Beyond Borders: Navigating Trauma, Identity, and Resistance in the Palestinian Diaspora

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Abstract: Background: Second and third-generation Palestinians living in the diaspora face profound psychological challenges, mainly as they are unable to visit their ancestral homeland. Witnessing ongoing conflict from abroad exacerbates collective trauma and emotional distress, while many Palestinians maintain a connection to their heritage through religious faith, cultural practices, and resistance efforts. **Objectives:** This study explores the psychological experiences of second and third-generation Palestinian diaspora, focusing on the challenges they face, their coping mechanisms, and strategies for maintaining cultural identity and contributing to the Palestinian cause. **Methods:** A qualitative approach was employed, with semi-structured interviews conducted among 14 Palestinian students residing in Turkey. These participants, who have never been to Palestine, were purposefully sampled. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes regarding their psychological challenges, coping strategies, identity preservation, and resistance efforts. **Results:** Four major themes emerged: Psychological challenges, including collective trauma, helplessness, and guilt; Coping mechanisms, where religious faith provided emotional resilience; Sustaining Palestinian identity, achieved through family narratives and cultural traditions; and Resistance from abroad, with participants engaging in digital activism and community efforts to support the Palestinian cause and raise global awareness. **Conclusion:** Despite significant psychological challenges, participants demonstrate resilience through faith, cultural preservation, and activism. These strategies not only help them cope with the emotional toll of displacement but also enable them to contribute to the Palestinian struggle from abroad. The study underscores the role of cultural and religious practices in maintaining psychological well-being and emphasizes the importance of transnational activism within the Palestinian diaspora.

Keywords: Coping mechanisms, Cultural preservation, Palestinian diaspora, Psychological challenges, Transnational activism.

خارج الحدود: دراسة الصدمة والهوية والمقاومة لدى الفلسطينيين في الشتات

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الملخص: إطار البحث: يواجه الفلسطينيون من الجيلين الثاني والثالث المقيمون في الشتات تحديات نفسية عميقة، لا سيما في ظل عدم قدرتهم على زيارة وطنهم الأم. إن متابعة الصراع المستمر من خارج الوطن تُفاقم من حدة الصدمة الجمعية والضيق العاطفي، في حين يحافظ كثير من الفلسطينيين على صلتهم بإرثهم من خلال الاعتقاد الديني، والممارسات الثقافية، وجهود المقاومة. **الأهداف:** يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف التجارب النفسية للفلسطينيين في الشتات من الجيلين الثاني والثالث، مع التركيز على التحديات التي يواجهونها، وآليات التأقلم التي يعتمدونها، واستراتيجيات الحفاظ على الهوية الثقافية والمساهمة في القضية الفلسطينية. **المنهجية:** تم اعتماد المنهج النوعي، من خلال إجراء مقابلات شبه منظمة مع 14 طالبًا فلسطينيًا يقيمون في تركيا ولم يسبق لهم زيارة فلسطين، وقد تم اختيارهم بطريقة قصدية. تم استخدام التحليل الموضوعي لتحديد المحاور الرئيسة المتعلقة بتحدياتهم النفسية، واستراتيجيات التأقلم، والحفاظ على الهوية، وجهود المقاومة. **النتائج:** برزت أربعة محاور رئيسة: التحديات النفسية، بما في ذلك الصدمة الجمعية، والشعور بالعجز، والذنب؛ وآليات التأقلم، حيث كان الاعتقاد الديني مصدرًا للثبات النفسي؛ والحفاظ على الهوية الفلسطينية، من خلال السرديات العائلية والتقاليد الثقافية؛ والمقاومة من الخارج، عبر النشاط الرقمي والمشاركة المجتمعية لدعم القضية الفلسطينية وزيادة الوعي العالمي بها. **الخلاصة:** على الرغم من التحديات النفسية الكبيرة، يُظهر المشاركون مرونة عالية من خلال الاعتقاد الديني، والحفاظ على الثقافة، والنشاط المقاوم. لا تقتصر أهمية هذه الاستراتيجيات على التخفيف من الأعباء النفسية للشتات، بل تمكّنهم أيضًا من الإسهام في النضال الفلسطيني من خارج الوطن. تؤكد الدراسة على دور الممارسات الثقافية والدينية في تعزيز الصحة النفسية، وأهمية النشاط العابر للحدود ضمن الشتات الفلسطيني.

الكلمات المفتاحية: آليات التأقلم، الحفاظ على الثقافة، الشتات الفلسطيني، التحديات النفسية، النشاط العابر للحدود.

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Introduction

Palestine has long been at the heart of one of the most enduring and contentious conflicts in modern history, marked by multiple waves of violence, forced migration, and mass displacement. The events of 1947–1948, known as *Al-Nakba* or "the catastrophe," saw the forced displacement of approximately 750,000–800,000 Palestinians, representing 80% of the Palestinian population at the time (Matar, 2005). This event initiated a profound demographic shift, as displaced Palestinians sought refuge in neighboring Arab countries and beyond. The displacement was further exacerbated by the 1967 Six-Day War, which displaced even more Palestinians, particularly from the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem (Masalha, 1992). These historical events, alongside continued occupation and territorial disputes, have led to the establishment of numerous refugee camps and the gradual dispersion of Palestinian communities across various countries, forming what is now known as the Palestinian diaspora.

The *Forcibly Displaced Palestinian Diaspora* (FDPD) comprises individuals who have never had the opportunity to set foot in their ancestral homeland, yet they maintain a deeply rooted connection to their Palestinian identity. This connection is preserved through stories, cultural practices, and the shared hope of returning to their homeland, a sentiment deeply ingrained in displaced populations (Badawi, 2013). As Anderson (2020) argues in his work on imagined communities, diaspora populations, such as the Palestinians, form a "community" not solely through physical proximity but through shared experiences, collective memory, and a sense of belonging. Anderson (2020) describes imagined communities as socially constructed groups where members, despite never meeting in person, develop a strong collective identity through culture, history, and common narratives. For the Palestinian diaspora, this shared identity is continually reinforced through generational transmission, the process by which cultural identity, historical narratives, and collective aspirations are passed down from one generation to the next (Badawi, 2013; Schulz *et al.*, 2022). However, despite this strong emotional attachment, the ongoing displacement and the inability to return have left significant psychological scars on these individuals.

Recent studies have explored the psychological toll of such displacement, particularly focusing on second and third-generation Palestinians who have never visited their homeland. While much of the existing literature has documented the psychological challenges faced by those living within conflict zones—such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety (Farajallah, 2022; Thabet *et al.*, 2009)—there is a growing body of research examining the psychological impact on the diaspora. Farajallah (2022) for example, provides an in-depth exploration of the mental health issues prevalent among Palestinians in exile, identifying high levels of PTSD and depression among the displaced population. These findings are critical to understanding the lasting impact of conflict on individuals who live far from their homeland, yet remain emotionally connected to it. Thabet *et al.* (2009) conducted a longitudinal study that emphasized the prevalence of anxiety and depression among Palestinian refugees, particularly those who have faced the compounded trauma of displacement over generations. Their findings suggest that the emotional and psychological toll on second and third-generation refugees extends beyond individual trauma, affecting collective identity and community resilience.

While these studies focus primarily on those within conflict zones, there is a growing body of research examining the psychological impact on the diaspora. Studies suggest that although second and third-generation Palestinians are physically removed from the conflict, their emotional attachment to their homeland makes them vulnerable to vicarious trauma. Vicarious trauma occurs when individuals are indirectly exposed to traumatic events, often through media or personal narratives, leading to prolonged states of psychological distress (Hirschberger, 2018; LaMotte *et al*., 2015). The denial of their right to return and the persistent state of displacement have resulted in a unique form of collective trauma that transcends generations, as highlighted by Bastaki (2020a).

Moreover, the role of digital media in amplifying awareness of the conflict and its psychological effects on the Palestinian diaspora has also garnered increasing attention. Ponzanesi (2020) and Lynch *et al*. (2016) emphasize how digital platforms, such as social media, have transformed the way diaspora communities engage with the conflict. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube have provided younger generations with new avenues to participate in transnational activism, raise awareness, and stay connected to the Palestinian cause despite being geographically distant. These digital tools not only facilitate global solidarity but also serve as a form of resistance, allowing diasporic Palestinians to challenge dominant narratives and advocate for justice and human rights (Ponzanesi, 2020). Such digital activism has become a central aspect of how the Palestinian diaspora negotiates its identity and engages in the broader struggle for self-determination.

In addition to political engagement, the concept of identity preservation is a central theme in the study of diasporic populations. Theories of identity from cultural anthropology, particularly those advanced by scholars such as Geertz (1973) and Hall (1997), provide critical insights into how identity is fluid, adaptive, and constantly renegotiated in diasporic contexts. Hall (2015) argues that identity in diasporic communities is not fixed but is instead constructed through a process of 'becoming' rather than 'being.' In the Palestinian diaspora, identity is shaped not only by their ancestral ties to Palestine but also by their experiences in their host countries. This duality leads to a dynamic and evolving identity, as individuals balance their cultural heritage with the realities of their current lives.

Transgenerational trauma further complicates this identity formation, as the trauma of displacement is passed down through family narratives, cultural traditions, and religious practices (Schulz *et al*., 2022). Transgenerational trauma is a transmission of trauma symptoms, emotional distress, and psychological vulnerabilities from one generation to another within a family or community (Dass-Brailsford, 2007). These narratives, stories and practices serve as both a coping mechanism and a form of resistance, as they preserve the collective memory of Palestine and reinforce the community's commitment to the right of return. The works of Schulz *et al*. (2022) and Bastaki (2020a) highlight how this inherited trauma plays a pivotal role in shaping the psychological resilience of second and third-generation Palestinians. Despite their physical distance from Palestine, their identity and sense of self are inextricably linked to the ongoing conflict.

While the political, legal, and economic ramifications of forced migration and displacement have been extensively studied (Agbaria, 2021; Hammer, 2005), the psychological dimensions of such experiences—particularly for second and third-generation Palestinians—remain relatively underexplored. This study addresses this gap by

focusing on the psychological experiences of Palestinians in the diaspora, particularly those who have never been to Palestine but remain emotionally and politically engaged with the conflict. By examining their coping mechanisms, cultural identity, and resistance strategies, this research aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on diaspora studies and transgenerational trauma.

The study draws on several foundational psychological theories that provide a nuanced understanding of how the Palestinian diaspora navigates the psychological challenges associated with displacement. One of the key frameworks employed is that of Pearlin & Schooler's (1978) conceptualization of coping. This framework views coping not as a static or fixed response but as a fluid, dynamic process that is shaped by individuals' ongoing assessments of stressors and the resources available to them. According to this model, individuals continuously evaluate the demands of the stressor—such as displacement—and weigh these against their personal and communal resources, which can include emotional support, cultural resilience, and social networks. This lens allows for a deeper exploration of how Palestinians in the diaspora respond to the stressors of displacement, such as loss of home, cultural alienation, and ongoing political conflict, while simultaneously drawing on their resources to adapt and maintain psychological stability.

In addition to coping frameworks, the study also integrates theories of transgenerational trauma and identity preservation, as discussed by Schulz *et al*. (2022). These theories are particularly relevant when exploring how members of the Palestinian diaspora continue to maintain a connection to their homeland despite physical displacement. According to these theories, trauma, particularly when experienced collectively, is not only processed by those who directly experience it but can also be passed down across generations. In the case of Palestinians, the shared trauma of displacement, loss of land, and the ongoing struggle for national identity has significant psychological implications that transcend individual experience. The theory of transgenerational trauma helps to illuminate how this collective memory is preserved and transmitted through families, communities, and cultural practices. Furthermore, identity preservation theories suggest that despite physical relocation, Palestinians in the diaspora actively engage in strategies to preserve their cultural identity, such as through language, rituals, and narratives that connect them to their homeland. These practices help to maintain a sense of continuity and belonging, offering a sense of psychological resilience in the face of the challenges posed by diaspora life.

Together, these psychological frameworks provide a comprehensive lens to understand the multifaceted nature of coping, trauma, and identity among Palestinians living in diaspora, offering insight into how they maintain their cultural integrity and psychological well-being across generations. In light of these concerns, this study aims to investigate the psychological impact of displacement on second and third-generation Palestinians, examining the role of vicarious trauma in shaping emotional distress within this population. It further explores how intergenerational trauma influences identity, belonging, and mental health outcomes while offering insights into potential interventions that can help mitigate the psychological effects of displacement and trauma among these communities.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the growing body of literature on displacement-related trauma and intergenerational mental health challenges. By focusing on second and third-generation Palestinians, the research highlights the persistence of trauma beyond direct exposure to

conflict and sheds light on the unique psychological struggles faced by displaced populations.

Research Questions

The current study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the primary psychological challenges faced by Palestinians residing in foreign lands who have never been to Palestine?

2. How do second and third-generation Palestinians in the diaspora cope with the psychological toll of being physically separated from their homeland?

3. What role do cultural identity and religious faith play in enhancing psychological resilience and resistance among the second and third generations?

4. How can the strategies employed by these individuals contribute to the broader Palestinian struggle for identity and self-determination?

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design aimed at exploring the psychological challenges and coping strategies of second and third-generation Palestinians residing in foreign countries who have never been to Palestine. A qualitative approach was chosen to capture the depth and complexity of participant's lived experiences, particularly in relation to their emotional and psychological struggles of displacement and their ongoing connection to their homeland. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of personal narratives and coping mechanisms in a way that quantitative methods cannot fully capture.

Sampling Method

The study used purposeful sampling, a method chosen to ensure that participants met specific criteria relevant to the research questions. Purposeful sampling was deemed appropriate given the study's aim to focus on a particular group of Palestinians who have never visited Palestine due to restrictions imposed by the Israelis. The criteria for inclusion were: (1) Palestinian descent, (2) residing abroad, (3) born in diaspora, and (4) having parents who were born in Palestine but displaced. The final sample consisted of 14 participants (7 male and 7 female), all of whom were university students living in Turkey. Their ages ranged from 18 to 28 years, with a mean age of 23.6 years. All participants were proficient in English, allowing the interviews to be conducted in English.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ibn Haldun University's Ethical Review Committee. All participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. They were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant prior to the interview, with additional consent provided by those who participated via phone or Zoom. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, participants were informed about available psychological support services should they experience any distress during or after the interview process.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method due to their flexibility, which allowed for the exploration of participants' personal experiences while providing the freedom to follow up on emerging themes. Interviews were conducted in January and February of 2024, with each session lasting between 50 minutes and an hour. Eight interviews were conducted in person and six via Zoom, based on the participant's availability and preference.

The interviews took place in a private setting to ensure confidentiality. Each participant selected the interview location, ensuring their comfort. One pilot interview was conducted to test and refine the interview protocol, allowing for adjustments to the phrasing and order of questions to capture the participants' experiences better.

Sample Interview Questions

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to elicit in-depth responses. Sample questions included:

1. Can you describe what Palestine means to you despite never having visited the country?

2. How do you maintain a connection with Palestine while living abroad?

3. How do the recent events in Gaza affect your mental and emotional well-being?

4. In what ways does your family or community support your understanding of Palestinian identity?

5. What coping mechanisms have you developed to deal with the emotional distress caused by the conflict?

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis, following the framework established by Braun & Clarke (2021). This approach was selected for its flexibility and suitability in providing a nuanced and detailed interpretation of the data. Thematic analysis facilitated the identification of both major and sub-themes that reflected the psychological experiences and coping mechanisms of the participants. The analysis began with familiarization, where the author and a research assistant independently read the transcripts multiple times to grasp the data's breadth. Initial codes were generated independently by both coders, focusing on identifying recurring patterns and themes.

Following this, a peer debriefing session was conducted to compare, refine, and discuss the codes, ensuring that a consensus was reached regarding the development of overarching themes. These themes were subsequently reviewed through cross-case analysis to enhance consistency and reliability across the dataset. To further bolster the credibility of the analysis, three external experts from the fields of diaspora studies and psychology reviewed the themes, providing feedback that was used to refine the thematic structure, ensuring the final themes were a robust representation of the data. The generated themes and sub-themes identified through thematic analysis are presented in Table 1 below.

Table (1) shows the key themes and sub-themes identified during the thematic analysis.

Main Themes	Sub-Themes
Psychological Challenges	Collective Trauma, Guilt, Anxiety, Depression
Coping Mechanisms	Religious Faith, Community Support, Family Narratives
Sustaining Palestinian Identity	Storytelling, Cultural Preservation, Intergenerational Ties
Resistance from Abroad	Activism, Advocacy, Digital Campaigns

The study ensured trustworthiness through several strategies, including triangulation (multiple coders), member checking (participants were asked to review their transcripts for accuracy), and peer debriefing. The coding process was conducted independently by two researchers and was cross-validated by three external experts to ensure the reliability of the thematic categories.

Results

The thematic analysis of the interviews revealed four major themes: Psychological Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, Sustaining Palestinian Identity, and Resistance from Abroad. These themes illustrate the varied and interconnected psychological experiences of second and third-generation Palestinians living in the diaspora.

Psychological Challenges

The first theme focused on the psychological challenges participants faced as a result of their separation from Palestine and their ongoing exposure to the conflict, even from a distance. Feelings of collective trauma, helplessness, and overwhelming guilt were shared among participants. Collective trauma is a shared psychological impact experienced by a group due to historical or ongoing social, political, or cultural oppression (Eyerman, 2004). They expressed deep sorrow over their inability to return to Palestine, often describing their emotional distress as relentless. This was coupled with the frustration of watching their homeland suffer while feeling powerless to help.

P1 remarked, *"The thought of it is truly heartbreaking, overwhelmingly sorrowful, and traumatic, even though I am unable to return or even visit my homeland. While individuals from other nations enjoy the freedom to visit Palestine, we are denied this basic right. Despite repeatedly applying to visit our homeland, our applications have consistently been rejected."*

Participants expressed that this feeling of helplessness extended beyond their inability to aid their compatriots physically. The constant bombardment of distressing news from Palestine heightened their emotional burden. Many described feelings of guilt, particularly when they compared their relatively stable lives to the dire conditions faced by those in Gaza.

P7 stated, *"Every time I sit down at my dining table and see food before me, a wave of guilt washes over me. The stark contrast between my ability to eat and the starvation endured by my people weighs heavily on my conscience."*

P3 added, *"It's the helplessness that hurts the most. Knowing that I am safe here while my people are suffering every day makes me feel guilty for even the simplest things, like enjoying a meal or being able to sleep in peace."*

This sense of helplessness often led to heightened stress, diminished focus, and difficulty engaging in everyday tasks. For many participants, the emotional toll of witnessing the ongoing conflict from afar was a constant source of distress, shaping their psychological well-being.

Coping Mechanism

Religion and faith played a central role in helping participants cope with their emotional burdens. Participants described their faith as not only a personal refuge but also a source of strength, helping them maintain hope for the future amid the distress of being physically separated from Palestine. Faith provided a foundation of emotional resilience and purpose, reinforcing their belief that their suffering was part of a divine plan and that justice would eventually prevail.

P5 explained: *"My faith sustains me and alleviates my stress, guiding me through turbulent waters. I firmly trust in Allah's promise that one day, we will return."*

For many participants, faith was more than just a means of coping; it was an integral part of their identity and their connection to their homeland. It fostered emotional stability and allowed them to endure the psychological strain of watching the conflict from afar while remaining emotionally connected to the Palestinian cause.

P10 added: *"As Palestinians, we believe Allah chooses us. We accept His plans wholeheartedly, knowing that victory will ultimately be ours. We hold steadfast to the belief that we will soon reclaim our sacred land, Palestine."*

P3 echoed this sentiment: *"It is our faith that keeps us grounded. Even when we feel powerless, we trust in Allah's timing and believe that one day, our people will return to*

Palestine. This belief gives us the strength to continue, even when things seem bleak."

Through their faith, participants were able to find comfort, resilience, and hope, all of which helped them navigate the emotional toll of displacement and the ongoing conflict.

Sustaining Palestinian Identity

A strong sense of Palestinian identity was maintained through familial narratives, cultural practices, and storytelling. This cultural preservation was crucial for participants to remain connected to their heritage, even though many had never set foot in Palestine. Family stories, historical accounts, and the transmission of cultural traditions helped participants foster a deep connection to their roots despite the ongoing displacement.

P12 mentioned: *"Despite being born and raised in Romania, my parents instilled in me a profound understanding of Palestinian history, culture, and identity, ensuring that I remained deeply connected to my roots."*

Many participants saw it as their responsibility to pass on these narratives and traditions to future generations, preserving their collective identity even in exile. This intergenerational transmission of culture helped sustain a sense of belonging and solidarity, reinforcing their connection to Palestine despite physical separation.

P7 said: *"Sometimes, I start losing hope, and as a human, it is normal, but I push myself to give every small effort that is in my hands. Without losing hope, organize whatever you can to stay connected with the Palestinian community and share your ideas for the cause of Palestine."*

P11 echoed this sentiment: *"Even though we are far from Palestine, we need to keep our history alive, share our stories, and ensure that the younger generation understands where we come from. This is how we stay connected to our land and our people."*

Through these practices, participants were able to maintain a strong sense of identity, passing on the stories and traditions that define their Palestinian heritage and ensuring its continuity across generations.

Resistance from Abroad

Participants highlighted their involvement in resistance efforts from abroad, mainly through digital activism, community initiatives, and educational efforts aimed at raising awareness about Palestine. These activities were seen as essential contributions to the struggle for Palestinian self-determination and a means to stay connected to their homeland despite the physical distance.

P9 shared: *"I dedicate my time and effort to volunteering, focusing on initiatives that are closely tied to our homeland. This includes creating content on social media that highlights Palestine, educating young children about its history, and actively promoting the boycott of Israeli and pro-Israeli products."*

For many, activism was a way to counter feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. Through digital platforms and community efforts, they felt they could contribute meaningfully to the cause, ensuring that the plight of Palestine remained visible and that the younger generation stayed informed and engaged.

P11 added: *"It's essential for us to continually educate ourselves, actively participate in seminars and gatherings, and maintain close ties with the Palestinian community. By doing so, we can avoid feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and aimlessness and remain united in our cause."*

P13 emphasized: *"Though we are far from Palestine, every effort counts. Whether it's spreading awareness on social media or organizing local events, these small actions make a difference and help keep our identity and struggle alive."*

Through their activism, participants were able to foster a sense of purpose, solidarity, and Resistance, contributing to the more significant movement for Palestinian rights and maintaining their connection to their cultural and political heritage.

Discussion

The findings of this study offer a nuanced understanding of the psychological and emotional challenges faced by second and third-generation Palestinians living in the diaspora, particularly in the context of their separation from their homeland and ongoing exposure to the conflict. The study's results reveal the pervasive impact of collective trauma, the central role of religious faith as a coping mechanism, the significance of maintaining Palestinian identity, and the multifaceted nature of Resistance from abroad. These themes resonate with existing literature on displacement, trauma, and diaspora activism while also providing unique insights into the lived experiences of Palestinian youth in foreign lands.

The psychological challenges experienced by participants in this study echo findings from previous research on displaced populations, particularly those from conflict zones. Collective trauma, stemming from both personal and communal experiences of displacement, emerged as a central theme. Participants reported feelings of helplessness, guilt, and emotional distress as they watched their homeland suffer from afar. This aligns with research by Pappe (2009) and Bastaki (2020b), who highlight the heavy toll of long-term displacement on Palestinian mental health. As the Israeli occupation persists, Palestinians in the diaspora, despite being physically removed from the conflict, continue to grapple with the psychological burden of their inability to return and provide direct assistance to their compatriots. The sense of collective trauma reported by participants in this study is consistent with the broader literature on Palestinian displacement, which underscores the deep psychological scars caused by the ongoing conflict (Farajallah, 2022; Thabet & ElRabbaiy, 2018).

Religious faith played a pivotal role in how participants coped with their psychological distress. Many viewed their faith in God as both a source of personal comfort and a form of resilience, helping them navigate the emotional challenges of displacement. This finding supports previous research on religious coping mechanisms (Menawi, *et al*., 2024), particularly in conflict-affected populations. Abu-Raiya *et al*. (2020) emphasize the importance of faith in providing a sense of meaning and control in otherwise uncontrollable circumstances. For the participants in this study, faith not only alleviated stress but also reinforced their belief in eventual justice and return to their homeland. Religious faith, therefore, serves not only as a psychological refuge but also as a form of Resistance, a way of maintaining hope and perseverance in the face of adversity. This is consistent with the work of Afana *et al*. (2020), who found that faith-based coping strategies were central to the psychological well-being of Palestinians living under occupation.

In addition to religious coping mechanisms, the study highlights the importance of cultural preservation and identity in sustaining participants' resilience. Participants spoke at length about the role of family, storytelling, and artistic practices in maintaining their connection to Palestine despite never having been there. This intergenerational transmission of identity plays a crucial role in helping younger generations remain connected to their roots. Hua (2005) argue that storytelling and oral history are essential for preserving cultural memory in diasporic communities, especially in the context of displacement. The findings of

this study further affirm that, for Palestinians living abroad, family narratives and cultural traditions are potent tools for resisting cultural erasure. By passing down stories of their homeland, participants and their families are able to sustain a sense of Palestinian identity that transcends physical borders.

Resistance from abroad, mainly through activism and digital engagement, also emerged as a prominent theme. Participants described their involvement in advocacy, social media campaigns, and community initiatives aimed at raising awareness about Palestine. This form of digital activism has been increasingly recognized as a critical component of transnational resistance movements, particularly for displaced populations. Amit (2014), Banko (2012) and AlTalafeeh & Amrieh (2024) highlight the importance of diaspora activism in maintaining global awareness of Palestinian issues, even when a physical return to the homeland is not possible. The findings of this study suggest that for many participants, activism offers a way to contribute to the Palestinian struggle despite their physical distance. Digital platforms, in particular, provide a space for them to assert their political identities and participate in the broader fight for Palestinian self-determination. This engagement helps them counter feelings of helplessness and strengthens their connection to the Palestinian community, both locally and globally.

Overall, the study's findings are consistent with existing research on the psychological and social experiences of displaced populations, particularly those from conflict zones like Palestine. The themes identified in this study—psychological challenges, coping mechanisms, sustaining identity, and Resistance from abroad—offer a comprehensive view of how second and third-generation Palestinians in the diaspora navigate their complex emotional landscapes. By drawing on religious faith, family narratives, and activism, participants are able to sustain their connection to Palestine and contribute to the broader struggle for justice and self-determination. These findings not only highlight the resilience of the Palestinian diaspora but also underscore the importance of transnational Resistance and cultural preservation in sustaining their identity and psychological well-being.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the psychological experiences and coping mechanisms of second and third-generation Palestinians living in diaspora. The findings highlight the profound psychological challenges these individuals face, including collective trauma, helplessness, and guilt stemming from their inability to return to their homeland and witnessing ongoing violence from afar. Despite these challenges, the participants demonstrated remarkable resilience, mainly through religious faith, cultural preservation, and activism. Faith in God emerged as a central coping mechanism, offering both comfort and a sense of purpose. At the same time, the preservation of Palestinian identity through family narratives and storytelling helped participants maintain their connection to their roots. Furthermore, their involvement in digital activism and advocacy efforts allowed them to contribute to the Palestinian struggle for justice and self-determination, even from abroad.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of religious and cultural resources in sustaining psychological resilience and Resistance within the Palestinian diaspora. It also emphasizes the crucial role of diaspora communities in global resistance movements, mainly through digital engagement and transnational activism. By maintaining their connection to Palestine through faith, identity, and activism, these individuals are able to

navigate the complex emotional landscape of displacement while continuing to support their homeland from afar.

Recommendations and Future Research Directions

Given the persistent psychological impact of displacement on second and third-generation Palestinians, several interventions can be considered to address these challenges. Psychological support programs that focus on identity resilience, community-based therapy, and intergenerational trauma processing may help mitigate the effects of vicarious and collective trauma. Policymakers and mental health professionals should work together to develop culturally sensitive therapeutic approaches that acknowledge the unique experiences of diaspora populations. Additionally, incorporating narratives of resilience and cultural identity in educational settings can empower younger generations to navigate their displacement-related struggles.

Future research should explore the long-term effects of intergenerational trauma within Palestinian refugee communities, particularly focusing on coping mechanisms and resilience-building strategies. Longitudinal studies examining mental health trends among second and third-generation refugees could provide deeper insights into the evolving psychological impact over time. Moreover, comparative studies between displaced populations in different socio-political contexts may help identify universal and culture-specific factors influencing psychological distress and resilience. Additionally, research on the role of digital media in shaping vicarious trauma and collective identity could contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the psychological experiences of displaced populations.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, sample constraints may arise due to the availability of participants who identify as second or third-generation Palestinian refugees, potentially limiting the representativeness of the findings. Additionally, the study relies on self-reported data to assess psychological distress, which may be influenced by personal bias or social desirability, affecting the accuracy of responses. Another limitation involves cultural and contextual factors, as the findings may not be generalizable to all displaced populations due to variations in socio-political contexts, historical experiences, and cultural influences. Finally, the study employs a cross-sectional design, which captures psychological distress at a single point in time, restricting the ability to establish causality between variables and limiting insights into the long-term evolution of trauma across generations. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the psychological impact of displacement and intergenerational trauma among the Palestinian diaspora.

Disclosure Statement

- **Ethical approval and consent to participate:** The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Ibn Haldun University Ethical Committee board with reference number E-71395021-050.04-40367. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

- **Availability of data and materials:** The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

- **Author contribution:** The author was solely responsible for all aspects of this research. This includes the conceptualization and design of the study, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The author also conducted the literature review, developed the research

methodology, and wrote the entire manuscript. All revisions and final approvals were completed by the author, ensuring the integrity and accuracy of the research presented.

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