


RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effect of a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Program on Resilience and Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms Among Palestinian Children Affected by Political Detention: A Quasi-Experimental Study

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ABSTRACT

Few studies have examined the effectiveness of CBT among war-traumatised Arab children, including Palestinian children. This study aimed to assess the effect of a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) program on enhancing resilience and alleviating complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD) symptoms among Palestinian children affected by political detention. A quasi-experimental design utilising a one-group pretest–posttest approach was employed. The study included 50 affected children recruited from non-governmental organizations and community organizations in conflict-affected regions of the West Bank. The CBT program comprised seven sessions totaling 9 h. Each session lasted between 60 and 90 min. Data were collected before and after the program, which was implemented from March to May 2025. The findings from the pretest and posttest revealed a statistically significant reduction in CPTSD symptoms and improvement in resilience following the program. Resilience scores increased from a mean of 19.6 ± 4.6 to 30.0 ± 2.6 , indicating enhanced resilience capacity ($t = 16.457$, $p < 0.001$). Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms showed a substantial decline from severe 14.1 ± 2.5 to minimal 1.4 ± 1.8 ($p \leq 0.001$). Similarly, disturbances in self-organization significantly decreased. The results proved the effectiveness of a CBT program in improving resilience and minimising CPTSD symptoms among participants. Thus, policymakers and healthcare professionals must ensure that psychological support programs, such as CBT, are implemented among war-traumatised children. Additionally, healthcare professionals, including nurses, should be equipped to respond effectively and provide high-quality care for traumatised children.

1 | Introduction

Political conflicts and armed confrontations create profound challenges for humanitarian and social services worldwide, with children among the most affected. Globally, over 1 billion children live in politically unstable or war-torn regions (Massad et al. 2018). Palestinian children represent one of the largest groups experiencing prolonged exposure to political violence

and systemic disruption (UNICEF 2024). Such conditions place them at high risk of psychological stress and trauma, with long-lasting effects on mental health and development (Harazneh et al. 2021).

Prolonged exposure to conflict increases children's vulnerability to psychological disorders, developmental delays and emotional dysregulation (Charlson et al. 2019; Cruz et al. 2022).