



**Arab American University**  
**Faculty of Graduate Studies**

**Social, Psychological and Economic Impact on the Palestinian  
Martyrs' Widows and Prisoners' Wives**

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**This thesis was submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the Master's degree in Intercultural  
Communication and Literature**

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## Thesis Approval

### Social, Psychological and Economic Impact on the Palestinian Martyrs' Widows and Prisoners' Wives

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This thesis was defended successfully on 8/7/2024 and approved by:

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis was composed by myself, and that the work contained herein is my own, except where it states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to the souls of the martyrs who sacrificed themselves in defense of us, our lands, and our rights and to the prisoners behind the unjust bars, where they have been buried alive as well as to all the widows of the martyrs and the wives of the prisoners, whether they participated in this research or not.

I also dedicate my efforts in this research to my dear parents, my father (Mahmoud Zeidan) and my mother (Khitam Zeidan), the individuals who always wish for my progress and success. I dedicate it to my beloved sisters and brothers who have never stopped supporting and assisting me. I specifically acknowledge my sister (Aya), who has been a great supporter and pillar for me throughout this journey.

I extend my dedication to my dear husband and life partner, my friend at all stages, (Jamal Nassar). My deepest gratitude goes to my precious soul and only daughter (Tala).

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I faced.

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I hope that this work marks the beginning of another path filled with success.

## **Abstract**

This study examined the social, psychological, and economic impacts experienced by Palestinian martyrs' widows and wives of activist prisoners, following the martyrdom or imprisonment of their spouses in the northern regions of Palestine. The study shed light on these two groups of women in the Palestinian society, who endure difficult social, psychological, and economic experiences due to Israeli-occupation practices against their husbands, including killing or imprisonment. In-depth interviews with 25 women were used, 10 of who are widows of martyrs and 15 wives of prisoners, exploring the social, psychological, and economic circumstances that affected those women in their daily lives after losing their spouses, either as martyrs or as prisoners inside the Israeli prisons. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the results, revealing that martyrs' widows in the northern region of Palestine received social support from their families and close friends. However, they faced significant social challenges, particularly from their deceased husbands' families, including continuous interference in their personal lives and constant social surveillance, leading to feelings of isolation. Economically, these widows struggled despite receiving a government stipend and charitable assistance, which were insufficient to meet their basic needs. Wives of prisoners also experienced similar social support, but with the crucial difference of receiving emotional support and encouragement from their imprisoned husbands, providing them with hope for the future. Both groups endured profound psychological distress, including shock and deep sorrow, due to the loss or absence of their husbands. However, their religious beliefs played a critical role in helping them cope with these hardships. The study focused on the northern regions of Palestine which can help future researchers to investigate other Palestinian regions.

Keywords: Palestinian martyrs' widows, Palestinian prisoners' wives, Stress and Coping Theory, Social challenges impact, Psychological challenges impact, Economic challenges impact, Palestine, Israeli Occupation.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

This research examines the social, psychological, economic factors that affect martyrs' widows and prisoners' wives due to the continuous Israeli military occupation and their aggressive practices directed to Palestinians. The Israeli occupation carries out arrests of different ages with different civil situations, directly impacting their lives and future opportunities by either terminating their lives or segregating them from the external world through incarceration.

However, there is a segment of people in Palestinian society who are affected by these practices, such as the widows of the martyrs and the wives of imprisoned men. These two group of women face numerous social, psychological, and economic challenges arising from the absence of their husbands and life partners, placing them in difficult psychological, social, and economic circumstances. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct this study to uncover the challenges facing these groups of the Palestinian society, in hopes of reaching suggestions for policy makers to produce realistic solutions or support for these women.

### Research Definitions

1. **Social Impact:** It refers to the effects that social practices and norms have on people within a community, leading to both direct and indirect outcomes on their behavior, mental health, social interactions, and their self-perception. This includes examples like community interference in daily life, social monitoring,

and the pressure to conform to social expectations (social pressure). (Schwandt, T. A, 2001)

2. **Psychological impact:** It refers to the psychological and behavioral changes in an individual resulting from continuous exposure to stress and psychological pressure, which in turn affect the individual's mental and emotional state as well as cognitive processes. The psychological impact manifests in various forms, such as sadness, depression, isolation, and loneliness.(Nolan, R. P., & Ruest, V, 1998)
  
3. **Economic impact:** refers to the influence that economic activities and conditions exert on individuals, businesses, and the broader economy. This impact includes a range of effects, including changes in income, wealth distribution, employment levels, and overall economic well-being and the economic status of an individual.(Mankiw, N. G, 2020).

### **The Goal of the Study**

The aim of this research is to uncover the social, psychological, and economic challenges faced by widows of Palestinian martyrs and wives of Palestinian prisoners. The goal is to identify the social, psychological and economic factors involved in the lives of those two groups of women. Given the increasing incidents of killing and detention of Palestinians, leading to a rise in the number of this category of widows of martyrs and wives of prisoners, it was necessary to conduct a study highlighting their daily living conditions.

## **Stress and Coping Theory**

The theory of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) was adopted in this study, asserting that an individual's psychological well-being aids in their integration into the surrounding society, and vice versa. In other words, isolation from the external community is fundamentally a result of compromised mental health (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The theory of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) also posits that an individual's response to surrounding circumstances varies over time due to two reasons: changes in the surrounding conditions and shifts in their perspective on matters as they age.

## **Palestinian Context**

The plight of the Palestinian people began with the British mandate, particularly after the Balfour Declaration issued by the British government in 1917. This declaration pledged to establish a homeland for Jews in Palestine, a decision that was realized through the forced displacement, killings, and other forms of violent suppression against the indigenous population and their families. (Muslih, 1992). These practices manifested in land confiscation, permanent siege of the population, incarceration of youth, escalating establishment of checkpoints and barriers, and construction of apartheid walls that separated cities and villages from each other. (Bornstein, 2008)

During the Nakba, the Israeli occupation completely destroyed 531 Palestinian villages and partially destroyed 243 villages, gaining control over them. These operations were described as ethnic cleansing carried out by Zionist gangs that killed more than 15,000 Palestinians through the commission of 70 separate massacres in Palestine. (Nisaa FM, 2020). Therefore, more than 100,000 Palestinian martyrs have been murdered in cold



blood through assassination operations carried out against them by the Israeli occupation between 1948 and 2023. (B news, 2023)

These violent practices prompted Palestinians to defend their lands, dignity, and rights using the simplest means available to them. Meanwhile, the Israeli occupation labeled them as saboteurs, terrorists, and rebels, thereby justifying their own rights to kill and continuously arrest Palestinians with lengthy sentences that sometimes resulted in their deaths inside prisons. (Feldman, 2019). Palestinians continued to endure the practices of Israeli occupation, facing displacement and deprivation of basic rights. Consequently, the scope of resistance expanded, intensifying as the pain and suffering deepened. Thousands of lives were lost, and countless families were destroyed to the extent that those who lost their loved ones could not continue their lives as before. Despite all this, Israel did not cease its relentless practices, targeting lives and seizing properties. (Said, 1991)

According to a report by the Palestinian Prisoners' Club, there are 9,100 male and female prisoners held behind bars in 23 Israeli prisons and investigation centers. The number of prisoners sentenced to administrative detention reached 3,558, 559 of which received life sentences. (Palestinian Prisoners' Club Association, 2024). It is necessary to note that administrative detention is a procedure that allows the Israeli military to hold Palestinian prisoners indefinitely on secret information, without charging them or allowing them to stand trial. (Playfair, 1986)

More than 26 prisoners have spent over a quarter of a century inside Israeli occupation prisons, and a significant number of prisoners have been martyred within these prisons. Five prisoners died as a result of torture in one year, according to a report in

2019, and the number continues to increase. (Nisaa FM. 2020). The brutal arrest campaign in the West Bank escalated after the events of October 7, 2023, where the Israeli occupation army carried out a series of arrests targeting civilians. (Abu Samra, 2024). The number of martyrs since the events of October 7, 2023, has exceeded 30,000 martyrs in Gaza alone, and the number continues to increase as the war on Gaza is still ongoing as of the writing of this research. (Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2024)

The Israeli occupation army continues to arrest hundreds of civilians from their secure locations and interrogate them violently and barbarically. The Israeli army takes pride in these violent practices by publishing photos of Palestinian prisoners in humiliating, harsh, and inhumane conditions. They deliberately conceal their health conditions and situations from their families, prevent them from appointing lawyers, and prohibit their families from visiting them. (Palestinian National Information Center (WAFA, 2024).

The violent practices carried out by the Israeli occupation against Palestinian men, whether through killing or imprisonment, directly impacted the families of these men, including their wives and children. Wives of prisoners and widows of martyrs in Palestine suffered profound grief and shock due to the loss of their husbands. (Shalev, 2017). Palestinian prisoners' wives also shouldered a considerable burden in caring for their children, in the absence of their husbands and they encountered various social obstacles, including interference from the surrounding community in their personal affairs (Faraj, 2023). Palestinian women who live without their spouses also suffered financial difficulties, like women whose husbands were arrested by the Israeli occupation, and this was one of the consequences of the imprisonment that the wives of the prisoners had to bear. (Taraki, 2006).

**Research Gap**

The researcher faced difficulties in reaching out to participants for face-to-face interviews due to road closures and sporadic settler incursions, especially after the events of October 7, 2023. Consequently, interviews were limited to recorded audio calls. Additionally, the researcher encountered difficulty in obtaining a larger number of participants, as a significant number of martyrs' widows and wives of prisoners refused to participate in the interviews. Therefore, those who declined participation were excluded from the study.

The number of martyrs' widows in the study was fewer than the number of wives of prisoners, primarily due to the refusal of many of them to participate in the interviews. Consequently, they were excluded from the sample. Therefore, we cannot generalize the results of this study to all parts of Palestine, but only to the northern region.

## **Research Problem**

The problem addressed by this research is the social, psychological, and economic impacts faced by widows of martyrs and the wives of Palestinian prisoners in northern Palestine. The study aims to understand how the martyrdom or imprisonment of their husbands affects their lives and to highlight their struggles under Israeli occupation, thereby raising awareness of their challenges both locally and internationally.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the social impact faced by the widows of martyrs in northern Palestine after the martyrdom of their husbands?
2. What is the social impact faced by the wives of prisoners in northern Palestine after the imprisonment of their husbands?
3. What is the psychological impact faced by the widows of martyrs in northern Palestine after the martyrdom of their husbands?
4. What is the psychological impact faced by the wives of prisoners in northern Palestine after the imprisonment of their husbands?
5. What is the economic impact faced by the widows of martyrs in northern Palestine after the martyrdom of their husbands?
6. What is the economic impact faced by the wives of prisoners in northern Palestine after the imprisonment of their husbands?

## **Research Objectives**

1. To investigate the social impact experienced by widows of martyrs in Palestine after the martyrdom of their husbands.
2. To examine the social impact faced by the wives of Palestinian prisoners after the imprisonment of their husbands.
3. To investigate the psychological impact experienced by widows of martyrs in Palestine after the martyrdom of their husbands.
4. To explore the psychological impact faced by the wives of Palestinian prisoners after the imprisonment of their husbands.
5. To examine the economic impact experienced by widows of martyrs in Palestine after the martyrdom of their husbands.
6. To assess the economic impact faced by the wives of Palestinian prisoners after the imprisonment of their husbands.

## **Research Significance**

This study highlights suffering of widows of martyrs and wives of prisoners in Palestine. It brings to light the struggles faced by this segment of the Palestinian community to the external world, illustrating the impact of Israeli occupation on Palestinian society, with a specific focus on these women.

## Study Boundaries

**1. Temporal Scope:** The study was conducted in the second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, specifically starting in September. The interviews with participants began on October 15.

**2. Geographical Scope:** The study was carried out in the northern regions of Palestine, specifically in the governorates of Tulkarm, Jenin, and Nablus.

**3. Sample:** The sample included 25 participants: 15 were women of prisoners and 10 were widows of martyrs, with ages ranging from 20 to 55 years.

**4. Methodology:** The study employed a qualitative research approach, utilizing in-depth interviews with the participants. The interviews included questions exploring the social, psychological, and economic impact on this group of women. The results were presented narratively.

**5. Variables:** The study examined the social, psychological, and economic impacts faced by the women of prisoners and widows of martyrs in northern Palestine.

**6. Limitations:** The study faced challenges such as the outbreak of the Gaza war on October 7, which complicated face-to-face interviews and accessing areas beyond Palestine. Consequently, generalizing the research findings is difficult.

**8. Assumptions:** The study assumes that widows of martyrs and women of prisoners in Palestine face difficulties and challenges on social, psychological, and economic levels.

## **Theoretical Frame Work**

### **(Stress and Coping Theory)**

The study was based on the stress and coping theory which was developed in the 1980s by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman. Their book, "Stress, Appraisal, and Coping," is considered a key reference in this context. In their book, the researchers elucidated that the psychological pressures individuals face have a discernible impact on their social engagement. Exposure to psychological stress may lead to reduced participation in surrounding social activities or alterations in the level of social interaction. The researcher also clarified that social support plays a significant role in alleviating the levels of stress and psychological pressures experienced by individuals. The extent of an individual's engagement in their community serves as an indicator of their mental well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Lazarus (1966) observed that an individual's appraisal of situations plays a significant role in how he/she perceives and response to his/her reality. If an individual interprets the situations she/he encounters as challenging, it will impact his/her level of adaptation to these conditions and to his/her ability to adapt. Consequently, this interpretation can have implications for his/her psychological well-being.

Lazarus & Folkman, (1984) defined adaptation as a set of efforts undertaken by an individual to control a situation, regardless of the outcome achieved. It is also considered an individual's active effort that continually changes with fluctuations in the individual's cognitive and behavioral levels. Adaptation can manifest in various forms, such as confrontation, facing challenges, avoidance, and distancing. Consequently, coping may exhibit complexity or flexibility. It is observed that individuals can either

positively adapt to their surroundings, termed positive adaptation, or struggle to do so, resulting in negative adaptation.

Folkman, Lazarus, Pimley, & Novacek, (1987) examined the impact of age differences and on how individuals cope with stress and adapt to it over time, comparing between older and younger adults. The outcomes suggested two explanatory approaches: the developmental interpretation and the contextual interpretation.

The developmental interpretation posits that the variation in coping strategies between older and younger individuals is attributed to changes in perspectives and ways of interpreting situations as people age throughout different life stages. According to this view, individuals evolve in their outlook and cognitive processing as they progress through life. In other words, the development of individuals' ability to cope with challenges they face may be caused by the maturation of an individual's personality, a shift in their perspective on surrounding matters, an increase in their ability and experience in dealing with environmental changes, and even differences in evaluating circumstances and priorities over time.

On the other hand, the contextual interpretation suggests that the diversity in coping strategies results from changes in the actual circumstances or conditions individuals encounter. In this perspective, the variations in how people deal with daily stressors are seen as responses to alterations in the external factors and challenges that shape their lives.

The study adopts the stress and coping theory to explore the divergence in coping mechanisms between older and younger individuals. The developmental interpretation emphasizes internal developmental changes over the lifespan, while the contextual interpretation highlights the external influences of changing circumstances on coping



strategies.

The individual's response to stress and pressure tends to vary depending on the surrounding context. The changing nature of stressors can influence one's cognitive patterns, prompting the individuals to adapt their thinking strategies in order to cope with the challenges in ways different from their previous approaches. The altered context may thus play a significant role in shaping the individual's response to stress and their ability to effectively confront it. The author also links social factors with psychological factors in other aspects of the theory, particularly through the concept of social appraisal. This concept refers to how individuals assess their self-worth and social standing within their community. The author suggests that when individuals feel valued and respected in their community, it boosts their self-confidence, which in turn helps to reduce feelings of stress and frustration. (Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S, 1984).

The author also confirmed in his theory that the social stressors faced by individuals, which are shaped by societal expectations and demands such as family and work requirements, increase stress levels. This, in turn, raises the levels of tension and psychological pressure experienced by individuals. According to the author, individuals can manage these stressors either through their personal ability to adapt to their surrounding conditions or through social support from those around them (Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S, 1984).

Although the author did not focus on the detailed explanation of economic conditions and their various factors, he did emphasize that difficult economic circumstances are one of the broad factors contributing to psychological stress (Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S, 1984).

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

In this research, several previous studies that address the thesis topic have been discussed. The following literature revealed some of the social, psychological, and economic impacts on widows of martyrs and wives of activist prisoners. The studies are categorized into three main topics: social impacts, followed by psychological impacts, and finally economic impacts, respectively. Each section begins by discussing the effects on widows of martyrs before transferring to a review about the women of activist prisoners. Most of these studies were conducted in Palestine, and some in other Arab countries that had experienced wars, such as Iraq and Syria, as well as Iran and South Africa.

#### **1. Social Impact**

##### **1.1 Social Impact on Widows of Martyrs**

Nashwan & Alzouabi (2023) conducted a study on a group of widowed women in Syria, particularly those who lost their husbands due to the war. The objective of the study was to address the social, cultural, financial, and psychological obstacles faced by Syrian widows in preserving their living arrangements and parenting, as well as to explore their coping mechanisms. The sample consisted of 20 Syrian refugees residing in specially designed compounds in Jordan—14 widows and 6 divorcees. The authors used qualitative methodology and interviews for their data collection. The authors found that the cultural heritage in Syria supposed that women, in general, tend to rely on men in various aspects of their lives, considering their presence a pillar and a strong source of energy, strength, and emotional stability. The authors added that the man is also viewed as the provider for the entire family, handling economic matters as part of his responsibilities, and so in his

absence, women experience a loss of security and confront serious psychological challenges which lead them into social isolation. The authors also argued that religious beliefs and faith in God's providence, along with social relationships, played a role in alleviating the challenges faced by these women. The findings demonstrated that social and cultural norms in Jordan and Syria are similar, with males seen as a source of socioeconomic and emotional stability. The widows faced significant challenges related to maintaining their living conditions, integrating into the community, and performing single parenting. The study highlighted the need for comprehensive humanitarian-policy programming targeting the vulnerabilities of refugee women and provided empirical insights into women's changing identities, agency, and empowerment related to their parenting experiences through displacement.

(Faraj, 2023) aimed to uncover the social and psychological suffering experienced by the widows of martyrs in Palestine, specifically those whose husbands' bodies were held by the Israeli occupation until the date of the study. The population sample included 22 widows of martyrs. The author used personal interviews to explore the opinions and perspectives of the sample. The results of the study confirmed that the interference widows of martyrs faced in Palestine wasn't only from their husbands' families but also from the surrounding community. They also dealt with social challenges, like people meddling in their personal affairs. This dual interference made things harder for them, leading to feelings of isolation and making their grieving process more complicated.

A study done by Sadri, Khanjani, Younesi, et al. (2021) in Iran identified social adaptability as an individual's ability to integrate or interact with others and the

surrounding community and considered it a significant indicator of one's mental health, meaning that social adaptability is a fundamental indicator for psychological, physical, and moral well-being. The objective of the study was to identify barriers to adaptability with spouse death in wives of martyrs in accordance with Iranian culture and create a suitable information base for future use in mourning counseling and other services for this group. The population included wives of martyrs who defended the holy shrine, with a sample of 12 wives aged 20-40 who lost their husbands in the last 2-4 years and lived in Tehran. Using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions and the contractual qualitative content analysis method. The results revealed that wives experienced harassment and lack of support from the spouse's family. They also faced emotional emptiness, high dependency, difficulty enduring the loss, difficulty in accepting the loss, and lack of inner happiness. The authors confirmed the need for community support for these martyrs' widows, emphasizing the importance of developing strategies to help them overcome these obstacles. Recommendations included providing problem-solving skills training, enhancing support from families and professional counselors, improving related organizations' support and follow-up services, and promoting awareness and understanding of the unique challenges faced by martyrs' wives within society.

Lafta & Merza (2021) conducted a study in Iraq focusing on the challenges faced by war martyrs' widows, particularly in Baghdad. The objective was to investigate the social and psychological difficulties encountered by these widows. The population comprised Iraqi war martyrs' widows, and the sample included a significant portion of 1000 widows residing in Baghdad. Using qualitative interviews and surveys, the study

revealed that these widows faced considerable psychological distress and social restrictions, limiting their social interactions within the community. More than two-thirds of the participants expressed negative expectations about their future, with many desiring to travel and relocate away from their current environment. The study also found that widows who received both financial and emotional support from their community exhibited fewer depressive symptoms. The authors recommended enhancing financial and emotional support systems and promoting continuous community engagement to improve the psychological well-being of war martyrs' widows in Iraq.

Qaadan (2019) also conducted a study that aimed to identify the extent of the social problems women might be facing. A questionnaire designed by the researcher was used, and the study was conducted randomly with 150 families. The study found that the widows of martyrs faced social problems, such as social isolation and a sense of loneliness.

(Shalev, 2017) investigated the socio-psychological conditions of Palestinian martyrs' wives. His book does not focus on a specific sample but rather provides an analysis of the social and psychological conditions related to the wives of prisoners, such as grief and loss of hope. The author revealed that these women faced social challenges in addition to grief and sorrow. The author added that the martyrs' widows were compelled at times to conceal their emotions, demonstrating patience and pride as they are the wives of resistance fighters and men considered elite in their society due to the sacrifices they had made for their homeland. As the author, society expected these women to exhibit endurance, support their husbands' history, and continue their lives despite

daily hardships and constant sorrow. The author called the local community to provide social support to these women.

Al-Sumairi (2014) conducted a study in Gaza which aimed to identify the effectiveness of a guidance program in improving the psychological adjustment of Martyrs' widows in Gaza following the war. The study sample included 40 Martyrs' wives. The author used a psychological adjustment measure and a guidance program, both prepared by the researcher. The results indicated statistically significant differences between the pre and post-measures of the experimental group, favoring the post-measure, showing a significant effect of the guidance program. These findings suggest that the guidance program effectively enhances psychological adjustment among Martyrs' wives and supports the recommendation for such programs in similar contexts. The author also called to encourage widows of martyrs to engage in social life.

Al Helou (2014) also conducted his study in Gaza with 262 widows of martyrs. The objective was to categorize the challenges faced by the Palestinian martyr's widows as either internal, (stemming from the widows themselves and the extent of their confidence and belief in themselves) or external (like the isolation from the surrounding community). The author used qualitative interviews and found that martyrs' widows lived in isolation from the external community which -in the widow's view- did not easily accept them. This isolation, as the author, can lead to difficulties in achieving dreams and, consequently, challenges in social integration and interaction with the surrounding environment.

(Gebara, 2011) conducted his study on 111 families of Palestinian martyrs, with the aim of understanding the social problems faced by the wives of these martyrs in Palestine, using qualitative research methods. The results revealed that in the Palestinian cultural context, the social challenges could be represented in the widows' suffering of the increasing household responsibilities placed on them, the upbringing of their children, the interference of the husband's family in their social relationships, the wife's limited ability to express her personal opinions and the inadequate social support received by the surrounding families

In a study conducted in South Africa on a sample of 198 widowed women, Somhlaba & Wait (2009) aimed to investigate the stress-coping relationship following spousal bereavement among these widows. As the results, there was nearly nonexistent social interaction and weak adaptation of these women to the surrounding community, attributed to the prevailing grief following the loss of their spouses. The authors emphasized the need for the surrounding community to provide psychological, social, and economic support, considering martyrdom as a religious sacrificial act.

(Ramphela, 1996) conducted a study in South Africa with the aim of elucidating the suffering experienced by war widows there. The main objective of the study was to understand the impact of political deaths (as opposed to natural deaths) on the social and psychological state of the deceased's wives and families. The author relied on a personal experience of participating in political funerals that included ten coffins, focusing on how war influences the scale of mourning. The author found that in South Africa, if the widow was an activist, she must be imposed to some social rituals to demonstrate to the

surrounding society the extent of her grief and mourning for her noble husband, who performed heroic deeds. The scope of the rituals performed by her could expand to include several members of the activist family to which her husband belonged. Widows there were supposed to mourn for a period exceeding one year. Their movements and social interactions were monitored and the community imposed stricter scrutiny on them. The author attributed this monitoring to societal assumptions that women, in the period following the loss of their husbands, may be in psychological shock and were expected to pose a risk to themselves. Consequently, the surrounding society felt a need to closely observe them. Social rituals, including physical punishment, smearing with charcoal, and exclusive wearing of black clothing, were imposed on them. Typically, widows were forbidden from engaging in social interactions and participating in social events. Additionally, they were required to remain in their homes, refraining from certain social activities. Throughout the mourning period, widows were obligated to observe silence, replacing verbal communication with sign language, symbolizing grief. These practices signified restrictions on their social engagement and emphasized the solemnity of their mourning

Sande (1992) conducted a similar study in Palestine, the study aimed to reveal how Palestinian families, particularly widows of martyrs, cope with the phenomenon of martyrdom. The sample included 46 individuals, including widows of martyrs, and the study was conducted through field interviews with the participants. The author found that Palestinian widows of martyrs faced social isolation after the death of their husbands, due to the social restrictions imposed on them. For example, when they visited someone, they ensured that there was no man in the house, as that could lead to accusations of possible



illegitimate relationships. Consequently, their visits were mostly limited to other widows, resulting in a form of social exclusion. The author noted that these widows were effectively marginalized from broader society. The study also highlighted that the prospect of remarriage was perceived as daunting for these women, largely because they believed that no one would be willing to marry a woman with children from a previous marriage. Additionally, some widows found conversing with their relatives to be a source of tension rather than comfort.

## **1.2 Social Impact on Wives of Prisoners**

Rexer (2023) aimed to explore the social and psychological effects of sperm smuggling practices from Israeli prisons. The sample consisted of nine Palestinian women, and the research was conducted through field interviews in the participants' homes. The author stated that women who gave birth before their husbands' detention had better mental health than those who did not, emphasizing that motherhood was a significant factor for their well-being. The author also found that living in the family home could protect these women from psychological and health issues, as they received continuous social support from family members.

Muntasir (2022), conducted his study in Hebron on a group of the prisoners' wives. The primary goal of the study was to assess the extent of stability and resilience of Palestinian prisoners' wives, using qualitative surveys to assess their opinions and perspectives. The author found that Palestinian prisoners' wives face significant challenges due to the absence of their husbands, bearing substantial responsibility for their children and enduring numerous social and practical difficulties that impact their

psychological well-being. Recommendations of the study emphasized the need for targeted support programs to help these women cope with their hard circumstances and alleviate their psychological strain.

Shalabi and Abdulaziz (2020) conducted their study in Nablus on a sample of 34 wives of high-security Palestinian prisoners by using qualitative research methods to investigate the effectiveness of empowering and strengthening the role of the prisoner's wife in her community to help her overcome psychological problems. The results found that increased support and empowerment within the community can lead to reduced pressure and social interferences. The authors emphasized the necessity of empowering these women by providing good job opportunities, which can help them overcome psychological problems. The study's findings indicate that social pressures and community interference decrease with higher educational levels, longer marriage periods, and financial independence. Therefore, enhancing educational opportunities, promoting financial independence through job opportunities, and developing empowerment programs are crucial in helping prisoners' wives mitigate social pressures and improve their psychological well-being.

Al-Balidi and Mohammad (2020) conducted a study in Tulkarm, Palestine, aiming to examine the social support received by wives of prisoners and its impact on their psychological well-being and problem-solving abilities. The population consisted of 63 wives of prisoners, with a sample drawn from the town of Tulkarm. Utilizing surveys and psychological assessments, the authors found that these women received significant social support, which positively influenced their ability to confront and resolve problems

and cope with daily pressures. The study revealed a reciprocal relationship between societal support and the wives' ability to overcome psychological shocks and pressures following their husbands' arrests. The authors recommended enhancing community support systems to further assist prisoners' wives in managing their psychological and practical challenges.

Abu Bakr (2018) conducted a study in Jenin, Palestine, aiming to investigate the relationship between social support and life stressors among Palestinian prisoners' wives. The study included a sample of 71 prisoners' wives, utilizing surveys and psychological assessments as tools. The results indicated an inverse relationship between social support and psychological stress levels, suggesting that increased community support significantly reduces stress among the wives of prisoners. Abu Bakr found that both social support and stress levels were moderate, and the support was not influenced by the age of the wife. Based on these findings, the author recommended enhancing social support systems to further alleviate the psychological stress experienced by Palestinian prisoners' wives

According to Al-Jundi and Abu Ghubosh (2017), their study aimed to investigate the psychological impact on wives of prisoners, comparing those with children and family members to those without. The population consisted of prisoners' wives, with a sample of 131 participants, including both mothers and non-mothers. The authors used psychological assessments to measure satisfaction and mental health. The results indicated that wives with children and family members experienced fewer psychological problems and higher levels of satisfaction compared to those without children. The

authors recommended providing additional support to childless prisoners' wives to help mitigate their psychological distress and enhance their well-being.

Shehadeh et al. (2017) aimed to investigate the relationship between mothers' mental health and their children's psychological wellbeing in families with fathers detained in Israeli prisons. He conducted a study which involved 115 Palestinian prisoners' wives, using tools such as the General Health Questionnaire 28 (GHQ 28) for mothers. Results showed minimal associations between the mental health problems of the captives' wives and their children's psychological and behavioral problems. The author noticed that the older the children, the less intense the shock and the less difficulty of the mother adapting to the new circumstances of the husband's absence. The authors said that this was because older children were capable of shouldering responsibilities and taking charge of affairs, thereby alleviating the mother's sense of tension. The authors also found that some of the wives of prisoners perceived involvement from the surrounding community as a form of social support, while other wives of prisoners viewed it as a type of interference in their personal affairs. As a result, they experienced isolation and loneliness.

Shehadeh et al (2016) also conducted a study on 16 wives of Palestinian prisoners to assess their perceptions of others and examine their relationship with the social environment, specifically focusing on how they viewed societal support. Using qualitative questionnaires. The authors found that the majority of the prisoners' wives perceived the surrounding society as unsupportive, feeling that people around them had the right to interfere in their personal lives and affairs. The authors added that some wives of prisoners challenged weakened interaction with their surrounding communities,

irrespective of the duration of their husbands' detention. On the other hand, the authors stated that another group of women viewed societal interference in a positive light, finding it helpful in managing their affairs and decision-making and acknowledged that they couldn't make decisions on their own. The authors suggested that the variance in their perspectives was attributed to the differences in their social networks as some had supportive and understanding networks, while others did not.

Despite the social challenges facing the wives of Palestinian prisoners, they are often characterized by strength and resilience according to Al-Saadi (2016) who attributed that strength to the emotional support and respect they received from the surrounding community. Al-Saadi (2016) found these results after conducting a study which primarily aimed to understand the concept of "meaning in life" among the wives of Palestinian prisoners in Jenin. It also sought to explore how this meaning is influenced by factors such as age, number of children, the educational level of the wife, and the duration of the husband's imprisonment. The researcher used a measurement tool consisting of 46 items distributed across four dimensions: acceptance and satisfaction, life purpose, stability and responsibility, and self-transcendence. The study sample included 118 wives of prisoners who are still in detention.

Giacaman & Johnson (2013) conducted a study which aimed to reveal the social problems faced by women and mothers of Palestinian prisoners, especially the wives of those prisoners who were living under extended detention. The objective also was to analyze the impact of Israeli prisons and the colonial system on the lives of the wives and mothers of prisoners. The research was conducted through personal interviews and focus groups with a sample of women who met the study's criteria. The author found that this

category of women faced imposed control and restrictions on their freedom of movement or behavior and that they lived under the control and interference of extended family members. The author added that the prisoner's wife was compelled to isolate herself from the surrounding community in order not to involve others in her private affairs. The author also stated that wives of other prisoners found this interference as a form of community support.

Taraki (2006) conducted a study that aimed to examine how the absence of the husbands affected their women's overall well-being. The sample size in this study was 2,000 Palestinian households which were surveyed across 19 different communities as part of a research project by the Institute for Women's Studies at Birzeit University. Data were collected through interviews and surveys. The author found that the extended family provided emotional support to the prisoner's wife and children, as they participated in raising the children and caring for their affairs. The author asserted this idea and found that the wives of the prisoners received material and social support from the extended families in which they lived with after the arrest of their husbands. The prisoner's father, the author explained, provided financial support to his imprisoned son's family.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2005) conducted a study to investigate the psychological impact on the wives of prisoners and its relation with the social support, focusing on the emotional and mental challenges that prisoners' wives face due to their partners' political imprisonment. The objective was to explore the extent of psychological stress experienced by these women and the role of social support in reducing psychological manifestations. The study involved a population of 52 wives of political prisoners who were affected by their partners' incarceration. Data was collected through interviews and

psychological assessments. The author found that providing support to these individuals (wives of prisoners), allowed them space to express themselves. The author added that sharing these women's feelings with others who were facing similar circumstances could be considered as psychological treatment and reinforcement for them.

## **2. Psychological Impact**

### **2.1 Psychological Impact on Widows of Martyrs**

By the same study of Faraj (2023), which was conducted to examine the psychological impact and grief experienced by widows of martyrs whose bodies were held, the author found that the families and wives of martyrs experienced continuous and severe psychological distress, characterized by feelings of loss and profound sorrow. The author believed that their heightened grief was exacerbated by the uncertainty surrounding the fate of the martyr's body, as well as legal challenges associated with navigating complex legal procedures to demand the release of the martyrs' bodies.

On the psychological level, Sadri, Khanjani, Younesi, et al. (2021) revealed that widows of war faced significant difficulties, including psychological instability, emotional voids, and loneliness. The authors also found that the depth of the widow's grief was strongly related to the quality of the marital relationship prior to the partner's death. They concluded that a stable and affectionate marriage led to deeper feelings of loss and loneliness. The study recommended prioritizing the mental health of these women and supporting their families, as maintaining their psychological well-being is crucial for the overall health of the community.

The study of McNeely, Barber, Spellings, et al. (2014), aimed to investigate the relationship between death in wartime conditions and the extent of stress and grief it causes. The sample included 508 individuals aged 30 to 40 years. Household interviews were used to assess psychological health and social functioning related to political conflict. The author argued that the loss of a spouse in the context of armed conflict increases psychological shock and prolonged grief, leading to a state of isolation from their communities.

From the perspective of Qaadan (2019), matters became even more challenging for Palestinian war widows whose husbands' corpses were still detained by the Israeli occupation. The author believed that these widows of martyrs lived in constant feelings of breakdown, frustration, loneliness, and sometimes rebellion and emotional outbursts, occasionally combining all of the emotions mentioned in one. For the author, the percentage of these psychological problems in the families of martyrs reached 54%. The author concluded that most wives and families of martyrs faced these psychological challenges by seeking the help of mental health professionals.

The factor of time could play a role in the depth of sadness and psychological shock that the widow lived as Kristiansen, Kjær, Hjorth, et al., (2019) believed. The authors depended on statistical analysis to study the correlation between the time factor of spousal loss and the depression that affected martyrs' widows. The study sample consisted of 12,982 studies, of which 22 were reviewed, and the final analysis included 14 studies through a systematic review and meta-analysis. The findings of the authors showed that the percentage of grief and depression was linked to the time factor reaching



about 40% in the first month, and it began to decrease to an estimated 10% after five years of widowhood. For the authors, there was a strong association between widowhood and depression, highlighting that widowed women were a group that required special attention from responsible institutions because these women suffered depression which presented continuous risks, especially in the early widowhood period, with depressive symptoms persisting for at least five years. The authors added that the prevalence of depression and so the social isolation remained relatively high among widows within at least the first five years.

Shalev (2017) and Gebara (2011) who conducted their studies in Palestine to investigate the psychological conditions of Palestinian martyrs' widows, revealed that these women faced severe psychological challenges, including profound grief and emotional distress. The authors recommended providing targeted psychological support and counseling to help these widows cope with their profound losses and improve their overall emotional well-being.

As mentioned above, Al-Sumairi (2014) applied a psychological relief program on some wives of war martyrs in Gaza to assess the effectiveness of these programs in helping widows of martyrs improve their psychological conditions after the loss of their husbands.. The author stated that the activity included interactive dialogue sessions between the wives of martyrs and psychological experts, as well as physical activities to aid relaxation. The author found that such programs helped the wives of martyrs positively change their self-perception and concluded that such programs contribute to improve the harmony and self-acceptance of the wives of martyrs and recommended the development of similar programs and activities, emphasizing the importance of giving special attention to this segment of society.

Somhlaba & Wait (2009) also had adopted the same ideas in their study and emphasized the need to address the psychological issues associated with widows of martyrs' grief and subsequently help the bereaved families within the social and cultural context. The authors also highlighted significant psychological distress among the widows, emphasizing their need for specialized support. The authors called for developing culturally sensitive interventions to address the emotional and social needs of these widows, aiming to provide comprehensive support to help them navigate their grief and improve their well-being.

Al-Krenawi, Graham & Sehwal (2002) conducted a study on the families of the martyrs who were killed in the massacre in Hebron while performing prayers in the mosque. The study aimed to uncover the psychological effects resulting from the loss of the father in these grieving families. The sample size included 61 individuals, with 23 being widows of martyrs. The Derogatis Symptom Checklist-Revised (SCL-90-R) was used to assess psychological distress among the participants. The authors found that the wives of the martyrs experienced higher levels of stress and anxiety compared to their sons and daughters. Women were more sensitive to violence than men, as stated by the authors, who revealed that grief and psychological tensions were higher among the wives of the martyrs and their daughters, but slightly lower among the male children. The author attributed this to the societal expectations of Palestinian men, who were raised to be strong, in control, and a source of strength for their families, often avoiding openly expressing the sadness they experienced. The authors also found that none of the martyrs' widows in his study sought psychological treatment from specialists and suggested that the religious factor played a significant role in the reluctance to seek psychological therapy, as religion is considered an important element in dealing with grief and pain,

helping individuals cope and accept them in a healthy manner. The study suggests the need for culturally and religiously sensitive mental health interventions for surviving family members of the martyr.

According to Sande (1992), most of widows are fundamentally refugees who had endured persecution and wars, and the combination of all these factors, along with the loss of their husbands, made these widows suffer from stressful mental health. One of the most challenging issues facing the martyr's widow, as stated by the author, was her internal struggle between intense grief and the other feeling that forced her to feel pride. The author had identified several factors that can determine the extent of grief and psychological shock experienced by the widow of a martyr, such as the wife's age. For the author, the psychological, physical, and economic damage was greater for the younger widow, especially between the ages of 16-22, compared to older widows and this was because she was exposed to a more significant shock, she was more vulnerable, and may, at times, have faced sudden death. The author added that young widows had less life experiences and were less capable of managing their responsibilities towards their children and mourning their partners, all in one. So, the author argued that it was not enough to rely solely on the religious aspect to provide emotional, psychological, and social support for individuals from this group in society (martyrs' widows) and it's the governments and social institutions role to study the psychological disorders experienced by this category of women and provide various types of psychological and social support.

## **2.2 Psychological Impact on Wives of Prisoners**

Rexer (2023) focused in his study on the wives of the Palestinian political prisoners, who had not had the opportunity to bare children before their husbands'

imprisonment. The author found that these women experienced psychological pressure from this aspect, as they learned that their reproductive ability to get kids was limited during a specific period of their lives. For the author, this limitation led to feelings of anxiety and frustration due to their strong desire to experience motherhood and start a family. The aspects of endurance varied among the wives of prisoners, especially those with long sentences, as revealed by the author, who argued about how these wives of long-term imprisoned individuals considered the idea of smuggling sperm from the occupation's prisons to enable the wife to undergo assisted fertilization procedures, allowing her to conceive and give birth. The author saw this activity, undertaken by some Palestinian prisoners' wives, as a form of resistance and resilience against the challenging conditions of the occupation.

Muntasir (2022) focused on assessing how prisoners' wives adapted and continued their lives with courage and determination after the imprisonment of their spouses, the author stated that there are varying levels of resilience among the prisoners' wives, which the author attributed to differences in their psychological and social circumstances. The author recommended enhancing support systems to bolster the resilience and stability of these women, acknowledging the critical role of their adaptability and the impact of their families' pride in their coping mechanisms.

Al Issa and Beck (2021) conducted a study to investigate the emotional impact on the families of Palestinian political prisoners detained by Israeli occupation forces, with a specific focus on the wives of these prisoners. The study aimed to explore the emotional issues faced by these families due to the incarceration of their loved ones. The population

included families of detained political prisoners, with a sample comprising 20 of prisoners' wives. Data was collected using interviews and psychological assessments. The results revealed that family members, particularly the wives, experienced significant emotional issues such as anger, anxiety, fear, and feelings of helplessness. The study recommended the implementation of targeted psychological support and counseling services to help these families manage their emotional challenges and improve their overall mental well-being.

According to Abu Bakr (2018), there were psychological stressors differences between prisoner's wives in favor of older wives of prisoners who may have got used to the challenging circumstances by timing factor, but still live in harsh conditions

That aligns with the study of Shehadeh et al. (2017) who conducted a study to examine the psychological impact of a father's arrest on both his wife and children, focusing on Palestinian families. The authors found that the arrest led to significant psychological distress, including feelings of isolation, loneliness, anxiety, and shock of loss, affecting both the mothers and children. The study recommended providing targeted psychological support for these families, particularly for the wives and children living in refugee camps, to help them cope with the ongoing anxiety and uncertainty.

The study of (Al-Jundi, & Abu Ghubosh, 2017), which was mentioned above, also revealed that the satisfaction of prisoners' wives in Hebron was of moderate degree, influenced by several variables such as the woman's employment, her academic qualifications, the number of children in the family and the duration of her husband's imprisonment.

Shehadeh, Loots, Vanderfaeillie, and Derluyn (2016) investigated how the psychological stress and concerns of Palestinian prisoners' wives evolved with age and found that stress and concerns increased with the wives' advancing age, particularly due to the presence of teenage children and fears of their potential arrest linked to their fathers' political activities. The study found that these wives experienced significant psychological symptoms such as disturbance and depression, which could later lead to health and physical problems. Recommendations included providing targeted psychological support to address the increasing stress and concerns of older wives and to mitigate potential health impacts.

However, Al-Saadi (2016) found that the wives of Palestinian prisoners held by Israeli occupation forces exhibited a good degree of hope and optimism about life, despite the challenging circumstances they faced under occupation and the injustices imposed upon them. The author attributed this to the prevalence of the phenomenon of imprisonment, as almost every household had a prisoner, reducing the intensity of the shock and making wives feel that others shared similar conditions. Additionally for the author, the hope of these women lied in the potential release of their husbands through prisoner exchange deals. The author recommended providing psychological support from responsible entities to the wives of prisoners and their families.

Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2005) investigated the psychological impact on the wives of prisoners, focusing on the emotional and mental challenges they face due to their partners' political imprisonment. The author stated that there is significant psychological stress among the wives, characterized by frustration, shock, intense fear, emotional

reactions, and anxiety. The study recommended implementing targeted mental health support and interventions to address the emotional distress of these women, aiming to alleviate their psychological burden and improve their overall well-being.

### **3. Economic Impact**

#### **3.1 Economic Impact on Widows of Martyrs**

Nashwan and Alzouabi (2023) conducted a study to explore how economic obstacles faced by widows of Palestinian martyrs, particularly those whose spouses were responsible for their family's daily needs, contribute to feelings of loneliness and isolation. The objective was to examine the impact of these economic challenges on the psychological well-being and resilience of these women. The findings revealed that economic difficulties and the absence of a supportive partner led to increased loneliness and stress. The authors recommended providing comprehensive financial and psychological support to empower these women and enhance their resilience over time.

In their 2021 study, Sadri, Khanjani, Younesi, and colleagues investigated the challenges faced by war widows, particularly focusing on the impact of financial independence on their ability to manage economic problems. The objective –as mentioned above- was to understand how financial dependency affects stress levels and adaptation difficulties following the loss of a spouse. The results indicated that widows lacking financial independence faced greater economic challenges, which increased their stress and sometimes led to aggressive behavior. The study recommended improving financial support systems and resources for widows to help alleviate stress and enhance their ability to adapt to life without their spouses.

Al Nahal (2017) conducted a study in Gaza with a sample of 113 widows of martyrs. The study aimed to identify the needs of this group of women based on their personal perspectives. The study depended on personal interviews to collect the data. The author found that economic needs were the most pressing among all other types of needs, even more than social needs. The author also emphasized that these women often had to resort to lending in order to meet their basic family needs, which further complicated their ability to manage their financial responsibilities.

Sande (1992) also suggested that financial constraints negatively affected the psychological well-being of the martyr's widow and stated that there were other factors such as poverty, which played a role in negatively affecting the psychological well-being of the martyrs' widows.

### **3.2 Economic Impact on Wives of Prisoners**

Shalabi and Abdulaziz (2020) conducted a study examining how social pressures on the wives of prisoners can be alleviated through educational attainment and financial independence. The sample consisted of wives with varying levels of education and income. The results revealed that higher educational levels and financial independence were associated with reduced social intervention and pressures. The study recommended enhancing the educational and job opportunities for these women to empower them and reduce social pressures.

Abu Bakr (2018) found that low-income families of Palestinian prisoners experienced economic stress and that strongly affected their psychological well-being, especially of the young wives of prisoners. Also the physical health of these women was



affected by their economic conditions, leading them to issues such as hypertension and diabetes. The author recommended enhancing and empowering this category of society. Additionally, Shehadeh et al. (2017) suggested prioritizing support for families in refugee camps and those facing poverty and continuous anxiety about the future.

Taraki (2006) also investigated the economic hardships experienced by the wives of Palestinian detainees, particularly those whose spouses were imprisoned due to the ongoing conflict in Palestine. The study aimed to examine how the absence of the primary breadwinner affected these women's financial stability and overall well-being. The results indicated that these women faced significant financial crises and dependence on humanitarian assistance due to the loss of their main source of income. The study recommended increasing support and aid to these women to help them manage their economic difficulties and improve their overall quality of life.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

The researcher employed the qualitative research method by applying in-depth interviews that were designed to address the research questions of this study. The researcher obtained the Graduate Department of Social Studies' approval at the Arab American University to conduct this research. All participants provided informed consent that was signed by the researcher on their behalf after reading it for them over phone. The nature of the questions for each participant was explained by reading the informed consent to them, and they were asked about their willingness to participate in the interview. Participants who declined the interview after reviewing the questions and the research's objectives were excluded.

An in-depth interview was designed based on the theoretical frame work of the Stress and Coping Theory by Lazarus & Folkman (1984). The In depth interview, as a qualitative approach deemed suitable for the study, it is utilized to assess attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and other defined variables, with the intent of making conclusions applicable to a wider population sample (Martin, 2020). It involves investigating a specific group within society. Consequently, it allows for generalizations based on the study's results (Mayring, 2014). This research is a master's dissertation that comes after finishing all the requirements to receive the Master degree upon discussion of this dissertation.

#### **1. Participants**

Twenty-five women were interviewed, including ten widows of martyrs and fifteen wives of prisoners who are still in prison. All participants were from the northern

regions of Palestine, specifically from Tulkarm, Jenin, and Nablus. Ten participants from Jenin were interviewed, seven of whom are wives of prisoners and three are widows of martyrs. From Nablus, nine participants were interviewed, including five widows of martyrs and four wives of prisoners. In Tulkarm, six women were interviewed, four of whom are wives of prisoners and two are widows of martyrs.

The participants' residential locations in the study varied between cities, villages, and refugee camps. Twelve participants lived in villages, seven lived in cities, and six lived in refugee camps affiliated with the three cities (Tulkarm, Nablus, and Jenin). Participants' names were pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Their names were replaced with symbols consisting of letters and numbers, as noted in the tables provided in the research's results section.

The participants' ages ranged from 20 to 53 years old, and their educational levels varied as follows; ten participants held a Bachelor's degree, two held a diploma, and two others had obtained advanced degrees (Master's). Additionally, nine participants had completed secondary education, without obtaining a high school diploma, and two participants had received primary education. All widows of martyrs have children, with numbers ranging from two to four offspring per mother. As for the wives of prisoners, most of them have children, with the number ranging from one child to six, and there are two prisoners' wives who do not have children.

There was also variation in the number of years since the martyrdom of the husbands. Seven widows were interviewed, and the periods since the martyrdom of their husbands ranged from 18 to 23 years. Additionally, three others were interviewed, and only one year had passed since the martyrdom of their husbands.

Similarly, the same applies to the wives of the prisoners. Women who have endured the imprisonment of their husbands for an extended period, reaching up to twenty years, were interviewed. In the same sample, other women were interviewed, whose husbands had been recently imprisoned, for only two months.

## **2. Data Collection**

The study adopted the method of in-depth interviews method. It is considered to be purposeful method in qualitative research, aiding the researcher in accessing the thoughts of the people being interviewed, understanding their experiences, feelings towards these experiences, and their perspectives on specific matters (Mears, 2012), since these points align with the research questions.

The interviews questions were developed and formulated by the researcher and reviewed by the supervisor to ensure the accuracy, consistency, and reliability of the questions. Subsequently, the questions were presented to a judge expert to guarantee their validity and appropriateness. The questions were included at the end of the research (appendix).

Recorded audio interviews were conducted with each participant. The interview questions consisted of sixty questions, exploring the participants' perspectives on their social, psychological and economic situations.

A list of wives of prisoners and widows of martyrs was obtained randomly and this started through having a couple of friends of the researcher, one of them was a prisoner wife and the second was a martyr widow. As for the rest of the participants, communication was established through a snowball sampling method in which the researcher started with a small number of participants and then these individuals were

asked about other suitable people who met the aim of the study and had the same required criteria and those people helped to reach other participants. (Parker, C., Scott, S., & Geddes, A, 2019).

The interviews were conducted by the researcher through voice calls via a social media application (Messenger). The duration of each interview ranged from 20 to 50 minutes, and each call was recorded to document the interview. The interview questions were built upon the theoretical framework of the Stress and Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The questions were open-ended and focused on the three things: The social, psychological, and economic situations experienced by both the Palestinian martyr's widows and the wives of Palestinian prisoners and its impact on their lives. (Appendix A= Interviews' Questions of Widows of Martyrs) and (Appendix B=Interviews' Questions of Wives of Prisoners).

### **3. Data Analysis**

The researcher employed the thematic analysis method to analyze the in-depth interviews. This process involved transcribing the audio interviews into written texts (transcriptions), followed by categorizing these texts into three main sections based on their themes: social, psychological, and economic. Subsequently, these themes were further categorized into broader main themes and then into smaller subthemes. The researcher included thematic analysis for the first time and left it for ten days and did the analysis again newly after ten days to match both analysis and to eliminate the not matching thematic analysis. If this research was not a master thesis for one student then this step could be done by two or three researchers to assure the validity of the data.

Participants' names were pseudonyms to protect their privacy. Their names were replaced with symbols consisting of letters and numbers, as noted in the tables provided in the research's results section. The interview questions explored various aspects and provided participants with the opportunity to express their opinions objectively. So there was a need to categorize participants' responses into (main and subheadings), a methodology applied in thematic analysis. Therefore, thematic analysis was also utilized in this study, as it assisted in examining and understanding qualitative data, while unraveling the significance of themes (Clarke & Braun, 2017).

Depending on this approach, the participants' responses were categorized into three main themes that the study aimed to investigate and measure; Which are the social impact, the psychological impact and economic impact resulting from the absence of the husband, whether due to martyrdom or imprisonment. The data and responses were not only gathered not based on their similarity or repetition, but also because they carried the same classification that had been determined earlier (Saldaña, 2021). The narrative approach was employed in presenting the study's findings.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Results**

#### **1. Participants**

Participants (n=25) women that participated in this study, including widows of martyrs (n= 10) and wives of prisoners (n= 15), from north of Palestine. Widows of martyrs' ages ranged from 21 to 53 years old, and the number of their children varied from two to four. The period since the martyrdom of their husbands started from one year up to 23 years during this study. Three (3) of these women hold bachelor's degrees, one (1) has a diploma (two years of undergraduate degree), four (4) completed their secondary school education, and two (2) received primary education (1st to 6th grade). Four (4) of them reside in villages, three (3) in cities, and three (3) in refugee camps. These characteristics are summarized in Table 1.

The wives of the prisoners (n=15) who participated, their husbands are currently incarcerated. The ages of the wives of prisoners ranged from 20 to 52 years and the number of their children is from zero to six. The duration since their husbands' imprisonment varied from two months to 21 years as of the study date. The status of the imprisonment sentence of the husbands are as follows: nine (9) of them under administrative detention (A.D), one (1) is serving a three-year term, and five (5) of them are facing sentences ranging from 23 years to life imprisonment. The level of education of the wives of the prisoners is as follows: Two (2) of them hold master's degrees, seven (7) of them have bachelor's degrees, one (1) of them possesses a diploma, and five (5) of them completed their secondary school education. Eight (8) of the prisoners' wives reside in villages, four (4) in cities, and three (3) in refugee camps. These characteristics are summarized in Table 2.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Widows of Martyrs.

Pseudonyms	Age	Number of children	Education	Place of living	Husband's martyrdom period (years)
M <sup>1</sup> (1)	22	2	Secondary school	City	1
M(2)	44	2	Secondary school	Camp	22
M(3)	48	4	Primary School	Village	22
M(4)	33	3	Diploma	Camp	5
M(5)	21	2	Secondary School	City	1
M(6)	53	4	Primary School	Village	20
M(7)	47	3	Bachelor's degree	Camp	22
M(8)	46	3	Bachelor's degree	City	23
M(9)	45	4	Secondary School	Village	18
M(10)	46	3	Bachelor's degree	Village	20

<sup>1</sup> M: Refers to the pseudonym of widow of martyr.



Table 2: Characteristics of the Wives of prisoners.

Pseudonyms	age	Number of children	Education	Place of living	Last imprisonment was since?	Sentence of imprisonment for the husband
P <sup>2</sup> (1)	32	3	Diploma	village	10 years ago	25 years
P(2)	20	0	Secondary school	Village	2 years ago	AD <sup>3</sup>
P(3)	39	3	Bachelor's degree	Village	1 year and 3 months ago	AD
P(4)	43	6	Bachelor's degree	Village	2 months ago	AD
P(5)	52	5	Bachelor's degree	village	1 year ago	AD
P(6)	40	4	Bachelor's degree	City	3 months ago	AD
P(7)	33	3	Bachelor's degree	village	2 years ago	3 years
P(8)	34	1	Bachelor's degree	City	10 months ago	AD
P(9)	41	6	Master's degree	City	2 years and 6 months ago	AD
P(10)	35	5	Secondary school	Camp	6 months ago	AD
P(11)	52	6	Secondary school	Camp	2 years ago	AD
P(12)	44	1	Secondary school	village	20 years ago	25 years
P(13)	39	1	Bachelor's degree	village	19 years ago	30 years
P(14)	45	2	Secondary school	Camp	20 years ago	23 years
P(15)	30	0	Master's degree	City	21 years ago	LIS <sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> P: Refers to the pseudonym of wife of prisoner.

<sup>3</sup> AD: means (Administrative Detention). Administrative detention is the practice of detaining or holding Palestinians by the Israeli executive authorities without formal charges or legal proceedings. This decision is implemented by the military authorities (Playfair, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> LIS: means (Life Imprisonment Sentence). Life imprisonment means the indefinite incarceration of the accused in prisons for the remainder of his/her life or until death (Appleton, 2010).

## **2. Social Impact**

### **2.1 Social Impact of Husbands' Martyrdom on the Palestinian Widows of Martyrs**

All widows of martyrs in this study mentioned were receiving social support from their close women friends, which involved continuous encouragement, praise, and uplifting conversations to boost their spirits. Five of the widows of martyrs expressed that they receive respect and appreciation from the surrounding community in which they live, like neighbors and relatives. "The surrounding community is very supportive, and I am happy among them. Everyone likes me and encourages me, whether it's a friend, family, or anyone else." (M 6)

Nine widows of martyrs received support from their father and mother. Seven out of the ten widows of martyrs received support in the form of ongoing visits from their mothers, fathers and both brothers and sisters, with a rotation to stay overnight with them and their children. Additionally, three of the nine widows of martyrs mentioned that their fathers sought to halt the continuous interferences from their husbands' families. My parents used to support me. For example, my mother was the first supporter in my life. My brothers also took turns sleeping over in my house, never leaving my children and me alone. Even my sisters visit me constantly, and my father comes and calls regularly to check on me. (M 5)

Nine out of ten widows of martyrs mentioned facing problems from their husbands' families. These problems have taken various forms like interference in their personal affairs (five of the widows of martyrs experienced it), imposing control (five of

the widows of martyrs experienced it), insulting and spreading falsehoods (three of the widows of martyrs faced it) and accusation of the intention to remarry again (three of the widows of martyrs faced it). "I faced problems with my mother-in-law to the extent that she wished my brother had died instead of her son because they were in the same place at the time of his martyrdom. She became controlling, imposing her opinions and dominance." (M 1)

Eight widows of martyrs mentioned that they suffer from persistent monitoring, which comes from the surrounding community, such as neighbors and relatives. Seven out of these eight widows of martyrs stated that this monitoring has led them to put themselves, by intention, in social isolation. "I am often filled with fear, especially of people's monitoring, and this scares me. I don't feel comfortable with any action I take; I feel like everyone is watching me closely." (M 5)

Eight widows of martyrs complained that they have been subjected to interferences from the surrounding community in their personal affairs. However, five out of these eight widows of martyrs expressed having strong personalities and rejected these interferences. "I hope that people reduce their interference in our affairs and their curiosity to know our news." (M 10)

Seven widows of martyrs participate in social events, but they mentioned that they limit their involvement more to visits than weddings and celebrations. Three widows of martyrs view society positively. All these three participants mentioned that they consider social interactions, conversations, and visits as a means of entertainment and relief from

psychological pressure. "I visit all my relatives and friends regularly, and I constantly go to visit people. This positively impacts my mood." (M 6)

Six of the widows of martyrs mentioned that they have experienced violence from the surrounding community, sometimes from males like their husband's brothers or fathers and sometimes from females like their mother in-laws or husbands sisters. Five out of the six faced the violence from the husband's family. One of these five widows of martyrs suffered verbal and physical violence (hitting) from her brother-in-law. While the rest (four widows of martyrs) encountered violence at work or in the surrounding environment. "The interference of my husband's family in raising my children and their interference in crucial decisions regarding them, such as their education and majors, were challenging. When I tried to defend my children, I faced humiliation and physical abuse (hitting)." (M 8)

Five widows of martyrs who have been widowed for a period of no less than twenty years mentioned that they receive social support from their children living in the same household specially after they started to grow up. They mentioned that this support is represented in constant joking and playful interaction. They mentioned that this playful interaction pleases them, boosts their positive energy, and improves their psychological well-being. "My son is young, but he is my joy. His presence brings happiness to my heart, and I always ask him not to leave my side." (M 9)

## **2.2 Social Impact of Husband's Imprisonment on the Palestinian Wives of Prisoners**

All wives of prisoners received support from their husbands behind prison bars through regular phone calls and when they visited them at prisons, expressing that these calls greatly encouraged them emotionally. "I constantly receive emotional and psychological support from my husband. (He has the ability to completely change my mood)." (P 13)

Thirteen out of fifteen wives of prisoners received social support from their mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers, like helping in taking care of children and constant visits to their homes. However, the other two participants mentioned that their fathers and mothers were initially opposed to their marriages, and they did not even receive social support from them.

Thirteen wives of prisoners complained about the surveillance imposed on them by people in their surroundings, and mentioned that this led them to social-interaction restrictions. "People closely monitor me, and so I can't go out of the home freely." (P 11)

Thirteen wives of prisoners mentioned that they experience interference from individuals in their surroundings, such as neighbors and relatives. "I've heard many comments like 'leave him, you're still young,' and 'marry someone else, leave him.'" (P 14) Ten wives of prisoners mentioned that they prefer to engage in social activities only when absolutely necessary. "I only attend close family events, and that happens rarely." (P 3)

Eleven out of fifteen wives of prisoners received social support from their girlfriends. "I have two friends from my childhood who still provide me with the same

affection, tenderness, love, and care. They are the closest to my heart at the moment." (P 12)

Eight out of fifteen wives of prisoners received social support from their husbands' families, such as assistance in taking care of children and constant encouragement. "The presence of my husband's family in my life, along with their continuous support, has greatly helped me face the society at large." (P 6)

Eight out of fifteen participants mentioned that they have been subjected to harm by the families of their husbands. The forms of harm varied from one participant to another, including exerting control, interference in personal matters, continuous monitoring, and sometimes escalating to verbal insulting and humiliation. "I often feel very lonely. My relationship with my husband's family is almost nonexistent; I live only with my son." (She cried bitterly). (P 12)

Six wives of prisoners were subjected to verbal violence, who mentioned that they experienced it from the families of their husbands. "I faced verbal abuse from my husband's brothers. When I tried to defend my son, they would speak hurtful words to me." (P 12)

Four wives of prisoners complained about the continuous social visits, whether from neighbors or relatives in which they attributed the frequency of these visits to the absence of their husbands at home, allowing those around them to extend and increase the duration and number of visits. "Visits to my house have become open at all times. A lady could stay in my house until midnight since there is no man in the house, and this is very exhausting." (P 7)

Three of the wives of prisoners mentioned that they receive community assistance from people they don't know in the surrounding society, especially at the beginning of their husbands' detention or when they are affected by Israeli occupation.

### **3. Psychological Impact**

#### **3.1 Psychological Impact of Husband's Martyrdom on Palestinian Widows of Martyrs**

All the widows of martyrs mentioned experiencing profound grief and psychological shock due to the loss of their life-partners. Seven out of ten participants mentioned that they cry continuously from time to time when they remember their life partners and feel the need for them. Two of the widows of martyrs whose husbands were martyred recently tend to cry almost daily. "I felt intense sadness and continuously cried in the initial period after the loss. However, after four or five months, I started to internalize my emotions, attempting not to cry in front of others. Yet, privately, I find myself shedding tears almost daily." (M 1)

All widows of martyrs received emotional support from their mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, and friends. "My mother and father were always my constant support, and so were my siblings. Without their continuous support, I wouldn't have been able to overcome the situation". (M 5) Two out of ten participants sought psychological treatment centers that offered intervention to alleviate shock and grief. Both of these two participants mentioned experiencing significant improvement and greater acceptance of their new reality after going under intervention.

Eight of widows of martyrs see that their husbands were the support and strong fortress that protected them in the community. The eight widows of martyrs expressed a sense of vulnerability in their community, feeling that they have become 'prey' to others after the martyrdom of their husbands. "I faced major problems from my husband's family and relatives after his martyrdom, with continuous interference in every aspect of my life. If my husband were still alive, they wouldn't have dared to do that". (M 1)

Eight out of ten widows of martyrs expressed their longing for their life partners and for the kindness they used to treat them. "My husband is my greatest loss; I lost everything when I lost him. My husband was the father, brother, and friend. I lived with him for two years and four months, and during this time, we shared many moments and he supported me." (M 5)

Seven out of ten of the widows of martyrs mentioned experiencing frustration, depression, and a lack of desire to engage in any activities. "I was deeply affected by the death of my husband because I did not expect it. I felt isolation, sadness, loneliness, and depression." (M 4)

Seven widows of martyrs have expressed deep concern about their children's emotions, especially when they experience the ongoing absence of their father in different aspects of their lives.. One of these seven mentioned that her fear for her children extends to their exposure to the Israeli occupation authorities due to being the children of a former martyr. "The most tiring thing for me is that I worry a lot about my children, especially when conflicts with the occupation escalate. I'm afraid they might be exposed to harm." (M 10)



Six out of ten of the widows of martyrs expressed that they do not share their feelings at all with others, nor seek any alleviation for their sadness in doing so. Eight out of ten widows of martyrs mentioned experiencing a constant sense of stress, especially concerning the way they handle household matters and take care of the children on their own. Six out of ten widows of martyrs in the study mentioned preferring social isolation over socializing with people around them. "If I want to feel good, I go to our farm and sit alone with myself." M (10)

Five of the widows of martyrs expressed suffering from various health problems like blood pressure and diabetes. They attributed the cause to their intense grief and frequent crying. "I used to feel loneliness, loss, and intense sadness to the point that as time passed, I lost my tears, and my eyes and body became dry. However, as time went on, I began to regain strength, and my perspective of life changed a little." (M 7)

Four out of ten of the widows of martyrs mentioned that they live in a community facing similar circumstances, surrounded by women who are also widows of martyrs. These four widows of martyrs mentioned that sharing difficulty in their community can alleviate the intensity of pain they feel and help them accept the situation. "The entire surrounding community (Jenin refugee camp) was facing dire conditions, so sometimes, I was the one helping them." (M 7)

Three widows of martyrs expressed a desire to get rid of the nervousness and emotional reactions that accompanied them after losing their husbands, according to their statements.

Three widows of martyrs expressed overcoming their sadness through engaging in religious rituals and surrendering to the will and decree of God. "My connection with Allah brings me mental peace, and my faith in Allah strengthens me." (M 9)

Three of the widows of martyrs mentioned that they experience an improvement in their emotional feelings after visiting the graves of their husbands. "If I want to feel better, I go to visit my husband's grave." M (1)

Three widows of martyrs out of ten were employed while seven of them were not. The seven unemployed martyrs' widows mentioned that they are living in psychological stress due to the shortage of income.

### **3.2 Psychological Impact of Husband's Imprisonment on Palestinian Wives of Prisoners**

All of the wives of the prisoners mentioned that they experience profound sadness in the absence of their partners, and this sadness takes various forms, such as isolation, feelings of loneliness, and sorrow. "There is nothing that can compensate for my pain and sorrow. (I have a difficult story to tell)." (P 7). All wives of prisoners also expressed their desperate need for the presence of their husbands by their side. "I wish for my husband to come back and be with me." (P 10)

All wives of prisoners, who have children, (13 wives of prisoners) complain of their intense fear for their children, expressing the need of the children to their father's existence. They mentioned that this puts them in a state of sadness, distress, and frustration. . "I find writings on my children's notebooks that say, 'I miss you, Dad.' This affects me a lot, but I can't change anything." (P 6) Two out of fifteen wives of prisoners

also mentioned that their fear for their children extends beyond that, as they worry about the impact of Israeli occupation on them.

All of wives of prisoners also mentioned that they receive psychological support from their husbands through phone calls and visits to them in prisons. They all emphasized that the support from their husbands is a primary factor in infusing them with positive energy. Additionally, thirteen out of fifteen wives of prisoners mentioned that they receive psychological support from their parents, brothers and sisters, and twelve of them also receive support from their close friends. "I talk to my husband about everything that crosses my mind, and there are never any barriers between us. He always understands me, gives me advice, and constantly tells me that we are not just spouses; he says that we are one soul." (P 13)

My husband continues to seek forgiveness from me in every call, and I respond that such words are not necessary. I am committed to you, and I await you throughout my life. Whatever you need, I will provide. He is a genuine person who values my efforts for our children. (P 11)

Fourteen out of fifteen wives of prisoners stated that they greatly long for the feeling of family stability and warmth and having their children and husbands together in one home.

Psychologically, I feel extreme comfort when my husband is present among us. He bears all the responsibilities, and every moment we need something, he is there to provide it at any time. However, in his absence, this becomes very difficult, and I have to coordinate

my time with other people to find someone to go with me. My relationship with my husband is all about understanding and stability. (P 3)

Thirteen wives of prisoners mentioned experiencing constant stress, especially concerning the way they handle household matters and take care of the children on their own. "I have taken on the role of both father and mother, and since my son is the only child, I never wanted to burden him, but this has mentally burdened me." (P 12)

Eight wives of prisoners who are unemployed are experiencing psychological stress due to the difficulty of their economic situations and the poverty they are living in according to their statements. "Especially when my son asks me for money, and I don't have cash to give him, I feel sadness and helplessness." (P 12)

Seven of the wives of prisoners mentioned that they suffer from excessive nervousness, and most of them attributed it to the high psychological they face. "I suffer from excessive emotional reactions and nervousness, and I attribute this to the psychological pressures we are experiencing, particularly in the face of the persecution of the prisoners." (P 4)

Five out of fifteen wives of prisoners suffer from health problems like blood pressure and diabetes resulting from the pressures placed on them, according to their statements.

Nine out of fifteen wives of prisoners mentioned that their belief in Allah and their trust in His decree increases their strength, determination, endurance, and patience in facing the difficult circumstances they are going through. All these nine wives of prisoners believe that Allah promises them reward and compensation for their patience. "My faith in Allah gives me all the strength and support." (P 5)

Five wives of prisoners mentioned that they are surrounded by conditions similar to those of theirs, making it easier for them to cope with the difficult social and psychological circumstances they face in the absence of their husbands. "I find that everyone in Palestine is living the same conditions, so I see myself not exempt from these difficult circumstances." (P 9)

#### **4. Economic Impact**

##### **4.1 Economic Impact of Husband's Martyrdom on Palestinian Widows of Martyrs**

All widows of martyrs receive a government salary, which is approximately 2000 shekels per month. Sometimes it is a little bit less or more according to the number of children they have. All participants mentioned that this salary is not sufficient to cover their needs. "By God, there were days when I couldn't find money to buy bread." (M 8)

Nine out of ten widows of martyrs have their own homes, which they had during the life of their husbands. One of them mentioned that the conditions of her house are extremely difficult and unsuitable for living, while the last participant lives in a rented place. Six of the widows of martyrs mentioned that their economic conditions were better before the martyrdom of their husbands. Three out of ten of the participants mentioned that they are employed, while the majority (seven) of the widows of martyrs stated that they do not work. All of the unemployed widows of martyrs attributed this (unemployment) to the need for their presence inside the house due to their children, since they are still young kids and need special care which prevents them from working outside.

Eight widows of martyrs received economic support from charitable institutions, and the majority of these participants mentioned that the percentage of this assistance was very low and was given to them periodically with a small cash value.

Seven of the widows of martyrs mentioned that their children were unable to complete their education and sometimes had to postpone it due to insufficient funds needed to cover their university tuition fees or to provide their educational supplies. "My economic circumstances did not allow me to support my children's education so my children left school to help me manage the household's financial income." (M 9)

Seven of the widows of martyrs expressed their desire to support their children in establishing stability and getting married in the future. However, they mentioned that their current economic situation does not allow for such aspirations. "So, there are many expenses. I help my children so that they can get married and start their own households. I took checks for my eldest son when he got married, and there are many other expenses on me." (M 7)

Six of the widows of martyrs stated that they experience economic hardship, and so they live with constant stress due to their continuous concern about managing their financial matters. "Most of the time, the salary which I take from the government is far from sufficient. I often have to turn to my mother to ask for help, and I feel that I am financially burdening her. This is something embarrassing for me." (M 2)

#### **4.2 Economic Impact of Husband's Imprisonment on Palestinian Wives of Prisoners.**

As for the economic conditions of the wives of prisoners, all of them confirmed that they received a monthly income from the Palestinian Government but they have not received any financial support from any charitable organizations that deals with such matters. "No, no one has offered me any help." (P 8)

Thirteen out of fifteen wives of prisoners live in homes owned by them or their husbands, while the other three participants live in the houses of their parents. One of these three participants had her house demolished by the Israeli occupation.

Twelve of the wives of prisoners mentioned that their economic conditions were better before their husbands were detained. "If it weren't for the help of my family and my husband's family in covering household expenses, I wouldn't be able to manage. My husband used to handle all the responsibilities at home, so after his arrest, I faced significant difficulties in managing household affairs." (P 8)

Five wives of prisoners have their own jobs, three of these five are employed and work as teachers in government owned schools. Ten of the wives of prisoners mentioned that they do not work, with six of them attributing the reason to the needs of their children, since they are young and need their mothers' care. They find themselves unable to balance between work outside the home and their domestic responsibilities.

The salaries of the wives of prisoners range from 1700 to 7000 shekels per month. Nine out of fifteen wives of prisoners mentioned that this income is not sufficient to provide a decent life. "Our income is from the government and it is only sufficient for ten days of the month. I have five children, all of them are in school." (P 10). Six out of fifteen wives of prisoners mentioned that the salary they receive is sufficient. Five out of these six wives of prisoners mentioned that they are employed.

Two participants mentioned that they may be forced to end their children's education in school in order to seek their assistance in providing income for a livelihood which is full with economic difficulties. "Our economic situation is so difficult that I might consider having my children leave school to support themselves." (P 10)



## **Chapter Five**

### **Discussion, Conclusion, Limitation And Recommendations**

#### **Discussion**

Upon careful examination of the results obtained in this study, it can be asserted that the study effectively addresses the research questions, yielding findings and recommendations. The study provides data that is beneficial for relevant authorities to gain continuous insight on the conditions faced by the wives of prisoners and widows of martyrs in Palestine, particularly regarding their economic, psychological, and social circumstances. These three dimensions were individually classified to ensure clear answers to each research question. The results demonstrate data classification and analysis, offering insight for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges confronted by Palestinian widows of martyrs and wives of prisoners.

There is significant alignment and correlation between the findings of this research and previous studies in the same field, specifically those conducted in Palestine, whether in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. All previous studies that have been discussed in the literature review section have affirmed the general content of the results of this study, indicating that the wives of prisoners and widows of martyrs face social, psychological, and economic pressures due to the absence of their husbands, who constitute the source of support for these three aspects.

## **1. Social Impact**

### **1.1 Social Impact Experienced by Palestinian Martyrs' Widows**

As has been showed in the results, the social aspect significantly impacted the lives and psychological conditions of Palestinian martyrs' widows. Most participants faced clear social challenges like interferences in their personal affairs and ongoing monitoring, which intensified their grief and shock over the loss of their husbands. In the same context, other women encountered strong social support from their families and the surrounding community, aiding them in overcoming grief and frustration more swiftly. Hence, there was a strong correlation between the psychological and social side.

The results showed that there are social impacts on the lives of widows of martyrs arising after the martyrdom of their husbands, like interferences from the husband's family which took different forms, such as interference in personal matters, attempting to exert control, and accusing them of intentions to remarry. Some widows even faced the extreme of verbal abuse. Similar findings also have been reported in the studies of Sadri, Khanjani, Younesi, et al (2021) and Gebara (2011). However, it could be clear in the findings of the current study that a portion of these widows received social support from their husband's families, although the percentage of these women was small compared to those who encountered challenges.

There are also social impacts that are inseparable such as social interferences from relatives and neighbors. These interferences are accompanied by close monitoring of the movements of the martyrs' widows. Consequently, another effect emerged, namely social isolation resulting from such interferences. As revealed by the findings, most widows of martyrs lived in social isolation to avoid being observed by people during their movements and to prevent rumors about themselves and that aligns with the study of

Ramphele (1996) who explained how martyrs' widows in South Africa were also exposed to social control and interference of their movements and behavior.

There is a strong correlation between the social and psychological factors, as social isolation delays the process of recovering from grief and shock over the loss of a spouse. Thus, the impact is negative on the martyr's widow. This was also emphasized in the studies of Najib & Faraj (2023) and Al-Helou (2014), highlighting that interferences from the surrounding community posed an obstacle to the social adaptation of the martyrs' widows and most of the previous studies emphasized the importance of providing social support for this category of women (widows of martyrs) and engaging them with the surrounding society can enable them to develop themselves and overcome the shock they have experienced. That goes with the study of Sadri, Khanjani, Younesi, et al (2021) and Al- Sumairi (2014) who suggested that the ability to adapt to the surrounding society is an indicator of the mental health well-being of the martyr's widow.

This also corresponds to the theory of stress and coping, which believes that there is a reciprocal relationship between the psychological and social aspects of an individual's experience. That is, the more psychological pressures an individual faces, the lower the degree of their participation and interaction in their surrounding society, and vice versa. In other words, the level of social engagement for an individual is a strong indicator of their mental well-being. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The reason for social isolation in the study of Sande (1992) was attributed to two main factors: the widow's deep sadness for her deceased husband, which makes her unable to find comfort in talking about any other matters, and secondly, the intense scrutiny of society imposed on her. This aligns perfectly with the results of the current study which found that widows of martyrs faced deep sorrow and social monitoring and

both factors prevented them from participating in their society. That aligns also with the study of Somhlaba & Wait (2009) also who, attributed the social isolation of martyrs' widows in South Africa to the deep grief following the loss of their spouses.

On the other hand, the current study found that martyrs' widows received support from charitable organizations and from individuals they didn't know in their society. They also received social respect from the surrounding people. However, it is noteworthy that all those who received support pointed out that it was very minimal and sporadic, usually occurring from time to time. According to the results of this study, the social support received by widows of martyrs also comes from their friends, family, and even from their grown-up children when they are able to bear responsibilities and share them with their mothers.

## **1.2 Social Impact Experienced by Palestinian Prisoners' wives**

As for the wives of prisoners, the results of the current study revealed similar social challenges to those which were faced by the widows of martyrs, such as continuous interference from the husband's relatives and sometimes verbal violence. However, they did not face the same accusations as the widows of martyrs, such as the spread of false rumors about them. Women of prisoners also faced social interference from people around them like neighbors and relatives, as well as constant monitoring of their movements, along with unwanted repetitive and long visits. The participants attributed these actions to the absence of the husband, leading the visitor to stay in their homes for a longer time, due to the absence of a man in the house, which had an effect on the comfort of the family, both the wife and the children.

The results of the current study also showed that wives of prisoners experienced a state of social isolation, avoiding interactions with people in their surroundings. These findings associate with the outcomes of Shehadeh, Loots, Vanderfaeillie, & Derluyn, (2016) who suggested that the interaction of prisoners' wives with society weakens during the period of their husbands' incarceration. Additionally, in the study of Giacaman & Johnson (2013), we also find that external interferences in the personal affairs of the wives of prisoners pushed them to lean towards isolation and distance themselves from their surroundings. The situation of prisoners' wives differs from that of martyrs' widows in that prisoners' wives received significant support from their husbands behind bars via phone calls. So, hope was evident in the responses of the wives of prisoners, anticipating the release of their husbands from prison and their return to a stable family life. In contrast, the widows of martyrs did not share that hope.

As the case of martyrs' widows, wives of the prisoners in the sample of the current study received social support from the surrounding community, including assistance from parents and siblings. They also received support from friends, relatives, and their husbands' families. However, the support from their husbands had the greatest impact on their well-being, restoring their strength each time they felt weak. Additionally, the continuous hope for potential prisoner-exchange-deals played a crucial role in the possibility of their husbands' early release, which in its role filled them with hope.

As has been presented in the results section, the wives of prisoners longed for the family atmosphere and domestic stability. This reflects the findings of Shehadeh, Loots, Vanderfaeillie, & Derluyn (2016) and Al-Jundi, & Abu Ghubosh (2017), which indicated that the wife's presence in a family environment contributes to her mental well-being and that women with children faced fewer difficulties than those without children. Rexer

(2023) also confirmed the same idea and found that prisoners' wives who lived in the (family vibes) could be less exposed to psychological or health issues.

The study also founded that mothers with relatively older children received social support from their matured children, sharing partial responsibility. This corresponds with Shehadeh et al (2017), indicating that mature children can take charge of economic matters, consequently reducing stress and anxiety symptoms in mothers. This aligns with the contextual factor embraced by the theory of stress and coping, which assumes that changes in the circumstances and the surrounding context can alter an individual's perspective on things and, consequently, enhance their ability to adapt. (Folkman, Lazarus, Pimley, & Novacek, 1987)

In other words, the change in the circumstances of the wives of prisoners, with the maturity of their children and their assistance in shouldering the responsibilities assigned to them, had further aided them in accepting life conditions they are experiencing and adapting to them more effectively. But, on the other hand, the current study and a previous study conducted by Shehadeh, Loots, Vanderfaeillie, & Derluyn (2016) both found that having matured children may increase the mother's stress from other perspectives. This included her constant fear for her children's safety, fearing any form of violence from the occupation due to their father's political history in the struggle.

The findings of this study confirm that social support is the most significant factor in alleviating the shock and sorrow experienced by the wife of a prisoner upon her husband's arrest. The support she received from her family and siblings helped her overcome the situation. This aligns with the study by Al-Balidi and Mohammad (2020), which found a correlative relationship between the social support received by wives of prisoners and their ability to overcome the psychological shock they experienced after

their husbands' arrests. Al-Saadi (2016) also attributed the strength of the prisoners' wives in his study to the social and emotional support they received from the surrounding community. Similarly, the studies by Abu Bakr (2018), Muntasir (2022), and Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2005) confirmed the persistent need for social support for the wives of prisoners, to help them overcome the shock of loss following their husbands' arrests. This aligns with the stress and coping theory proposed by Lazarus, which suggests that as social support increases, the psychological stress faced by an individual decreases. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

## **2. Psychological Impact**

### **2.1 Psychological Impact Experienced by Palestinian Martyrs' Widows**

The findings of this study confirmed that widows of martyrs face significant psychological difficulties following the martyrdom of their husbands. They experience deep sorrow, psychological shock, frustration, depression, continuous crying at times, and a feeling of being vulnerable to society because the source of security for them (their husbands) had passed away. This aligns with the findings of many researchers, including Al-Krenawi, Graham & Sehwal (2002), Qaadan (2019), Najib & Faraj (2023), Lafta & Merza (2021) and McNeely, Barber, Spellings, et al (2014), who all found that widows of martyrs experience intense grief that takes various forms, such as feelings of frustration, depression, occasional continuous crying, weakness, and a sense of loss of security. Widows of martyrs in the current study sample feel a constant longing for their husbands, but they are obliged to conceal these feelings and their sadness, so as not to make their children feel distress or sorrow due to their mothers' grief. The suppression of their feelings puts them in a state of psychological tension, and it can sometimes manifest

as emotional outbursts. Shalev (2017) also found that widows of martyrs were compelled to conceal their emotions. However, the reasons identified in his study were not to alleviate the sorrow of their children, who lost their father, as indicated in the current study's findings. Rather, it was because social customs required them to suppress their emotions and feel pride as the widows of martyrs, who defended their homeland.

Widows of martyrs also suffered from isolation and loneliness for two reasons, according to the current study findings. The first is their deep grief, which does not put them in a good mood for engaging in conversations with others, and the second is their sense of intense societal scrutiny, leading them to isolate themselves to avoid the abundance of rumors and suspicions. They also experienced continuous fear and constant worry about their children, as being the children of a martyr exposes them to harassment by the Israeli occupation and sometimes even arrest. All these psychological pressures that affected the lives of martyr's widows sometimes lead them to suffer from health problems such as high blood pressure. However, according to the current study results, there were some factors that played a crucial role in alleviating the intensity of grief and shock experienced by the widows of martyrs like the religious aspect, which manifested in their faith in God, accepting His will and decree. The participant widows also depended on the continuous psychological support from their parents, siblings, and friends, and occasionally from specialized institutions to overcome their grief. Moreover, the results also revealed that being part of a community experiencing similar challenging circumstances, involving martyrdom and imprisonment, enabled the widows to better accept and cope with their situation. There was a difference between the findings of Lafta & Merza (2021), who conducted their study in Iraq, where they discussed how the grief among widows of martyrs reached the point of suicide. In the results of this study, such



intentions or practices were not mentioned among the widows of martyrs in Palestine, who mentioned that the religious factor and their strong faith in God's will played a role in alleviating the severity of the grief and shock they experienced after the martyrdom of their husbands and that applies to Al-Krenawi, Graham & Sehwal's (2002) whose study was also conducted in Palestine, yielded similar results, as the author emphasized the importance of religious faith among the widows of martyrs in overcoming their psychological hardships. This faith also made them less reliant on seeking psychological treatment centers.

Also, one of the most significant findings in this study also is the impact of the factor of time on the ability of the martyr's widow to adapt to her new circumstances and reintegrate into her community through social participation in joyous occasions and regular visits to relatives. This was existent among widows whose husbands had been martyred for extended periods, not less than twenty years. As for those widows who had lost their husbands within short timeframes, the results showed that they remained completely isolated from the surrounding community and struggled to adapt to their new circumstances, according to participants, that was due to them still being under the influence of the shock of losing their life partners. These findings applies to Kristiansen, Kjær, Hjorth, et al (2019), who discussed how widows of martyrs face significant psychological difficulties in the first five years after the martyrdom of their husbands. This is due to the severe shock they experience, and it takes time for them to adapt to their new circumstances. The results of the current study also revealed that passing a long period of time after the martyrdom of the husband was a significant factor in enabling widows to reintegrate into society and participate in their social events. The theory of stress and coping also adopted the idea of temporal difference and its role in shaping the

assessment of situations. The developmental factor of the theory believes that older individuals have greater adaptability to new circumstances due to their increased life experience. The longer a person has lived, the more their perspective on things around them evolves. (Folkman, Lazarus, Pimley, & Novacek, 1987)

## **2.2 Psychological Impact Experienced by Palestinian Prisoners' Wives**

Palestinian women with husbands in Israeli prisons also have endured challenging psychological conditions, according to the findings of this study, and that was due to the loss of their spouses through repeated arrests and, at times, long-term detentions. All of these circumstances had a direct impact on their mental health, leading to intense feelings of sorrow and a continuous yearning for the presence of their husbands by their side. They also longed for the stable family environment they had before. The results found that a Palestinian prisoner's wife experiences constant worry for her children and their future security, living in perpetual tension and emotional stress due to the intense pressures she bears alone. All of this leads to her suffering from health problems, as a result of the psychological stress she endures. The results highlighted the direct impact of losing a spouse and the absence of a life partner on the psychological well-being of the prisoner's wife. This situation leaves her in a state of shock, intense grief, frustration, and depression. These findings are corresponding the studies of Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2005) and Al-Issa & Beck (2021), which both elucidated how sorrow, pain, anxiety and fear dominated the prisoner's wife during her husband's detention. The current study also revealed how these psychological obstacles experienced by the prisoner's wife could extend to affect her health and that was consistent with Shehadeh, Loots, Vanderfaeillie, & Derluyn, (2016) who arrived to the same conclusions. On the other hand, there are reasons that enable wives of prisoners to face these difficulties with resilience, much like

the widows of martyrs. These include their faith in the divine decree, hope for the release of their husbands from captivity, and the presence of individuals in their surroundings facing similar family circumstances, which makes them more accepting to the situation. Lastly, the strong support they receive from their families, siblings, and friends helped alleviate the severity of grief and frustration. One of the most important things that helped the wives of prisoners overcome these difficulties (as mentioned in the results) was the shared experience with the surrounding community, facing the harsh conditions due to Israeli Occupation. This phenomenon, imprisonment, is prevalent in almost every neighborhood and that played the role in reducing the intensity of wives' grief. Similar results have been previously documented by Al-Saadi. (2016).

The theory of stress and adaptation assumes that an individuals' assessment of the circumstances they face plays a crucial role in their ability to adapt and adjust to new conditions. In the case of the prisoner's wife or the martyr's widow, it is likely that she perceives that many people around her are facing similar conditions, reducing the significance of her own affliction or problem. In this context, the individual can feel a sense of relief from the weight of the difficulties she faces, as this perspective makes her situation less distinct from others who are going through similar challenges. (Lazarus, 1966)

### **3. Economic Impact**

#### **3.1 Economic Impact Experienced by Palestinian Martyrs' Widows**

Although the widows of martyrs live in their own homes and not rented ones, they face, according to findings of this study, challenging economic conditions, especially as their children grow older with their increasing needs, such as

education. Widows of martyrs relied on the martyr's salary provided by the government, which is equivalent to the minimum wage. However, this often leaves them struggling with poverty, necessitating continuous borrowing from those around them. Consequently, they consistently experience a sense of embarrassment. These findings align with Al-Nahal (2017), who confirmed that the Palestinian widows of martyrs in his study were obliged to sometimes lend money in order to meet their family needs.

Despite the difficult economic situation that widows of martyrs endure compared to their status before their husbands' martyrdom, they are also unable to work outside the home to provide the basic requirements for their children. The reason for that is the need for their children to be with them at home, as they cannot effectively meet their needs both inside and outside the home simultaneously. This solution is challenging for them, especially for those women with young children. The results revealed that despite receiving economic support from some social organizations, the assistance to the widows of martyrs was very limited and sporadic. It does not constitute a reliable source of income. The challenging economic conditions experienced by the widows had a direct impact on their children within the family. Some of them chose to suspend or postpone the education of their children until later, allowing their children to assist them in life's demands. Consequently, this constant sense of guilt and concern for the future of their children led to continuous psychological stress. In terms of economic impact, this study demonstrated how the martyr's family was economically affected, causing direct negative repercussions on the widow of the martyr. She underwent constant stress due to the ongoing uncertainty about how to manage her children's needs. Similar findings were observed by the study of Sande (1992), as well as Sadri, Khanjani, Younesi, et al (2021).

This can make the martyr's widow feel deeply the loss of her husband, who represented a source of support and security for her, as confirmed by Nashwan & Alzouabi (2023) in their study.

### **3.2 Economic Impact Experienced by Palestinian Prisoners' Wives.**

Most of the Palestinian wives of prisoners in the current study faced similar difficulties to those encountered by the widows of martyrs due to the absence of the spouse, who is the breadwinner and is responsible for providing for the family. The majority of the participants from the prisoner's wives suffered from poor economic conditions, inadequate salaries received from the government, the complete absence of economic support from institutions, and the difficulty of seeking employment outside the home. This difficulty arises, in most cases, due to having a large number of children who need care within the household, as the participants mentioned.

All of this makes the Palestinian prisoner's wife live in a state of psychological tension and constant concern about her economic affairs and how to provide for her children's needs. She is sometimes. As a prisoner's wife, she is sometimes forced to postpone or even cancel her children's education due to the inadequacy of affording for their schooling. This, in turn, led to her sorrow for her children and emotional and psychological impact on them. This study, along with previous researches, has demonstrated that the wife of a prisoner experienced poverty and income shortages due to the absence of the husband, who traditionally provided for the needs of his children and wife. This situation put the wife in a state of tension, as she struggled to meet the financial and emotional responsibilities for her children. Similar findings have been concluded by Taraki, (2006).

The current study found that Palestinian prisoners' wives who work outside the home and received a regular income did not experience difficult economic conditions compared to those who did not work. This finding is consistent with the study of Shalabi, & Abdulaziz (2020), which found that working prisoners' wives faced less economic pressure compared to those who did not work. Therefore, the author called for enhancing and strengthening the role of Palestinian prisoners' wives by providing them with employment opportunities.

### **Limitations**

It should be noted that the research was done in the northern regions of Palestine, specifically the cities of Tulkarm, Nablus, and Jenin, along with some surrounding villages and refugee camps. Due to the researcher's residence in the northern region of Palestine and due to that this research has been done through the time of Gaza war which made it difficult to choose other cities than northern areas, these cities were deemed more accessible for conducting precise research.

This study was focused on Palestinian wives of prisoners and martyr widows. Therefore, we cannot generalize its findings to other countries besides Palestine, or to widows whose husbands passed away under normal circumstances rather than as martyrs at the hands of the Israeli occupation forces. Additionally, its results cannot be generalized to wives of prisoners who are not incarcerated within Israeli occupation prisons.

## **Conclusion**

After conducting this study, it became evident that there was direct impact of the violent practices carried out by the Israeli military occupation against Palestinians in the Palestinian territories, such as intentional killing of Palestinians and prolonged imprisonment. This, in turn, had a direct effect on the families of these Palestinian men, especially their wives and children.

These effects manifested in three main dimensions: social, psychological, and economic aspects. Concerning the social aspect, widows of martyrs and Palestinian prisoners' wives experienced intense interferences and scrutiny from the surrounding society. This, at times, led them to avoid social interactions and prefer living in social isolation. However, other women considered this societal interference as a form of help, support, and care, and they did not see it as harmful.

Psychologically, Palestinian widows of martyrs and prisoners' wives have endured shock, intense grief, frustration, and psychological stress due to the loss of their life partners, who are considered their primary support in life. There has been neglect and shortening in forming psychological and recreational programs that alleviate the severity of the shock and grief experienced by widows of martyrs and prisoners' wives.

The psychological effects, intense grief, and despair experienced by this group of women have been a direct cause of their isolation from the surrounding society. This aligns with the fundamentals of the stress and coping theory, which asserts that the psychological factor directly influences an individual's interaction with their surrounding community. The strength of the individual's social interaction with the environment serves as a clear indicator of their psychological well-being.



Additionally, widows of martyrs and Palestinian prisoners' wives faced challenging economic conditions due to the absence of the family breadwinner. They took on all responsibilities inside and outside the home, due to the lack of economic support provided to them by the local community in which they live.

The three dimensions of social, psychological, and economic impact were affected by each other in the lives of Palestinian widows of martyrs and wives of prisoners. It was shown that their psychological well-being was affected by their social and economic situations. The grief and shock resulting from the loss of their life partners contributed to their isolation from the people around them.

## **Recommendations**

The current study recommends conducting additional research, focusing on these two groups of women, which constitutes a significant proportion of the Palestinian society. Building upon these findings and further developing them is crucial, by which the study reveals that this group of women is marginalized and in need of support, care, and ongoing research to understand their psychological and social conditions.

The study also recommends that relevant authorities and responsible entities engage this group of women in development projects that could enhance their empowerment within their communities. Providing employment opportunities for them is essential, as it can improve their financial and, consequently, psychological conditions. Finally, the study also recommends paying attention to the rights of these women and empowering their roles within society.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix (1)**

#### **Interviews Questions of Widows of Martyrs**

##### **General questions:**

- How old are you?
- Do you have kids? If yes, how many kids do you have? (boys and girls with ages)
- What is your education level?
- Where do you live? ( city, village, refugee camp)
- Do you live in your own house, apartment? Rented or your own?
- If you are living at your parents in law home, then who is living at the same place with you?
- Do you have any medical treatment?
- Do you have a medical insurance? If no, how do you get treated?
- What is the level of education of your sons? (mention the gender and the qualification he has)
- Do you think that the martyrdom of your husband may affect the level of education of your sons?

##### **Economic Influence (work, money earning, resources)**

- Describe your economic situations before your husband's martyrdom?
- **Do you work? If yes:**
- What is your job?
- How much approximately is your salary?

- Does the salary you earn covers all the household needs like your food and education? If yes, explain how? If no, why?
- Do you feel satisfied with your career? If yes, in what ways / If no, why?
- Do you face any challenges at your work? If yes explain in what sides?
- Did you face any challenges to work from the surrounded community that you live in? If yes, explain what are they?
- How long have you been working since your husband has been martyred?
- How many hours do you work a day?
- Do you market your products (in case you produce products)?
- **If yes:** ( it is linked to social media plat forms)
- Do you think social media affects your economic situations? Or does it help to improve your economic situation?
- Have you faced any manifestations of bullying on social media platforms? If yes, in what sides?
- **If you have a qualification,**
- Did you get your academic qualifications before or after the martyrdom of your husband?
- Do you think that the Israeli military occupation affected your economic level? (If yes, in what ways? if no, explain)
- Do you find yourself able to fulfill all your family needs? (If yes, in what ways? If no, explain).
- **If no: (she doesn't work)**
- Do you think you've been affected economically after the martyrdom of your husband? In which ways?

- Why you don't work? Explain the reasons or if there are any challenges prevented you to work?
- Where your family's income comes from?
- Is there any economic support from the Palestinian government? If yes, who is the supporter organization?
- Do you receive any support from any other side? If there is, who are they?
- Do you think that the martyrdom of your husband may affect the level of education of your kids?

### **Social influence**

- Describe the social situations before your husband's martyrdom?
- Do you face social challenges? Like interferes from your deceased widow's side family? **If yes,**
- Did you face interferes from the surrounded community in your personal issues or daily life? (Like suggestions to get married again for example?) Or any other issue?
- Did you receive any kind of help from your relatives or neighbors, friends, family members of your husband? In what ways?
- Do you think that your family side was supportive enough for you after your husband's martyrdom?
- In what ways? How do they support?
- Do you share social event with the surrounding? What kind? (Weddings, celebrations, visiting...)?
- Have you ever been affected by violence? From whom? What did they do?
- If you work, do you face any violence at work?

### **Psychological influence**

- What are the main psychological challenges do you face today after the martyrdom of your husband?
- What support do you need to feel better?
- Who is the best person to let you feel better?
- What kind of modification would you like to make in your life, (psychological and social)?
- Do you ask for a psychological help from an organization or group of people?
- Do you get psychological support from any one? Like family, friend, org? How do they help?
- Do you have motivation to continue your life like this?
- What do you do to entertain yourself? Do you visit friends, go to the park with the kids...?
- Did you find that managing your life alone is stressful? If yes, how is that? If no, how do you describe it?
- Do you feel that you are worried about the economic issues? If yes explain how do you think about it?
- Do you feel stressful about the social community you live in? If yes explain how.
- Do you feel the need to find somebody for sharing your family's issues with?
- Do your kids ask about their father? If yes, does that put psychological pressure on you? Explain how?

## **Appendix (2)**

### **Interviews' Questions of Wives of Prisoners**

#### **General questions:**

- How old are you?
- Do you have kids? If yes, how many kids do you have? ( girls and boys with ages)
- Where do you live? ( city, village, refugee camp)
- Do you live in your own house, apartment? Rented or your own?
- If you are living at your parents in law home? Then who is living at the same place with you?
- Do you have any medical treatment?
- Do you have a medical insurance? If no, how do you get treated?

#### **Economic influence (work, money earning, resources)**

- Describe your economic situation before your husband's arrest?
- **Do you work? If yes:**
- What is your job?
- How much approximately is your salary?
- Does the salary you earn covers all the household needs like your food and education? If yes, explain how? If no, why?
- Do you feel satisfied with your career? If yes, in what ways / If no, why?
- Do you face any challenges at your work? If yes explain in what sides?



- Did you face any challenges to work from the surrounded community that you live in? If yes, explain what are they?
- Do you market your products (in case you produce products)?
- **If yes:** ( it is linked to social media plat forms)
- Do you think social media affects your economic situations? Or does it help to improve your economic situation?
- Have you faced any manifestations of bullying on social media platforms? If yes, in what sides?
- **If you have a qualification,**
- Did you get your academic qualifications before or after the arrest of your husband?
- Do you think that the Israeli military occupation affected your economic level? (If yes, in what ways? if no, explain)
- Do you find yourself able to fulfill all your family needs? (If yes, in what ways? If no, explain).
- **If no: ( she doesn't work)**
- Do you think you've been affected economically after the arrest of your husband? In which ways?
- Why you don't work? Explain the reasons or if there are any challenges prevented you to work?
- Where your family's income comes from?
- Is there any economic support from the Palestinian government? If yes, who is the supporter organization?

- Do you receive any support from any other side? If there is, who are they?
- Do you think that the arrest of your husband may affect the level of education of your sons?

**Social influence:**

- Describe the social situation before your husband's arrest?
- Do you face social challenges? Like interferes from your husband's side family?

**If yes,**

- Did you face interferes from the surrounded community in your personal issues or daily life? (Like suggestions to get divorced for example?) Or any other issues.
- Did you receive any kind of moral support from your relatives or neighbors, friends, family members of your husband? In what ways?
- Do you think that your family side was supportive enough for you after your husband's arrest?
- In what ways? How do they support?
- Do you share social event with the surrounding? What kind? (Weddings, celebrations, visiting...)?
- Have you ever been affected by violence? From whom? What did they do?
- If you work, do you face any violence at work

**Psychological influence**

- What are the main psychological challenges do you face today after the arrest of your husband?

- What support do you need to feel better?
- Who is the best person to let you feel better?
- What kind of modification would you like to make in your life,(psychological and social)?
- Do you ask for a psychological help from an organization or group of people?
- Do you get psychological support from any one? Like family, friend, org? How do they help?
- Do you have motivation to continue your life like this?
- What do you do to entertain yourself? Do you visit friends, go to the park with the kids...?
- Did you find that managing your life alone is stressful? If yes, how is that? If no, how do you describe it?
- Do you feel that you are worried about the economic issues of your family? If yes explain how do think about it?
- Do you feel stressful about the social community you live in? If yes explain how?
- Do you receive emotional support from your husband even if he is inside the prison?
- Do your kids ask about their father? If yes, does that put psychological pressure on you? Explain how?

## ملخص الرسالة

بحثت هذه الدراسة في الآثار الاجتماعية والنفسية والاقتصادية التي تواجهها أرامل الشهداء وزوجات الأسرى الفلسطينيين بعد استشهاد أزواجهن أو سجنهم في المناطق الشمالية من فلسطين. هدفت الدراسة إلى تسليط الضوء على معاناة هاتين الفئتين من النساء في المجتمع الفلسطيني، اللواتي يواجهن صعوبات اجتماعية ونفسية واقتصادية جراء ممارسات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي ضد أزواجهن، سواء بالقتل أو السجن.

شملت الدراسة إجراء مقابلات متعمقة مع 25 امرأة، منهن 10 أرامل شهداء و15 زوجة أسير لاستكشاف التحديات التي تؤثر على حياتهن اليومية بعد فقدان أزواجهن، سواء كانوا شهداء أو محتجزين في السجون الإسرائيلية.

استخدمت الدراسة التحليل الموضوعي للكشف عن النتائج، حيث تبين أن أرامل الشهداء في شمال فلسطين تلقين دعمًا اجتماعيًا من عائلاتهن وأصدقائهن المقربين، إلا أنهن واجهن تحديات اجتماعية كبيرة، خاصة من عائلات أزواجهن المتوفين، مثل التدخل المستمر في شؤونهن الشخصية والمراقبة الاجتماعية، ما أدى إلى شعورهن بالعزلة.

اقتصاديًا، عانت أرامل الشهداء من صعوبات رغم حصولهن على إعانات حكومية ومساعدات خيرية إلا أنها لم تكن كافية لتلبية احتياجاتهن الأساسية. كما واجهت زوجات الأسرى تحديات مماثلة، ولكنهن حصلن على دعم عاطفي وتشجيع من أزواجهن المسجونين، مما منحهن الأمل بالمستقبل.

كلا المجموعتين عشن ضغوطًا نفسية عميقة، بما في ذلك الصدمة والحزن الشديد بسبب فقدان أو غياب أزواجهن، إلا أن الإيمان الديني كان له دور أساسي في مساعدتهن على التكيف مع هذه الظروف. ركزت الدراسة على المناطق الشمالية من فلسطين، مما يفتح المجال أمام الباحثين مستقبلاً لدراسة مناطق فلسطينية أخرى.