the Israeli–Palestinian peace process. Common accusations that result in prison sentences for Palestinians include being members of the Palestine Liberation Organization, engaging in or planning sabotage, and raising a Palestinian flag.

Imprisonment, detention, and captivity used in this study intra changeably as the duration of the spent years in Israeli jails.

Ex-prisoners or ex-political prisoners the term used in this study as former political prisoners as the political prisoners freed into society.

Long term detention is the term used in this study showing the duration spent in Israeli jails was 10 years and more up to 27 years.

Coping strategies, coping models the terms used in this study to show any coping style used by former political prisoners to survive the experience during imprisonment and outside.

The most widely cited identification of coping is that it is “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external or internal demands that appraised as taxing or exceeding the person’s resources” (Richard S Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Not effectively coping can result in developing Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a psychiatric disorder that can occur in individuals who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a serious accident, a terrorist act, war, or other violent personal assault. People with PTSD have intense, disturbing thoughts and feelings related to their experiences that last long after the traumatic event. They may relive the event through flashbacks or nightmares; they may feel sadness, fear, or anger; they may feel detached or estranged from other people. People with PTSD may avoid situations or people who remind them of the traumatic event. They may have strong adverse reactions to ordinary things as a loud noise or an accidental touch. (Publishing, 2013).

Besides, because of failing to cope effectively, the person may develop depression, which is a psychological state in which a person is unfortunate because of physical problems that could be mild or severe. Its symptoms can experience dejection mode, interest loss of happiness and energy, excessive panic or guilt, and a desire to commit suicide(Publishing, 2013).

**Chapter Two**  
**Literature Review**

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

This section aims to review the latest literature reviews on long time detention experience, the impact of detention on political prisoners, and the process of reintegration into society.

#### **Coping strategies due to trauma (long imprisonment and torture)**

Trauma affects individuals' psychological well-being to different degrees in terms of time, severity, and symptomatology. After experiencing a traumatic event, such as assault, disaster, torture, or an accident, some may suffer trauma spectrum symptoms for weeks or months. In contrast some people continue to suffer these symptoms for a longer time (Kessler, Sonnega, Bromet, Hughes, & Nelson, 1996) cited in (Ehlers & Clark, 2000).

A study aimed to identify the nature of the trauma of liberation and the methods of adaptation used by the liberated Palestinian prisoner, as well as to reveal the relationship between the trauma of liberation and the methods of adaptation used to confront them in addition to uncovering the differences in both the liberation shock and the methods of adaptation, the most important results were the absence of a relationship between the shock of liberation and the methods of adaptation and the presence of differences in the average shock of liberation among prisoners held for a period of one year or less, and detainees held for four years or more, as there were differences in

psychological adjustment methods attributable to the age of the prisoner when detained between the category 18 years and less and the category 19 years to 25 years (Dukhan, 2020).

A study on the political prisoners in East Germany in the 1960s - 1970s shows that the individual differences regarding the reaction to trauma play a more effective role in post-traumatic psychopathology and not the severity of the traumatic experience (18).

The reaction to trauma is divided into two processes: Primary appraisal and secondary appraisal, so under a stressful condition, one initially perceives the threat and then tries to cope with the stress (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).

A study focused on ex-prisoners' psychological situation and the impact of coping methods in predicting Palestine's psychological distress. Results show that ex-prisoners were more avoidant and prone to denial. However, the non-prisoners were the opposite. The former shows mental problems or traumatic issues, while the latter shows a low level of psychiatric symptoms and distress: Individuals exposed to torture can cope with these violent experiences using their political commitment and emotional regulation capacity (Punamaki et al., 2008).

Another study on former Palestinian prisoners shows that emotion-focused coping mechanisms are helpful in the long run, whereas problem-focused coping is helpful in the short-run to prevent developing post-traumatic symptoms (K. Kanninen, Punamaki, & Qouta, 2002).



A study on refugees argues that the refugees' coping strategies can be active and passive. Political action is the primary base of active coping strategies, whereas religion is the primary base for passive coping strategies (Khawaja, White, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008).

Similarly, a study on Tibetan survivors of torture showed that survivors expressed that political and spiritual coping were the most helpful for their sufferings (Elsass, 2009).

Another study focuses on the coping mechanisms of life-sentenced Irish prisoners, which showed that they use coping mechanisms such as getting involved with work/education, maintaining family contact, and access to therapeutic and support services (Richardson, 2012).

Yet another study in Turkey examined coping strategies of the prisoners of Diyarbakir Military Prison. It followed how prisoners cover the four-year absence from actual life; 30 interviews were conducted, showing coping methods, namely expressing their feelings of sadness, anger, and fear or shame (Gençer, 2014).

However, one study describes the coping models of the interviewed prisoners. This study mentions seven various coping models reflecting on their suffering, weaknesses, and strengths. It shows that the older the prisoner is, the higher the level of torture may affect him because he adapts to his distress by avoiding or escaping from talking about them (Qouta, Punamäki, & El Sarraj, 1997).

In an article, the researcher used the Palestinian prisoners' movement as a case study to explore how prisoners' everyday acts of resistance, including the establishment of a 'counter order' of parallel institutions, the development of a political education system, and day-to-day non-cooperation, are crucial for maintaining a sense of agency, gaining rights, and transforming power relations within, and at times, beyond the prison space. The research demonstrates how extending the repertoire of prison-based tactics beyond hunger strikes facilitates the subversion of both the spatial and temporal boundaries of the prison to allow for a disruption of the intended power dynamics established by the state (Norman, 2020).

### **Psychological outcome due to imprisonment**

A study done in Romania tested the impact of PTSD in the cases of prisoners who have been in prison for over four decades. Fifty-four percent suffer from PTSD, somatization abuse, and dissociative disorders too. Results concluded that political imprisonment leads to long-term psychological results as the political system changed (Bichescu et al., 2005).

A survey conducted in the United States of America in 1998 aimed to examine the Vietnamese's' ex-political prisoners' relationship between PTSD and torture experiences. The survey sample comprises 51 ex-political prisoners by comparing their cases with 22 cases based on Vietnamese versions of the Hopkins Symptom Checklist 25 and the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire. It relates torture to psychiatric suffering

due to the refugees' situation, so they needed support to treat their depression and PTSD (MOLLICA et al., 1998).

Another study shows the growth of PTSD in offenders' perception, relations, and meaning of life. They studied coping ways assigned for PTSD with 365 prisoners who sought emotional support and religious coping. To conclude, high degrees of PTSD related negatively to psychotherapy and chaplaincy (Vanhooren, Leijssen, & Dezutter, 2018).

A survey conducted in Gaza considers protective patterns of violence against political prisoners who suffered from maltreatment. It examined 176 male Palestinian prisoners who suffered from PTSD. Results show that insecure exposure to torture led to high levels of PTSD. In contrast, secured exposure to torture was less vulnerable to PTSD. Both cases had the PTSD, but at different levels (Katri Kanninen, Punamaki, & Qouta, 2003).

Similarly, a study tackled the severity of the experiences of torture and the level of PTSD in Gaza. Results show that the more prisoners are object to torture and psychological deprivation, the more they suffer from long-term imprisonment effects, which may lead prisoners to think about marriage, financial conditions, and other blending problems (Sarraj, Punamäki, Salmi, & Summer-field, 1996).

Another study aimed at identifying the relationship between optimism & pessimism and psychological hardness, and detects differences in optimism - pessimism and psychological hardness, according to the

variable marital status, political affiliation, educational qualification, and the number of years in detention. The study sample consisted of (200) prisoner editor, the study results indicate the existence of a statistically significant correlation between optimism and psychological hardness. The results showed a statistically significant differences in psychological hardness has released prisoners for the category of (6-10) years ( ابو اسحاق (سامي عوض، 2013).

### **The process of reintegration into society**

Finally, few studies focused on the prisoners' reintegration into society, such as alienation. A study conducted in Ireland focused on rebuilding their lives. It found that they needed support to emerge in society, which needs psychological training following their release (Brand, 2016).

One study of the reintegration of prisoners found that it is tough to deal with financial issues, employment, education, and relationships since there is evidence that prisoners suffer from isolation and coping resistance (Rolston & Artz, 2014a).

**Conclusions:** The literature helped the researcher to understand some points of the method used. Moreover, it helped provide more insight and a logical understanding of the topic. This study aims at expressing the psychological effect of detention and the coping styles during detention. In addition, if the sentence period is not long enough, their studies help examine the impact after a short period of release.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Methods**

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methods**

This section aims to explain the methodological steps.

#### **3.1 Study design**

In this study, we used qualitative documentary analysis.

A qualitative design is the best design to get in-depth and more insight into people's experiences, emotions, and feelings, the socio-cultural individual relationship.

Qualitative research is an inductive, subjective inquiry process done in a natural setting to build a complex, holistic picture described in words, including reported informal and personal language of informants' detailed views (Slevitch, 2011).

Qualitative research aims to systematically describe and interpret issues or phenomena from the individual or population point of view, thus generating new concepts and theories (Mohajan, 2018).

The audio-visual texts are not mere realities observed neutrally by the cameras and the microphones. As Figueroa (2008) points out, instead, researchers' qualitative approaches may analyze narratives generated through the filmmaker's perspective (Figueroa-Dreher, 2008; Priya & Viswambharan, 2015).

### **What is content analysis?**

“A research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

“Any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings.” (Patton & Patton, 2002).

The content analysis uses text-based qualitative data such as newspaper articles, children’s books, interview transcripts, and advert or film scripts. Content analysis can be quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative researchers may search for specific words, phrases, or ideas in the data and count them up.

Qualitative researchers attempt to extract “meaning” by searching for themes in the data. They will not add numbers up or do any statistical analysis. It is a more sensible approach. The sampling method is unlikely to be random; it is far more likely to be purposive sampling. We know the chosen texts to be examples of the particular topic under investigation (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

### **3.2 Tool: Documentary film (Beyond the Walls) short preview**

Beyond the Walls 01 Aug 2012 | Palestine Filmmaker: Ahmed Adnan Al Ramahi:

“We followed Arabs released from Israeli jails as they attempt to adapt to their new lives on the outside.”

*“Nothing is harsher than imprisonment. It is the cruelest form of torture.” A former Palestinian prisoner*

This film tells the story of Arab and Palestinian captives detained in Israeli jails and the adaptation after their release.

Upon release, the prisoners faced several difficulties adjusting to a new life of freedom, albeit within an occupied territory.

They explained their mixed feelings about society’s changes and the political landscape experienced upon release from the day-to-day monotony of prison life.

Beyond the Walls contains beautifully filmed interviews and novel graphics to provide a moving portrait of the interviewees and the emotions and feelings they are describing the filmmaker (Al-Ramahi, 2012).

After watching the documentary film, we researched to collect more information about the documentary. The documentary filmed was between 2010 and 2012. Al-Jazeera channel viewed the documentary.

The film is around 47 minutes start with animated pictures drawing people in prison.



### 3.3 Setting

The film maker held interviews in everyone's house in the living room. Released prisoners told their stories about their hard time dealing with their imprisonment period. Describing how they deal with their lives post imprisonment and what changes and challenges they have faced during that time.

### 3.4 Participants

The film introduced 8 patriots from the Palestinian resistance living in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Jordan. They are all Palestinian by nationality. Detained in different periods, from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth, and released at some times in the late seventeenth to recent years. The minimum sentence period was ten years to a maximum of 27 years.

Between the releasing time and the year of the interviews, everyone lived in his society for over ten years.

**A brief biography of these ex-detainees (NO 8) one female seven males all married**

M. AL J. Palestinian former prisoner.

A. A-S. Palestinian lives in the West Bank. Imprisoned 27 years, released in 2003.

A. AH. Palestinian lives in Syria. Imprisoned 16 years.

S. AL. Palestinian lives in the West Bank. Imprisoned 15 years, released in 1985.

T. Al H. Palestinian lives in Syria. Imprisoned 12 years, released in 1979.

T. H. Jordanian lives in Jordan. Imprisoned 12 years, released in 1983.

A. Y. Palestinian lives in Lebanon. Imprisoned 17 years, released in 2004.

M. M. Palestinian lives in Lebanon. Imprisoned ten years, released in 1979.

### **3.5 Data analysis**

The steps of the thematic content analysis process:

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Initial coding generation
3. Search for themes based on the initial coding
4. Review of the themes
5. Themes identification and labelling
6. Report writing

After watching the film 8 times and transcribing all the dialogue in Arabic and English, the researcher chose thematic content analysis to analyze all the film dialogues. Consequently, three themes came up.

Themes and subthemes of the study:

- ❖ The experience of detention.
  - ◆ Recalling the hardships
  - ◆ Coping models
- ❖ The reintegration experience after release into society.
  - ◆ The socio-cultural and political shock
  - ◆ Life after detention-emotional distress
- ❖ The Long-term effects of detention.
  - ◆ Obsession, compulsion
  - ◆ dreams (nightmares)
  - ◆ Success no regret (positive growth)

Qualitative researchers rarely speak in terms of validity and reliability because these issues are largely framed in terms of quantitative research. Instead, the more likely criteria are credibility and trustworthiness, as developed by Lincoln & Guba (1985).

One specific issue in terms of reliability is the calculation of inter-rater reliabilities, which by definition requires more than one coding (i.e., "rating") of the data. But this approach primarily applies to content analysis, where the goal is to guarantee the systematic use of a code book. It is less relevant to the kind of interpretive process that is central to thematic analysis.

### **3.6 Ethical consideration**

The researcher received the Institutional Review Board (IRB) accreditation from An-Najah National University before starting the study procedures.

As many ethical considerations were raised because of online data and confidentiality issue, we can find the full video on the YouTube platform, al Jazeera website.

The film introduces patriots as public figures. We can find their stories in many reports, newspapers, and online media. They are not ashamed of sharing their stories, feelings, and emotions with the world.

The research had a minimum risk rate and highly significant benefit to the researcher and the community.

There are four ethical principles: beneficence, respect for people, justice, public interest, and law. The first suggests how to achieve balance of risks. The second refers to one's ability to self-determination and confidentiality, the third means to adjust the distribution of risks and benefits. The fourth means conformity to laws and clarity-based liability of the study.

We can define these principles by changing their accord since different ethical principles contradict each other, always concerning each other and weighing against each other in a specific study (Legewie, 2018).

# **Chapter Four**

## **Results and Findings**

## **Chapter Four**

### **Results and Findings**

Our study aims to explore the impact of detention experience and the reintegration challenges after a long period of detention for Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails. This section shows the results found after we did the qualitative thematic content analysis.

#### **4.1 The Experiences of detention**

This theme has two subthemes result showing the experience of imprisonment from the narrations of ex-political prisoners.

The first subtheme talks about recalling the toughest difficulties ex-prisoners have gone through with expressing emotions and feelings.

The second shows the used coping and adaptation models to cope with detention.

They have gone through physiological and psychological ill-treatment alongside the long detention period by being treated like numbers, not humans, humiliated, beaten, subject of soldier sarcasm, deprived of the basic needs, books, pen, receiving little food, minimum amounts of sheets, and over crowdedness.

Living the day-to-day monotony and daily routines without seeing the sun, or hearing any news about their families, or having appropriate visiting time. These challenges and obstacles were faced by political prisoner using coping models during the long imprisonment period.

The emotional distress, the overall trauma, the feeling of worthlessness, loneliness, anger, and sadness were overcome by coping models to keep their mental health and psychological well-being healthy as much as they could.

#### **4.1.1 Recalling the hardships**

Some ex-prisoners showed that the experience of imprisonment is the cruelest and hardest form of torture; some of them explained that they lived in humiliation, the bad living conditions, the daily routine, and day-to-day monotony were the worst. Even getting basic human needs was impossible without resistance.

#### **Ex-prisoners stated:**

*“Palestinian detainees came up with the term ‘the crisis of freedom.’ Nothing is harsher than imprisonment. It is the cruelest form of torture.” A. AH.*

*“The Israelis did this to turn you from a human being into a barely alive creature. Someone who is forgotten. Lives only to eat and sleep.” S. AL.*

*“They locked us in a room filled with 20 others. You see them day and night, after 10 days you have said all there is to say. After that, you are just repeating yourself. You break down.” A. AH.*

*“We would ask for the most basic right. A pen and paper. It was tough when they confiscated them. They would drag a girl out and beat her and we could do nothing.” T. H.*

*“I remember the 22-day strike in Junaid prison. After 22 days, the prison chief asked the officer in charge of the reason behind the strike. The officer said the prisoners wanted more sunlight. They only allowed us two hours in the sun each day. The prison chief answered sarcastically: ‘Just draw the sun on a wall of each cell. Then they can see the sun every day!’.” A. A-S.*

*“There was a time when they dragged anyone who had a pen into solitary confinement for a week. Gave them pens just once a month to write letters. Then they would take them back.” A. AH.*

*“It was a challenge. Living under the strict rules and brutal conditions imposed on us by the prison authorities. We took up the challenge to cope with prison life.” T. AH.*

*“Someone sentenced to life imprisonment does not count his days. He just waits for God’s mercy. Life in jail is routine all days are the same. Either you destroy this routine, or it destroys you.” A. A-S.*

#### **4.1.2 Coping models**

Results show that ex-political prisoners cope with the day-to-day monotony and the daily routines using some coping styles mentioned in



literature like; resistance, knowledge and reading, fantasy, need for justice, hope, and humor.

#### **4.1.2.1 Resistance**

Some ex-prisoners said resisting the strict rules is a way to cope with prison life. Some resisted harming other ex-prisoners. They fought through hunger strikes to get more books or pens or other different needs.

#### **Some prisoners stated:**

*“One break time, they opened the doors of the jail. One prisoner was a blind man called (M. D.). He had lost his sight when injured in a battle. A guard asked (M. D.) to make his bed before leaving his cell. We had to do this before going out. (M. D.) Did not arrange Sheets very well because he was blind. I told the guard it was fine. However, he insisted on doing it better. I got furious and slapped the guard; He falls then He blew his whistle to call the alert.” M. M.*

*“We had nothing to lose. We were ready for anything. They sentenced almost all of us to life imprisonment.” M. M.*

*“In late 1971, we went on strike and demanded books. The Red Cross supported us until they allowed books in. However, the prison administration deliberately allowed many books on religion and Marxism.” A. AH.*

*“I remember the 22-day strike in Junaid prison. After 22 days, the prison chief asked the officer in charge of the reason behind the strike. The*

*officer said the prisoners wanted more sunlight. They only allowed us two hours in the sun each day. The prison chief answered sarcastically: 'Just draw the sun on a wall of each cell. Then they can see the sun every day!'. ”*

*A. A-S.*

#### **4.1.2.2 Knowledge and reading**

Ex-prisoners cope with their lives by reading books or seeking the knowledge they need to go through this experience, being ready politically and spiritually.

#### **Some prisoners stated:**

*“Most of us were young when they jailed us. We knew nothing about politics. Except for some who affiliates with certain Parties, Some were communists. Some belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood. Others were Liberals. Those who understood politics taught us. They made us see how knowledge enables man to endure.” A. AH.*

*“They jailed me when I was 18. I met people who had been inside for 18 years. Despite this, they remained upbeat. The person who taught me to think this way was the Palestinian nationalist, the martyr (O. Al-Q.) He took me to the library. They had created it from the great sacrifice of the prisoners. Some books arrived, all torn and re-assembled at the prison. The library had about 4,000 books on various topics. (O. Al-Q.) Told me these books were not just paper, they had paid for it with blood.” A. Y.*

*“They gave us books on both kinds of extremism. Communist and Islamist Palestinians were aware of their aim. They studied both kinds of books, and there was an amazing mindset of resistance.” M. AL-J.*

#### **4.1.2.3 Fantasy, Need for Justice and hope**

Hoping to be free or dreaming about life outside prison, receiving news about their families helped them cope.

##### **Some prisoners stated:**

*“They need a spiritual feeling of freedom; they need to break this routine and open our doors to new experiences. People experience walking and feeling the grass, but they never appreciate these moments. It is the philosophy behind freedom.” A. Y.*

*“In prison, I used to dream of a lovely house near the sea. I was writing there. I missed colors, everything green or red. When I found a picture of nature, I hide it to keep staring at.” M. M.*

*“I received general news from my family by sending letters. However, little details have changed. My family thought I looked the same as when I was 18. I could not believe how different they looked when I received their pictures. It was not until 1995, eight years after we got jailed, allowed us to receive videotapes from our families. It was then when I had a new image of my family in my mind.” A. Y.*

#### **4.1.2.4 Humor**

For ex-prisoners to endure their stay in prison, they used certain coping mechanisms, for example, using the warden as a ridicule subject or humor as a play time mechanism between them.

#### **Some prisoners stated:**

*“We always amused ourselves by opposing this or fighting that. The worst misfortune is the one that makes you laugh.” M. M.*

*“There was a very violent guard in Ashkelon prison called Alfred. He used to beat prisoners for no reason even if they were not under interrogation. One day I requested to speak to Alfred. He asked me, ‘What do you want?’ I said, ‘I see you here for 24 hours. You then leave for 24 hours and come back the third day.’ He replied, ‘so what?’ I said, ‘This means if I stay in jail for 20 years, you will stay here for 10.’ He said, ‘But I got paid for it.’ I said, ‘But I eat, drink and sleep for free. And you are staying with me here.’ He got upset and sent me to solitary confinement for two days.” T. AL H.*

#### **4.2 The reintegration experience after released into society.**

The second theme has two subthemes; the socio-cultural and political shock. these subthemes show how the ex-prisoners deal with their lives after being released for months or years, their challenges and the emotional distress, their fears, and their ability to cope or not.

#### 4.2.1 Socio-cultural and political shock

Ex-political prisoners faced many challenges and changes after release. All of them experienced a culture shock and felt a gap in their understanding of technology, money issues, and dealing with people and society; even sleeping, eating, wearing clothes, shaking hands, the moral changes in the society and the surrounding people.

##### **Some prisoners stated:**

*“I went back to Ramallah. It has changed a lot it has many new buildings. It has been 27 years. It only had 17,000 inhabitants when they jailed me. Now the population is over 180,000. It has 20 store buildings.”*  
A. A-S.

*“There was no TV or radio when Israeli forces jailed us. Only the village mayor had a radio. When they freed us, all these things were available, even cars. Having a car was a big deal back then.”* A. AH.

*“Another weird thing was the automatic door. I stood in front of it and it just opened. ‘How did it open? Who opened it?’ I kept going in and out to understand how it worked. I had a hard time dealing with technology.”* T. H.

*“When we were released, we were keen to live. However, life was different. We slept on a 2cm-wide mattress for 12 years. Now we have beds and blankets. We jumped on the bed like little kids.”* T. AL H.

*“In prison, we had a uniform. We were all dressed the same. When they released us, we did not have the problem of choosing what to wear. I just wear the same trousers and blouse. I never look at myself in the mirror. Everything was different. Even the morning greetings. In prison, we would just say ‘Good morning’. Now, they expected you to ask, ‘How are you? What’s up?’ There was no need to ask that in prison because we were together all the time. We just said ‘Good morning’ and ‘Good night’.” T. H.*

*“I have not seen a penny in 12 years. In prison, they gave us food and tea. Take it or leave it. They gave us four cigarettes every day. We did not get to choose the cigarette type. Now, there are so many choices. Our families and the organizations we belong to give us money. However, we do not know how to spend it.” T. AL H.*

*“Life in Prison is free of hypocrisy.” M. M.*

*“We did not lie to others in prison. Why would we lie? Everything was clear. I think it shocked most former detainees at the dishonesty of people in the outside world.” T. H.*

*“Unfortunately, in our society, people put on different masks. They have a distinct personality when dealing with others than when they deal with themselves. In prison, it is hard to wear any mask. Eventually, you return to the real ‘you’ because you are in the same place all the time all masks drop.” A. Y.*

*“It shocked me how people had changed. Their ethics were completely different. For example, lying has become very common and kindness has been considered stupidity, and those who deceive others are considered to be smart. I was shocked.” M. AL J.*

*“I think recognizing Israel and its recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization is a crime. We do not only want some parts of the west bank; we want the land beyond the 1967 borders. However, unfortunately, even a third world war will not remove those settlements. Only the resistance can do that.” A. A- S.*

#### **4.2.2 Life after detention-emotional distress**

*“Before Israeli forces detained me, I knew no woman other than my mother. Therefore, I only used to see women as mothers. I had no romantic image of women. I only learned about women as they appear in the writings of Najib Mahfouz and Russian literature. I had no practical experience with women.” A. AH.*

*“I never knew fear until I got married.” M. M.*

*“A friend of mine told me after our release that he had told his wife one year after marriage: ‘If I can’t give you a child, you are free to leave me and marry someone else. I do not want to deprive you of the right of being a mother. I can live with it.’ T. AL H.*

*“I was 18 when they jailed me and 28 when they freed me. I felt that a new life is in front of me. I felt like a stranger among my family and*

*friends. It was distressing. I could not sleep. I was in a constant state of anxiety.” M. M.*

*“I left my youngest child at two years old. When they freed me, my son was already five years old. It is difficult; it is painful and exciting at the same time. It hurts because I did not have the chance to see my children grow. However, exciting because I see my grandchildren.” A. A-S.*

### **4.3 Long-term effects of detention**

The third theme in our results contains three subthemes. Speaking about the long-term effect of imprisonment on psychological well-being, overall mental health, and the final coping mode from ex-prisoners' narration, we can find psychological trauma, PTSD, depression symptoms, phobias, and paranoia.

Ex-prisoners overcome these psychological effects after being released, employing positive thoughts and succeeding endeavors to better their lives.

Ex-prisoners face the shadow of imprisonment throughout their life span; they cannot cope with some obsessions, compulsions, nightmares, and sleep disturbances.

#### **Some prisoners stated:**

*“For a long time, they tried to destroy and depress us.” A. Y.*



*“I felt a stranger whenever I was in my family’s house; it was depressing, so I could not keep my feelings bottled.” M. M.*

*“I could not cope with people for one year after my release. I stayed only with my family and very close friends. M. AL J.*

*“Once released, we should be checked medically and rehabilitated. We are not asking for something impossible. People should understand us.” T. H.*

#### **4.3.1 Obsessions, Compulsions**

Ex-prisoners have practices that still remain after the imprisonment life, like buying more food or not switching the lights off; some are wary facing the walls everywhere they go.

##### **Some prisoners stated:**

*“We had little food in prison. So we used to hide some bread or tomatoes to eat them when we felt hungry. We all did so. I still have the same habit. I always tell my husband: ‘We don’t have sugar’ or ‘we don’t have rice’. Even if we still have five kilos of each. He buys more, even though he knows we still have a lot. He wants to keep me calm.” T. H.*

*“Getting into an elevator felt like being in prison. I would rather take the stairs even to the fifth floor than get into an elevator I was stuck once in it and it felt like they were holding me in solitary confinement. Even the metal doors looked the same.” T. AL H.*

*“When we go to a restaurant, I refuse to sit at tables facing the wall. I hate to sit facing the wall. Sitting facing a wall reminds me of jail. It means humiliation and insecurity. I never again want to sit facing a wall.”*  
S. AL.

*“I never switch off the lights at home. It was always dark in prison. When my wife switches them off, I ask her to turn them back on.”* A.  
AH.

*“None of my family dares touch me to wake me. I would immediately hit them. They call out. In jail, they used to hit the keys on the bars to wake us up.”* T. H.

*“Each time I met with someone, I would keep walking back and forth, because that was what we did in prison. When I finished my meal, I would go to wash the dishes in the kitchen. That was what I used to do.”* M.  
M.

*“I go to my friends’ houses for a quick visit because I cannot stay long.”* A. A-S.

#### **4.3.2 Dreams (nightmares)**

Ex-political prisoners have dreams about their imprisonment life

##### **Some prisoners stated:**

*“I always dream about Askalan prison; I imagine myself in jail reading a book or even looking at pictures.”* A. AH.

*“The nightmares are fewer. The unpleasant experience no longer affects us. I did my best to free myself from the past. I consider it as a period that has passed. I need to reconcile with the past.” A. Y.*

### **4.3.3 Success no regrets (*Positive Growth, Expression*)**

Some ex-prisoners mentioned that after experiencing atrocities in prison, it empowered them. Some ex-prisoners posit that their devotion to the movement has increased after this experience. One ex-prisoners wrote about what they have gone through. Another one had a child, a promise he made to the soldiers, and another becomes a reporter.

#### **Some prisoners stated:**

*“I read over 1,000 books during detention. I learned Hebrew and all about Zionism.” A. AH.*

*“I learned English and Hebrew. I am a Hebrew teacher now. I learned French, but there was no one to teach me.” S. AL.*

*“It is not just professional success. It is more of a victory over the enemy. Because I appear on the TV, they banned me from watching in jail. However, I think they are more upset with seeing me on screen now than they were for the losses I caused them before. That is why it is a success.” A. Y.*

*“I do not regret spending 27 years in prison; all treated me well; I only regret the prison itself.” A. A S.*

*“Prison taught me how to know people. When I am in a room with 20 others, I learned the differences between them. I developed the skill of knowing the proper person from the first minute he speaks to me. I learned how many liars there were in the Palestinian National Movement.” A. AH.*

*“A detained friend in Askalan prison for ten years went back to his hometown, Tulkarm. His name is H. B.; the first thing he wanted to do after his release was to fulfill his wish. I asked him what his wish had been. ‘He promised a prison guard called Journo that he would have a child and name him Guevara.’ Seven years later, he went to visit his detained brother in Askalan prison. He saw Journo, showed him a picture of his son, and said to Journo, ‘As I told you. Had a child and named him Guevara. When he grows up, he will be a fighter.’ They banned him from visiting his brother for six months.” T. AL H.*

# **Chapter Five**

# **Discussion**

## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion**

In this study, we explored the exigency of the experience of imprisonment of eight ex-political prisoners.

This study analyzed the impact of detention experience and the reintegration challenges after prolonged detention of the Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli jails. How this experience affects PPP's psychological well-being, coping during and after imprisonment, and dealing with post-trauma.

To understand these experiences and coping styles, all the aforementioned will give us more insight into how political prisoners protect their mental health. The current study has an explorative nature

It showed how they coped with their challenges after their prison release, adapting to a new life after the day-to-day monotony they experienced in prison.

This section will talk about the results in consideration of the theories and previous findings in the literature.

#### **The Experiences of detention**

We explored the coping models and emotions of ex-prisoners; Political prisoners use a resourceful repertoire of coping mechanisms. We will talk about the results in consideration of the theories and previous findings in the literature.

All Palestinian political prisoners experience detention in different ways. We should note that Palestinian prisoners underwent torture and ill-treatment in the interrogation process from our sample's narration.

These coping mechanisms are different strategies as passive or active (Khawaja et al., 2008; Punamäki-Gitai, 1990), emotion-focused or problem-focused (R. S. Lazarus, 1993), approach or avoidance strategies (Littleton, Horsley, John, & Nelson, 2007), cognitive, behavioral or emotional (Littleton et al., 2007), (Punamäki & Joustie, 1998).

Resistance, in literature, is categorized as a problem-focused coping mechanism. Resistance is the primary coping model used during the detention period to protect each other or acquire a basic need using self-sacrificing and hunger strikes.

Hunger strikes are the central core of resistance. Ex-prisoners' resistance against the soldiers' hateful violence in prison conceives to help sustain their self-integrity; they resisted with their bodies doing hunger strikes.

However, their bodies were their agents to express anger, stand against the cruelty, and even change the prison practices. Ex-prisoners used passive resistance by either not responding or reacting to the tortures of the soldiers.

Our findings match Turkey's study findings that examined Diyarbakir Military Prison prisoners' coping strategies that encountered 24

coping mechanisms. One of them is the resistance through hunger strikes and self-sacrifice with their bodies (Gençer, 2014).

Our results also match with what Punamaki found in her study on ex-political prisoners who used hunger strikes as a means of coping when faced with overwhelming hardships. The psychological impact of the strike was remarkable in that it encouraged Palestinian prisoners to employ collective acts of adaptation (Qouta et al., 1997).

Another way of coping is reading and knowledge building. We found that Palestinian political prisoners give more and more attention to procure books and read more to keep their minds, souls, and feelings sharp to protect their mental health.

Learning the political issues, the occupier language, history knowledge about their political parties, and reading novels about love, communist and Islamic learning, shaped their feelings about life.

Knowledge in prison increased ideological commitment, political awareness, and critical thinking. Despite the lack of educational materials and social communication, political understanding survived, and political determination grew.

Our findings are in line with what Punamaki said; studying served as a means of coping with hardships by keeping the prisoners' minds active and creative. Studying helped the prisoners to make sense of why they were victims of imprisonment and torture (Punamaki et al., 2008).



This analysis is convenient with the results of Punamaki in her study that exposure to war violence increased Israeli children's ideological commitment (Punamäki, 1996).

Coping is one of the ways ex-prisoners deal with life out of prison. Despite the Israelis' attempts to break prisoners, they keep their hope up based on their realization of reality.

Our findings agreed with Turkey's study findings that examined Diyarbakir Military Prison prisoners' coping strategies that encountered 24 coping mechanisms; where one of the mentioned coping mechanism is hope (Gençer, 2014).

Using humor as a coping model significantly associates with sustaining a positive effect. Ex-prisoners used humor, either making jokes about themselves or the soldiers. Soldiers aimed to create a place where only pain, violence, and seriousness can exist—conceiving humor as resistance against this construction.

It also relates humor to ex-prisoners' social bonds by creating a relational area with laughter and jokes. Minimize their pain by devaluing their experiences and devaluing the soldiers' power exerted on them.

Our finding is convenient with the study on Vietnam prisoners, who significantly used humor to deal with the war trauma, assumed that humor has an important coping mechanism that enables the prisoners to cope with

their violent experiences. Humor is one kind of human communication claimed to help deal with traumatic experiences (Henman, 2001).

Ex-prisoners having a sense of belonging to a group. Their attachment to each other helped them to deal with the cruelest hardships. The most observed thing is that all ex-prisoners narrated their experiences with the subject “we.”

We can consider Ex-prisoners’ sense of belonging to a group as a human-focused, relational way of coping with the atrocities. We can notice this relational way of coping behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively in their narrations.

This analysis parallels the findings of Tibetan refugees who used community bonding to cope with the stress. Being a part of the group decreases their loneliness and relates to the ideological understanding of oppression dynamics. The sense of belonging to a group supported by self-sacrifice, as mentioned, and having social support (Hussain & Bhushan, 2011).

Our study on the ex-prisoners showed that there are certain expressed emotions. In contrast, ex-prisoners mentally and effectively engage in the processes of narrating and remembering their experiences. The most frequently expressed emotions are anger.

Our study findings are convenient with the study on East Germany prisoners who reported a high anger level. It significantly, correlates anger,

post-traumatic stress reactions, social support, and trait-anger activated by the experience of chronic post-traumatic intrusions. Social support appeared to lessen the level of anger (Schützwohl & Maercker, 2000).

Besides these emotions, ex-prisoners expressed helplessness and perplexity at some level. We also encountered disappointment, longing, insecurity, anxiety, terror, worthlessness, and humiliation expressed by the ex-prisoners.

Generally, studies related stress to anxiety; in contrast, it was not the prominently expressed emotion in our research. We consider that ex-prisoners might have suppressed the anxiety-provoking experiences in the process of narration.

Our findings align with what Lazarus said: emotions are the best sources to understand individuals' coping mechanisms; he proposed "stress emotions," which are anger, anxiety, shame, sadness, envy, jealousy, and disgust (R. S. Lazarus, 1993).

Considering the relationship between emotions and coping mechanisms, it assumed that trauma survivors experienced feelings that were not familiar to them before (Garrido, Kilner, Stephan, & Friston, 2009).

### **The reintegration experience after release into society.**

Our result showed that ex-prisoners' narrations about releasing into society they could not sleep; they felt lonely. The changes in everything

shocked them, how their families and beloved ones changed and got old, making ex-prisoners stressed and anxious.

Our sample faced many obstacles and changes like accommodating to new technology, the new condition of sleeping in a proper place, eating regular food, and having money.

They stress about the surrounding, how people lie to each other, even how to dress because they had one uniform during the long imprisonment; these stressful situations made them distressed.

Our results are in line with a study focusing on the coping mechanisms of life-sentenced Irish prisoners. The study showed that they use coping mechanisms such as getting involved with work/education, maintaining family contact, and accessing therapeutic and support services (Richardson, 2012)

Similarly, results agreed with a study that tackled the severity of the experiences of torture and the level of PTSD in Gaza. Results showed that the more prisoners object to torture, psychological deprivation, the more they suffer from long-term imprisonment. This leads prisoners to think about marriage, financial conditions, and other blending problems (Sarraj et al., 1996).

The details of their psychological state included difficulties in living in society, including family and friends. As Bateman and Hazel elaborated,

ex-prisoners suffers from an emotional breakdown during their journey to return to their lives in society (Hazel & Bateman, 2020).

Our finding is convenient with James and Grounds' study that found that Irish authorities' prisoners experienced anxiety and depression in the process of reintegration in the local context (Grounds & Jamieson, 2003).

Once they were released, males were going through interviews based on their experience. They showed some barriers to getting married or dealing with money.

Our results parallel with a study on the merging of ex-prisoners in society. Results found that they stressed and worried about employment, money, and marriage, which can be significant psychological barriers (Garland, Wodahl, & Mayfield, 2010).

By using social support as a coping mechanism, they seek social support from their families to help them put up with it. However, it was not enough. They could not cope in the first months with these changes and obstacles.

Our findings are in line with a research that suggests that social support is related to the decreased severity of PTSD. Robust findings yield that social support is a highly used coping mechanism by trauma survivors (Dwyer & Maruna, 2011; Hussain & Bhushan, 2011; Khawaja et al., 2008; Punamaki et al., 2008).

### **The long-term effect of detention**

Our result showed that ex-prisoners lived with long-term psychological trauma after experiencing a long detention period and its cruelest inhuman condition; they faced many phobias, distress, obsessions, compulsions, and nightmares related to jail life.

Prisoners experience traumatic effects for a long-time seeing flashbacks, nightmares about their imprisonment, feeling annoyed if reminded of their lives in prison, feeling sad, fear, or anger. Some feel detached from other people. Others avoid situations that remind them of their imprisonment life. They may have strong adverse reactions to loud noise or an accidental touch.

Our finding is convenient with a study in 2016 where most prisoners suffered from psychological consequences of imprisonment such as depression, anxiety, and distress after their release (Fazel et al., 2016).

Similarly, our findings are convenient with a study focused on ex-prisoners' psychological situation and the impact of coping methods in predicting psychological distress. Results show that ex-prisoners were more avoidant and denial; however, the non-prisoners were the opposite. The former showed mental problems or traumatic issues. In contrast the latter showed a low level of psychiatric symptoms and distress, and considered the acuteness of treatment as one of the coping strategies (K. Kanninen et al., 2002; Punamaki et al., 2008).

Our findings align with Romania's study on political ex-detainees that found that PTSD prevalence was 54%. With participants left untreated, PTSD persisted, often over four decades, such that currently diagnosed PTSD is still in a third of the survivors. Other clinical conditions such as substance abuse, dissociative disorders, and major depression were common among the former political detainees and often associated with current PTSD (Bichescu et al., 2005).

Another study found symptoms of PTSD in ex-political prisoners after release; 24% of the republican prisoners showed PTSD symptoms such as anxiety, sleeplessness, and depression. PTSD levels in South Africa reported about 30% of the cases. Despite the evidence of the effect of prison, none had any psychological testing (Rolston & Artz, 2014b).

Success no regret (positive growth, expression)

Our result showed that the overall outcome is success in relation to learning languages and teaching Hebrew, studying Zionist history, writing books, and publishing many reports. Most of them do not regret the long years of imprisonment as it is a price for freedom. They are respected everywhere. Even from a young age, their success was to move on, get married, have children, and continue the resistance against the enemy until Palestine is free.

Coping with such frustrating and cruel conditions made them feel empowered, and tolerant. Many ex-prisoners used the expression, as a coping mechanism, for what they lived through in the Israeli prison.

Our findings align with Punamaki's arguments that post-traumatic growth in political imprisonment is meaningful since the political prisoners have a high ideological commitment. They have a pre-existing sense of resistance against the oppressive tools of the state. Thus, experiencing imprisonment and torture but still surviving supports their ideological beliefs and gives them empowerment. Besides, they found that political prisoners who have a secure attachment style are more likely to use post-traumatic growth. However, those with insecure-avoidant attachment styles are more likely to report negatively toned emotions (Katri Kanninen et al., 2003).

One study showed that they associated PTSD cases with negative emotions and insecurity. Those demographic factors such as gender affect the level of PTSD, such as the desire of men to get a higher position to have a better economic or educational status. (Salo, Qouta, & Punamäki, 2005).

## **5.1 Conclusion**

After analyzing Palestinian prisoners' coping responses, their psychological state was full of stress and fear from their political reality with present ideologies. It is not possible to generalize anything about imprisonment life and its trauma and depression. Therefore, we cannot generalize this because cases differ according to their conditions.



## **5.2 Implications**

To show the significance and implications of this study in the Palestinian context, we used the following quote from ADDAMEER prisoner's support and human right association: since 1967, less than a million Palestinians detained, about 20% of the Palestinians' total population, including 10000 women; 8000 children since 2000 (Addameer, 2019b).

This study sheds light on the experience of detention and its impact on Palestinian Political prisoners suffering in Israeli jails. Measuring and raising awareness of the burden of reintegration after releasing from Israeli jails has important implications for policymakers (Palestinian Ministry of Health and Non-Governmental Organizations) who can manage rehabilitation programs and mental health needs of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons.

## **5.3 Limitation of the study**

A qualitative study has its limitation in terms of validity and Reliability. The size and the characteristic of our sample raise the question of generalization.

The study lacks the epistemological nature of qualitative research paradigm (Creswell, 2007); the researcher did not conduct the interviews himself. Interviewing is a way of relating to the subject and raising more questions and answers about the issue (Creswell, 2007).

We should note that the researcher was not working in the “field”. The researcher did not have the chance to relate to the ex-prisoners individually. This status significantly contradicts the aim of decreasing the researcher’s emotional distance, which gives more opportunity to conceive the complex and dynamic issue. Watching the interviews still provides us with a sort of relation to the ex-prisoners through second-hand information.

Another significant issue is the demographic characteristics of the ex-prisoners. The duration of imprisonment, the ages, and social-demographic factors of the ex-prisoners are divergent. Therefore, the used coping mechanisms and expressed emotions would be different in each case.

The reason behind taking this video as a tool is that these ex-prisoners were detained, and released in different periods. They, lived in different socio-cultural demographics. These ex-prisoners are from different political parties. They lived the historical transition periods inside the detention; they succeeded in political and real-life after many years in captivity. Some of them are writers and reporters. Until now, some of the participants still engage in the Palestinian resistance.

This study only relies on ex-prisoners’ qualitative data. Other quantitative measures would provide more reliable data. Besides, only one reader analyzed the interviews. Other readers may have given a more reliable analysis of them.

After many years, the length of the time interval between the imprisonment experiences and interviews raises the question of whether we have analyzed the narrations correctly, relying on the memories of the experience of imprisonment or other traumatic and stressful experiences.

#### **5. 4 Recommendations**

This study is a base for listening to torture survivors while attempting to understand them, as witnesses, and help them therapeutically in terms of their coping mechanisms and emotions. It also provides insight on helping prisoners cope with their new situation. Prisoners need to prepare themselves to tackle the new life in a recovered psychological state.

Future research might focus on the relationship between coping mechanisms and emotions, contributing to the literature on torture. Quantitative measures of coping mechanisms and emotions would provide more reliable data.

Applying more designed intensive services and rehabilitation programs to enable Palestinian political prisoners to live in societies should support the influence of imprisonment on the Palestinians' psychological health and the reintegration challenges to protect their mental health.

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## التجربة الحياتية للاعتقال الطويل في السجون الإسرائيلية والحياة اللاحقة: تحليل وثائقي نوعي

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قدمت هذه الأطروحة استكمالاً لمتطلبات الحصول على درجة الماجستير في الصحة العامة بكلية الدراسات العليا في جامعة النجاح الوطنية في نابلس، فلسطين.

2021م

ب

التجربة الحياتية للاعتقال الطويل في السجون الإسرائيلية والحياة اللاحقة:

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## الملخص

منذ أن بدأت إسرائيل احتلالها غير الشرعي للضفة الغربية وقطاع غزة عام 1967، تم اعتقال أكثر من 750.000 فلسطيني، يمثلون حوالي 20 بالمائة من إجمالي السكان الفلسطينيين الحاليين في الأراضي المحتلة. طوال عقود من هذا الصراع المستمر، احتجزت إسرائيل بشكل غير قانوني رجال ونساء وأطفال فلسطينيين من خلال مجموعة واسعة ومنهجية من الأنظمة التي تتحكم في كل جانب من جوانب الحياة الفلسطينية، والتي تقيد أو تنتهك حقوق الإنسان الأساسية. علاوة على ذلك، فإن أوضاع السجون ومعاملة الأسرى مروعة وتنتهك العديد من القوانين الدولية والإسرائيلية يخضع الأسرى الفلسطينيون للمحاكم العسكرية الإسرائيلية، التي نادراً ما تتبع المعايير الدولية المطلوبة للمحاكمة العادلة.

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف أثر تجربة الاعتقال وعملية التكيف بعد فترة طويلة من الاعتقال في السجون الإسرائيلية. تم استخدام تحليل وثائقي نوعي.

تم استخدام تحليل المحتوى النوعي وظهرت ثلاث فئات رئيسية: تجربة الاسر، تجربة إعادة الإدماج بعد إطلاق سراحه في المجتمع، والآثار طويلة المدى للأسر.

وخلصت دراستنا إلى أن تحليل ردود التأقلم للسجين السياسي الفلسطيني أظهر أن السياق الذي يتعرض فيه الشخص للتعذيب وسوء المعاملة يحدد ردود الفعل النفسية عليه. عندما يكون مصدر الإجهاد سياسياً بطبيعته، تستمد أنماط التأقلم النفسي قوتها من الواقع السياسي. كانت موارد المواجهة ذات طبيعة أيديولوجية وقومية.

ج

من المستحيل التعميم حول تأثير الحبس طويل الأمد على الصحة النفسية، فمن الواضح أن بعض الأفراد يعانون من بعض الصدمات ويمكن أن تشمل الأعراض بالإضافة إلى أشكال أقل وضوحًا من الشعور بالضيق. من الواضح أن السجن تجربة مهيمنة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** معتقل سابق، اعتقال، الأراضي الفلسطينية المحتلة، السجن الإسرائيلي، اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة، اكتئاب.