



Psychological Effects of Yemeni War on Children Education

Ali Alsubari AM^{1*}, Aljalei MH², Al-Yousefi SS³, Al-Fakih WA⁴, Al-Atnah HA⁵, Alqadasi HK⁶, Al-Haijah ZM⁶, Al-Sharjabi HFA⁶, Saif NM⁶, Gashan AM⁶ and Ali Basha THQ⁶

¹Department of General Medicine and Surgery, Sana'a University, Yemen

²Psychiatric Resident, National Center of Mental Health, Jordan

³21 September University for Medical and Applied Sciences, Yemen

⁴Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery, Al-Thawra Modern General Hospital, Sana'a University, Yemen

⁵Emirates International University, Yemen

⁶Sana'a University, Yemen

Abstract

Children in Yemen bear the brunt of the warfare that began in March 2015 where over 2 million children are not attending school, over 4 million require assistance to access education, and more than 20% of all primary and secondary schools are closed. Given the scarcity of data and the lack of prior research, this paper aims to investigate the relationship between Yemeni children's mental health and its consequences on the quality of education, academic level, and school desertion. We searched databases and identified articles, of which were included and taken from academic sources, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Exposure of Yemeni children to warfare poses serious mental health risks to their development. The pivotal key factors include child army enlistment, threatened personal safety and security, bombarding of schools or their conversion to military bases, financial inability of families to enroll their children in private schools, and displacement with resultant regional discrimination. Additionally, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) manifests in the form of anxiety, lack of concentration and social phobia, with children's inability to seek psychiatric therapy due to social stigma surrounding it. Yemen, a once thriving country on the verge of infrastructural collapse and deteriorating educational and healthcare systems, is a prime example of the need for global assistance to maintain the mental wellbeing of its children. Yemen's government must develop a national mental health policy to allocate enough funding for mental healthcare and alter society's perception of mental health and break the stigma of psychiatric therapy.

OPEN ACCESS

Correspondence:

Asma'a Munasar Ali Alsubari,
Department of General Medicine and
Surgery, Sana'a University, Sana'a,
Yemen

Received Date: 11 Jul 2023

Accepted Date: 18 Jul 2023

Published Date: 22 Jul 2023

Citation:

Ali Alsubari AM, Aljalei MH, Al-Yousefi SS, Al-Fakih WA, Al-Atnah HA, Alqadasi HK, et al. Psychological Effects of Yemeni War on Children Education. *Ann Med Medical Res.* 2023; 6: 1063.

Copyright © 2023 Ali Alsubari AM. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Keywords: Yemen; Children education; Children; War effect; Mental disorders; Mental health; Schools

Introduction

Yemen has been under several armed conflicts for decades, that has turned Yemen into a battlefield for both civil war and external invasion parties, those unfortunate circumstances make Yemen one of the worst countries to live in. Given the long period of violence in Yemen, devastating consequences on civilians must be thoroughly studied especially in case of its effects on children and their health and well-being being the most vulnerable to war [1-4]. War has a huge and wide-ranging effect on children, including immediate stress responses, an increased risk for certain mental disorders, high susceptibility to depression from being separated from their parents, and fear for their own and their families safety and damaging almost every aspect of their lives; how they grow up, how they feel about society, how they treat other people, how they passionate about future and how they see life in general, especially in a country with almost zero potentials for substandard life quality circumstances including health and education. According to UNICEF statistics, Education has been affected dramatically by the ongoing war in Yemen [5], thus affecting the children's mentality and eagerness toward education and following academia for many reasons that have been never studied or looked after yet. Given the poor data on this area and having no previous literature studying the linkage between Yemenis children's mentality that was affected during the war and its effects on the quality of education, academic level of children, and abandonment of school. That is the main objective that will be discussed in this article [6].

On the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen is a low-income country in the Middle East.

It is strategically located on Bab el Mandeb, the strait between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, which is one of the world's busiest shipping lanes [7]. Yemen's ongoing grievous civil war has fractured what was once a thriving country, resulting in obstruction of humanitarian aid, shelling, and deterioration of the health infrastructure in addition to the educational system, all of which have disastrous consequences particularly for the most vulnerable populations; children. When the war in Yemen began in March 2015, 3,600 schools across the nation were forced to close either because they were destroyed, used as shelters for the displaced or as military recruitment bases, adding 1.8 million kids to the 1.6 million school-aged children who were already out of school. According to UNICEF data, over 2 million children are not attending school, over 4 million require assistance to access education, and more than 20% of all primary and secondary schools are closed [8].

Discussion

Conflict occurs in many parts of the world, with negative consequences for education. While education may continue during times of conflict, the prevalence and risk of violence, fear and safety concerns have a negative direct impact on education and its quality [9].

PTSD is estimated to affect 23% to 70% of children in Palestine, 5% to 8% in Israel, and 10% to 30% in Iraq (insufficient data for Lebanon). This is comparable to the prevalence of PTSD in children living in other areas of armed conflict: 70% in Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion (Nader et al. 1993), 52% in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Smith et al. 2002), and 50% in Cambodian children following war trauma (Kinzie et al. 1986). About 69% of those children with PTSD are reported disobedience in school [10].

According to a new save the children report, this result is comparable to that of Yemen. More than 60% of Yemeni children surveyed did not return to school last year after their schools were attacked [11]. One in every five children polled reported a security incident on their way to school. Approximately two million school-age students are currently out of school, with 62% of them being female.

The findings also show how the war caused psychological disorders that harmed children's psychological well-being and created a need in the country for comprehensive psychiatric care. Nonetheless, such an issue must overcome society's widespread refusal to address psychological treatment. This necessitates the development of effective policies that alter people's perceptions of mental health and its significance for change in the post-conflict era, particularly with regard to children.

Challenges

The lack of awareness among school learners and children greatly contributes to exploiting and influencing them with illusions of victory or martyrdom, and that manhood is to carry weapons. The warring parties fuel sectarian feelings in them for fighting. This deprives them of their basic rights (e.g., the right to live, the right to education, and the right to live a decent life). We see the school learners who are affected by this propaganda wearing the military uniform and carrying weapons instead of wearing the school uniforms and carrying pens.

This raises concerns about the future of coexistence between generations because of this conflict at the cultural and the national

level as well as there is a large group of children suffering from psychological problems and behavioral disorders, especially those who live in the bombed areas. These children could not go to school because of fear and anxiety, and there are no psychiatrists to deal with these cases. And even if psychiatrists exist, not many people will go to them because of fear of social stigma. The war has contributed to creating an environment capable of transforming education into a negative investment, so private schools increased significantly. Compared to the absence of salaries in the state schools, teachers go to the private schools in search of what would meet their material needs. The matter was negatively reflected on the education process itself and on the economic side as well. There is no mentorship on schools' work or their content. They only care about money.

Poverty as we found earlier poverty plays a major role in affecting the access to primary education in the area. Personal safety and security: Personal safety and security is common a problem hampering the smooth access to primary education [12].

The compelled displacement because of the war is a chief challenge to education; it effects on children causes them to lose many years of education and girls can also additionally drop out of school due to the families' hard monetary situations or mental pressures. The displacement phenomenon has caused the presence of discrimination. While preceding studies mentioned on discrimination towards susceptible agencies all through displacement, especially kids and women [13,14].

Displaced children for the duration of armed war have insufficient centers for their education [15]. The displacement of children and teachers, the closing or devastation of schools, all bring about lack of education for children.

Schools and teachers are frequently planned targets at the time of war. Child soldiers represent a major challenge for schooling structures already beneath strain.

The majority of cases that live in war zone can be affected by many complications such as PTSD in study was done in Gasa showed symptoms of affected children which can affect their social life and further more complications in form of recurrent fear, lack of concentration, social phobia and poor inserting to activities [6,16].

Early detection and social awareness to such diseases is very essential to prevent secondary psychological problems otherwise finding solution for children who suffers from PTSD and implementing the wealthy treatments in many levels besides psychological issues. Schools, family networks training courses provided by trained psychiatrics can improve and manage the mental health and psychological disorders in specific to war zone trauma and PTSD.

All are teamed up in helping the future of the children who lived in war zone with no options to choose a peaceful life or miserable one unfortunately they born in war zone.

Recommendations

provide psychological support since the conflict has had a significant impact on children's mental health, and it is critical that they receive the help they require to cope with the trauma they have endured. Access to therapy and other types of psychological help should be included. Establish learning safe areas where children can continue their education, such as community centers or other venues where they can obtain assistance and resources. These areas

should prioritize children's and teachers' safety and security while still providing a conducive learning environment. Support teachers ensuring that students receive a high-quality education and provide them with the resources and training they require to execute their jobs successfully. This should involve teacher training and financial support for individuals working in difficult conditions, as well as professional development assistance. These are just a few of the many recommendations that the education of Yemeni children can be supported during the conflict. By working together, organizations, governments, and individuals can help ensure that children are able to receive the education they need to build a better future for themselves and their country.

References

1. Alhariri W, Mcnally A, Knuckey S. The right to mental health in Yemen: A distressed and ignored foundation for peace. *Health Hum Rights*. 2021;23(1):43-53.
2. David B, Anagnostopoulos D, Vitiello B, Sukale T, Schmid M; Board and Policy Division of ESCAP, et al. "Impact of war and forced displacement on children's mental health— multilevel, needs-oriented, and trauma-informed approaches." *Eur Child Adolesc Psychiatry*. 2022;31(6):845-53.
3. Macksoud MS, Dyregrov A, Raundalen M. "Traumatic war experiences and their effects on children." *International handbook of traumatic stress syndromes*. Springer, Boston, MA. 1993:625-33.
4. Sowers J, Weinthal E. "Humanitarian challenges and the targeting of civilian infrastructure in the Yemen war." *Int Affairs*. 2021;97(1):157-77.
5. Impact of the conflict on children's education in Yemen, UNICEF.
6. Country Reports. "Yemen Facts and Culture". 2023. Accessed on January 30, 2023.
7. Baker L. "Yemen's education system at a tipping point: Youth between their future and present survival". Project on middle east political science. September 25, 2019.
8. UNICEF. "Education Disrupted. Impact of the conflict on children's education in Yemen". 2021.
9. Muthanna A, Almahfali M, Haider A. "The interaction of war impacts on education: Experiences of school teachers and leaders." *Educ Sci*. 2022;12(10):719.
10. Lydia D. "A systematic review on the mental health of children and adolescents in areas of arm deconflict in the Middle East." *Child Care Health Dev*. 2012;38(2):153-61.
11. Save the Children report. "YEMEN: 60% of children whose school came under attack have not returned to education". 2021.
12. Ihjas MM. Access to primary education in the context of resettlement in war-torn northern Sri Lanka: Problems and challenges. *Kalam - Int Res J Faculty Arts Culture South Eastern University Sri Lanka*. 2020;13(4):36-49.
13. Menier C, Forget R, Lambert J. Evaluation of two-point discrimination in children: Reliability, effects of passive displacement and voluntary movement. *Dev Med Child Neurol*. 1996;38:523-37.
14. Stark L, Roberts L, Wheaton W, Acham A, Boothby N, Ager A. Measuring violence against women amidst war and displacement in northern Uganda using the "neighbourhood method". *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 2009;64:1056-61.
15. Manuchehr TN. Education right of children during war and armed conflicts. *Procedia Soc Behav Sci*. 2011;15:302-5.
16. Child Abuse & Neglect. 2000-Copyright© 2000 Elsevier Science Ltd Printed in the USA. 2000;24(2):291-8.