

Introduction

The right to education is a universal human right. It is fundamental for the existence of other human rights since it promotes independence and empowerment (Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN 1948; Article 13, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, UN 1966). This research learns from Palestinians themselves on how their educational journeys have been affected by the political, economic and social situation in the occupied West Bank¹.

To study educational constraints in Palestine, I, along with my research partner Mariam Al-Dhubhani, collected ethnographic interviews from cities and villages in Areas A and B.² The difference between the areas is that the Palestinian National Authority, or PA, controls area A's civil and security administration, while Israel controls area B's military administration, and area C's civil and security administration. Israel's control over Areas B and C further complicate Palestinian students' mobility to schools; in particular, Israel has not provided permits to schools in Area C, so they are considered illegal and are under constant threat of destruction ("Israeli Authorities," 2018).

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² As I discuss in my Research Methodology section, visa issues prevented me from conducting interviews in Area C the summer of 2019.

This paper examines the historical background of the occupation, and discusses previous research on educational constraints in the West Bank because of this occupation. It analyzes the collected interviews in the context of previous research and discusses its methodology.

Literature Review: Education Under Occupation

When Israel declared its independence in 1948 after Britain's withdrawal, tensions between Israelis and Arabs escalated into the 1948 war ("Palestinian territories – Timeline," 2019), resulting in the expulsion of at least 750,000 Palestinian Arabs, the occupation of 78% of historic Palestine by Israeli forces, the destruction of about 350 villages and cities, and the killing of about 15,000 Palestinians ("The Nakba," 2017). This event, known as "Nakba," defined Palestinians' future of statelessness and occupation, and now forms the basis for their distinct national identity (Ibish, 2018).

One of the biggest consequences of this series of historical events has been the lack of Palestinian territorial autonomy, which was further deepened by the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. Israel seized control over the Golan Heights from Syria and the West Bank from Jordan, as well as Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, bringing the remaining Palestinian population under Israeli governance (Harris & Fisher, 2016). Popular resistance movements began to develop as a response to the occupation, including the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the 60s (Harris & Fisher, 2016) and Hamas in 1988 (Smith, 2017, p. 411). The first intifada "uprisings" started in 1987, when Palestinian frustration turned into protests and Israel responded with heavy violence. This drew international attention, resulting in the Madrid Talks in 1991, where Israel and Palestinians joined official negotiations for the first time, but the PLO was excluded (p. 419). As the Madrid process slowly continued, secret talks began between Israel and Palestinian

negotiators from PLO to complete the Declaration of Principles (DOP), known as the Oslo Accords, without the knowledge of Yesha Council, an Israeli extremist settler movement, or Hamas (Weiner, 2005). In 1993, leaders from Israel and the PLO signed the Oslo Accords, excluding Hamas, to start a peace process between Israel and Palestinians (Harris & Fisher, 2016).

The Oslo Accords were intended to give self-determination to the Palestinian people (Smith, 2017, p. 436), and create a future Palestinian Authority (P.A.) to govern Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank (p. 436). The type of power and responsibilities of the Palestinian Authority was stated in the Interim Agreement (p. 447). Importantly for this research, Oslo 2 called for the division of the West Bank into three areas: Area A, B and C, with varying levels of control by Israel and the P.A., and specified a gradual withdrawal of Israel and a transition of power to the P.A., but these deadlines were never met (p. 437). To address these issues, U.S. President Bill Clinton held the Camp David Summit in 2000, but it ended without an agreement between both parties (“Palestinian territories – Timeline”, 2019; Weiner, 2005). The Oslo Peace Process collapsed with the controversial visit of Israeli politician Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount, which helped spark the eruption of the second intifada (Smith, 2017, p. 482). More than twenty years later, as a result of the accords, the West Bank and Gaza suffer from a lack of economic prosperity (Morrar & Gallouj, 2016; World Bank, 2016), a lack of freedom of movement (Hasan, 2018; “The Paris Protocol,” 2012), as well as many constraints Israel continues to apply on Palestinians living inside the West Bank and Gaza (Bauck & Omer, 2013).

Israel’s creation and occupation of Palestine marginalized Palestinians, leaving them with little control over their lives and futures. The protocol that has been implemented after the Oslo Accords works to restrict Palestinians from receiving full autonomy over their land and

resources. Israel's occupation extracts political autonomy from Palestinians by governing the majority of the West Bank's security and administration through military control and checkpoints. The Israeli government also controls the economy of the West Bank by surveilling imports and exports. By looking at education in the West Bank within this context, it will be clear why Palestinians continue to face educational constraints.

The Israeli occupation of Palestine creates political, economic, and social obstacles to education (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2017). Israeli army occupation creates many political constraints in Palestine through frequent house demolitions, school and university invasions, forced displacement, hundreds of military roadblocks, visa restrictions, and barrier wall construction, which is illegal under the Geneva Convention. All of these prevent thousands of teachers and students from reaching their schools or universities (Rosenfeld, 2004; Education Under Occupation, 2013; Akesson, 2015; "Israel Restricting Visas," 2019). During the second intifada, Pearlman (2003) stayed in the West Bank for a month to conduct interviews with Palestinians who experienced the uprisings under the occupation. Some of the constraints Palestinians faced during the second intifada are similar to the political constraints Palestinians continue to face today. In an interview with three friends in a village near Bethlehem, Narimen, Jamila and Sultan described the checkpoints they face as they travel between Hebron and Jerusalem (Pearlman 2003, p. 28). Specifically, Jamila talked about how soldiers closed schools to stop children from throwing rocks (p. 29). In another interview, Osama, a financial advisor, talked about how he was arrested at the age of 17 for six months in an 'administrative detention' without clear reason (p.41). Although he did not specifically talk about education, he faced these constraints during his school years (p. 41). Sana, a ninth grader, talked about how Israeli soldiers shot at them as they left school (p. 63). He also took the longer route

because roads were closed due to the conflict (p. 64). In an interview with a mother, Muna, narrated the story of her son who was shot to death while he protested outside a checkpoint (p. 83). The mother talked about how her child was a kind person, but with his death, his future was cut to an end (p. 83).

As a result of these constraints, schools in the West Bank can be seen as a place of violence and nurturing. Bree Akesson (2015) conducted ethnographic interviews in Area A, B and C to weight schools in the West Bank as a place of both “violence” and “hope.” Akesson’s analysis of schools as a “place of violence” shows how political constraints by the Israeli occupation affect education in the West Bank. In her research, she describes schools as a “place of violence” because of harassment from Israeli military (checkpoints and school invasions) and settlers (throwing stones at Palestinians), as well as the demolition of schools in Area C (Akesson, 2015). Similarly, Salah Alzaroo and Gillian Hunt’s (2003) research analysis shows the political constraints Palestinians face as they pursue education. Alzaroo and Hunt conducted 13 ethnographic interviews with households in two camps, Al Fawar and Al Aroub, both in the Hebron area (2003). The authors use ideologies of political education (Harber 1991), conservative, liberal and radical education, to assess their results. Conservative education is when education reinforces, supports, and legitimizes the existing system of government (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003). It is connected to the idea of school as a “place of violence” since education is used as a tool of oppression. This includes the closure of Palestinian educational institutions, oppression of teachers and students in the West Bank by the Israeli army, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), as well as censorship of the curriculum for Israelis and Palestinians (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003).

Akesson's (2015) analysis of school as a "place of hope" shows how Palestinians try to defeat these political constraints by resisting occupation through a liberal education, which allows an individual to make up his or her mind after consideration and discussion of relevant evidence (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003). The authors discuss how Palestinians have accepted education without looking at the economic factor because they value education and because they have nothing to lose. A liberal education is connected to the idea of education as a "place of hope" because education is used as a coping strategy for the occupation — **although Palestinians will not benefit fully because of unemployment** (Alzaroo & Hunt, 2003). Research conducted by Maya Rosenfeld (2004) in Dheisheh, a refugee camp in the south of Bethlehem, notes the following attitudes towards education among Palestinians: education is considered an attribute or trademark comparable to other character qualities and is seen as enlightenment rather than a certificate. Education is highly valued among families across Palestine, with 95.4% of children enrolled in basic education ("Education and Adolescents," 2019).

Besides political constraints, economic and social constraints imposed by the occupation affect the quality and level of education. Classrooms and curriculums are underdeveloped a result of low budgets, high unemployment rates, and low salaries (Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 2011; UNICEF, 2018). Social constraints also affect education in Palestine considerably, including gendered views of the role of women as housekeepers and mothers, and the role of men as providers and a main source of income (Dana and Walker, 2015). Many females pursue an education in the West Bank, but social constraints and gender inequality still exist. Although it is not always directly linked to the occupation, a research study by Karam Dana and Hannah Walker (2015) explores how the occupation affects both genders who travel to work or school because of checkpoints and how females are more likely to be discriminated against by the IDF

(Dana & Walker, 2015). As a result, some families will prevent their daughters from working because of harassment (Dana & Walker, 2015). If we look at how the occupation results in gender inequality, it relates to schools as a “place of violence.” The study also shows gender differentials in both employment and compensation. In the study, male respondents answered that there are many service jobs suitable for women, as opposed to labor positions, but females still receive lower wages for their jobs (Dana & Walker, 2015). Meanwhile, men have added pressure to find masculine jobs that pay well to support their families (Dana & Walker, 2015).

These are the common political, economic and social constraints Palestinians face as they pursue education. Although many of the existing research was conducted in the early 2000s, Palestinians continue to face these constraints on a daily basis. **Israeli occupation has halted Palestinians for progressing and developing themselves for the better.** Therefore, it is important to amplify the existing narratives to show the continued cost of the Israeli occupation.

Research Methodology

In conjunction with my research partner, Mariam Al-Dhubhani, our field research in Palestine encompassed 29 days over the summer of 2019. I was in the field on July 2–18 and August 18–24 while Al-Dhubhani was in the field July 2–28.³

Our research method was primarily ethnographic, recording and transcribing interviews for future use in both written and visual narratives. We had three interview guides for students, teachers, and workers. The interview guide was in Arabic. Interviews were semi-structured,

³ Mariam Al-Dhubhani originally received the summer URG grant with me in a joint proposal, but she had to decline the award due to early graduation. Nevertheless, due to personal interest in the project, she self-supported her travel to Palestine this summer to conduct the research with me.

meaning that, while the section order is followed, the questions are not fixed — they vary based on the direction of the conversation and based on the subjects' answers (Bernard, 2017). The interview guide was always subject to change based on the subjects' responses. The semi-structured interview guide, in general, consisted of five sections. The first section aimed to ease the subjects into a conversation by asking them to paint a picture of their daily life and the village they come from. The purpose of the second section was to ask the subjects to paint their educational journey. The third section examined educational constraints. The fourth section queried the dreams and hopes of subjects in the absence of these constraints. In the last section, we asked subjects to be creative by offering solutions to their own constraints.

My research had nine separate stratified groups of people whom I wanted to interview: people in all three areas of Palestine (Areas A, B, and C) because life in each of these areas deals with a different set of constraints on education, and three groups of people within each of these areas — students, workers, and teachers — to make sure to capture a diverse group of voices about how educational constraints have affected them. However, due to logistical and security reasons, we were only able to cover Areas A and B. To cover Area A, Mariam and I traveled to Ramallah, Nablus, and Bethlehem. In Ramallah, we went to universities and downtown Ramallah to conduct interviews with students, teachers, and workers. In Nablus and Bethlehem, we went to different universities to interview students. Since people from Area B come to universities in Area A, we were able to simultaneously interview students from different villages. We were also able to interview Arab Israelis who study in Area A. During my second visit to the West Bank, I stayed in Salfit to interview teachers and workers in Area B. I was able to interview private tutors, school teachers, and Palestinians who work in Israel.

Demographics and Sampling

In these two areas, we used non-probability and intercept sampling. Although non-probability sampling is not a perfect way to collect data, due to the increased chance of bias in the respondents sampled, Reynolds, Simintiras, and Diamontopoulous (2003) have highlighted how probability sampling in developing countries is often a luxury, and non-probability methods are often the best option for scholars with slimmer research budgets. Nevertheless, there are many scholars who have successfully used non-random sampling in the Middle East, such as Martin's (2009) assessment of political socialization and media consumption among youth in Jordan and Kousha and Mohseni's (2000) assessment of Iranians' level of happiness and general life satisfaction. Most relevant for my project, Wendy Pearlman of Northwestern University has successfully used non-random interview techniques in Palestine (2003) and Syria (2017) to capture Palestinian voices and give humanizing details to the dry facts reported in the media or collected by organizations. Because the point of my project in Palestine is not to give, or claim, a representative sample of all Palestinian voices, but rather to highlight the experiences of individuals who have experienced problems with pursuing their human right to an education, the non-probability sampling of my interviews does not detract from the power of these voices or the usefulness of the research.

That said, there are ways to ensure that a diverse sampling of voices is heard, through the use of stratified sampling (Levitin 2017). I chose to create targeted quotas of people in Areas A, B, and C, because life in each of these areas deals with a different set of constraints on education. I also created targeted quotas of three groups of people within each of these areas — students, workers, and teachers — to make sure that I heard from a diverse group of voices about how educational constraints have affected them (see Table 1).

Besides our initial contact list, we also used intercept sampling (McKenzie and Mistiaen, 2007) to collect interviews, which helped us access a more diverse pool of people, especially workers and high school students. On different times and days, we approached subjects, introduced ourselves and the research purpose, then asked for an interview. Instead of signatures, we asked for verbal consent.

In sum, while my interviews were not randomly selected, by stratifying my sample and by using intercept sampling, my interviews provide a diverse selection of different viewpoints across Palestine.

Table 1. Targeted Vs. Actual Number of Interviews Across Nine Stratified Groups

Groups			
Areas	Target	Outcome	Total Per Area
Area A	10	7	29
Area B	10	4	29
Area C	10	0	0
Total Per Group	30	11	58*

Number of Interviewees From Area B

Category 1	6
Category 2	3
Category 3	4
Category 4	3
Total	16

* An additional eight interviews were conducted with Arab Israelis. Their interviews are not used in the present research analysis.

Figure 1. Breakdown of Interviewees' Geographical Location (Area A)

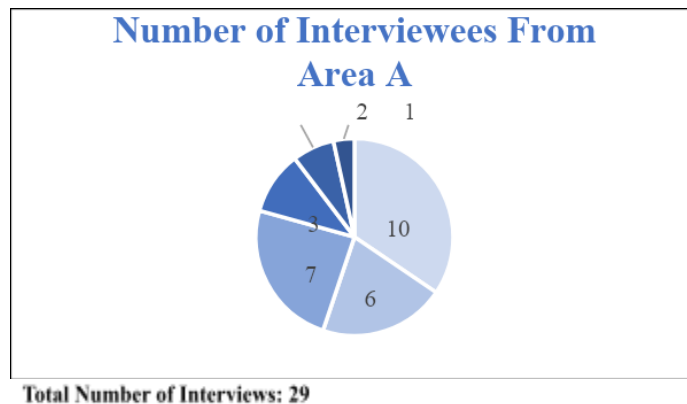


Figure 2. Breakdown of Interviewees' Geographical Location (Area B)

Figure 3. Age Range for Female Interviewees

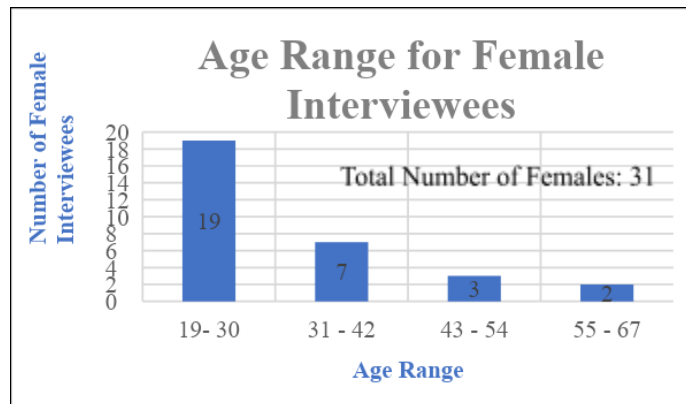
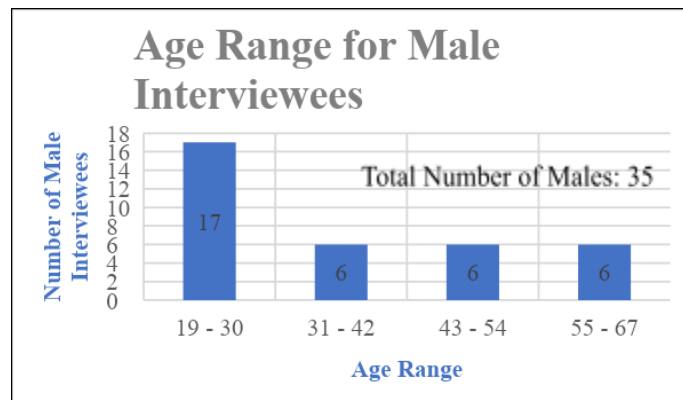


Figure 4. Age Range for Male Interviewees



Results and Discussion

To analyze the collected 58 interviews, each interview is coded with numbers based on the following groups: Military Occupation, Checkpoints, Economic Concerns, Gender Issues, Political Divisions, and the Educational System. Each group has a list of entries with a specific code, which is used whenever an interviewee talks about a particular constraint, such as jail, a low salary, unemployment, etc. For example, if an interviewee speaks about being detained by the IDF, the quote is highlighted with a code, such as 1002a.

Military Occupation

Many Palestinians mentioned specific instances of violence by the Israeli occupation. Those who witnessed or experienced violence are the same interviewees who mentioned jails, checkpoints, house demolitions, settler violence, school invasions, etc. Violence is also associated and mentioned by Palestinians who have experienced the first or second intifada. Among the interviewees, 20 Palestinians above the age of 30 experienced either the first or second intifada. Their memories of the intifada are related to violence, which ultimately hindered their journey to education.

Anas, a 49-year-old construction worker in Israel, recalls the closure of Al-Najah University in 1994:

The [military] surrounded the university for four days ... because they wanted to arrest several armed men inside the campus, and at that time there were university elections ... but the security closed the doors and refused to let the military inside ... I still remember these days... In the last two days, there was no food left. During the first two days, they used to give us boiled hummus twice a day, and during the last two days, they gave us water and salt to drink.

The IDF still frequently invades universities and schools to arrest politically active students. Palestinians have been detained and tortured in Israeli jails for their political activism. Mohammed, a 23-year-old university student, has been arrested twice for his political activism, which forced him to miss a year in high school:

I was arrested once during school and once during university. During school they jailed me for a year and four months. This is why I entered university late. I am 23 and I am still a senior ... I missed a year during school, and I had to repeat it with students younger than me ... It was during Nakba protests. Two Palestinian martyrs lost their lives, Nadeem Nawarah and Mohammed Abu Daher. During the protests, I stayed nearby to rescue them but I was caught by the military ... When I saw two people sacrifice their lives in front of me, I could not run away and leave them alone ... I felt like I could offer them help ... I was also detained for the second time during a protest against a military checkpoint.

During the second arrest, he was detained for ten months, which affected his university studies.

Mohammed said he wanted to pursue a master's degree abroad, but he is not allowed to leave the country due to his previous arrests.

Fayza, a 41-year-old teacher, spoke about her husband's arrest, and how it prevented him from attending their daughter's graduation:

He was arrested for the second time in 2014 at the administrative detention for six months. It was the most difficult time for me. He was one of the people that refused to eat for 63 days, and he suffered a lot to the point he almost lost his life because of a stomach bug ... Imagine [that] every day you are waiting to hear the bad news because [the prisoners] are demanding their rights ... What made it more difficult is that my eldest daughter ... was graduating from high school ... He was supposed to be released four days before her results were out, but his detention was extended ... Well, she now graduated with a degree in laboratory medicine, and life goes on.

Many Palestinians continue to face similar political constraints and violence resultant of the Israeli occupation, preventing or hindering their attendance at class or graduation. Children are also prone to this violence. Mariam, a 47-year-old teacher, decided to major in education after her two twins witnessed violence during the second intifada. Her children thought their

father had died after he was shot in the shoulder at a checkpoint. Mariam's children feared going to school because of this incident. She decided to help children like her own. After taking a gap year from university, Mariam returned and changed her major.

What happened to my children is also what children in Palestine suffer from. ... Our children face direct and indirect violence from the occupation ... and if we fail to take their hands and help them, they will get lost ... [our children] are our biggest investment.

Checkpoints

Palestinians who travel to different cities for work or school are likely to face checkpoints on the way. The problem is that they are unpredictable. Some days it takes less than ten minutes to pass the point, while on other days, it takes several hours.

Hazem, a 22-year-old university student in Bethlehem, spoke about struggling through checkpoints as when returns home to Jerusalem:

Sometimes there are 100 or 200 people at the checkpoint, so we have to wait an hour. There were days we returned to sleep in Bethlehem. The road that usually takes ten minutes in the car can take more than an hour ... If I leave university at 4 p.m., I arrive home at 6 or 7 p.m. I lose all my willpower to study with the exhausting road and the traffic, but then I have to go study, and on the other days I have to go work.

Since checkpoints are unpredictable, Palestinians cannot plan ahead for days they will be late. This uncertainty can be mentally exhausting and can result in consequences for students and teachers as well as workers. Lana, a 19-year-old finance student, recalled what happened to her friend on the same day she was interviewed:

Today, when my friend was inside the ford passing [Hallamis Checkpoint], the soldier told them to return. She was going to be one hour late, but by coincidence, the soldier shift changed, and they told them to come back because they opened the border.

Due to the uncertainty related to checkpoints, many students and workers decide to move from home to the dorms, while others choose universities in more accessible areas.

Economic Concerns

The Oslo Accords have affected the Palestinian economy considerably, creating high levels of unemployment and resulting in low salaries. Because of the low salaries, both teachers and students often work multiple jobs to provide for themselves and their families. The economic situation in the West Bank also demotivates students as they pursue education, since it is hard to cover university fees, and students may not find jobs after graduating.

One mechatronics engineering student said he knew he would not find a job with his major once he graduated:

I chose the major I wanted ... and I was hoping and planning ... to finish the bachelor's degree [here] ... and if God wills and blesses me with a scholarship ... I will leave for a country like Germany that is interested in the industrial area. ... My major is insignificant in Palestine because we are a state that depends on imports more than exports.

This reliance on imports is because the West Bank was not allowed to have industrial factories after the Accords. Furthermore, if there are jobs available for specific majors, it is difficult for graduates to find a job because the market is too saturated:

Why does no one major in pharmacy? It is because there are 3000 unemployed pharmacists ... For example, in our village, ... only two pharmacies are allowed, but this year, four people are studying pharmacy.

Those who do manage to gain employment earn low salaries, not enough to provide for their families. Tamer, an owner of a gold shop in downtown Ramallah, said:

As I work, many people come to sell their gold to pay for their children's university fees. Now it is the time for university admissions, and a Birzeit student

would need to at least pay 1000 dinars. This installment is a lot, so some people come to sell their gold to educate their children.

In addition to the low salaries, teachers and civil servants' salaries were cut in half when Israel withdrew tax money from the P.A. Alia, a geography teacher, spoke about how this affected her family's economic situation:

I built the second floor of our house, and all the loans were on me, as well as installments for furniture, which I paid with half of my salary. My husband is also a teacher, but he owns a car, and half of his salary goes to installments for the car. ... When they cut our salaries, how are we supposed to live? The bank takes 1500 to 2000 shekel, and only 500 are left. What is it enough for? Fuel? Water? Electricity? Vegetables, or for my children's pocket money?

Because of the economic situation in the West Bank, many people tend to work in Israel to receive a higher salary. Bushra, a 19-year-old university student, whose father is a teacher, said:

Nothing motivates people to study nowadays. A student [that] my father teaches said, "I go to Israel, and the salary you make in a month, I can receive it in one day."

Gender Norms

Men have added pressure to provide for the family. Thus, they only focus on ways to obtain money rather than to pursue their dreams. As a result, men tended to be more pessimistic towards education, and were likely to study primarily for the degree. In contrast, although many females provide for their families, they tended to be more optimistic and focused on receiving education in the best possible way. Tala, a 38-year-old teacher in Ramallah, talked about why males prefer working:

My son in grade ten is asking me why he should study at the university for four years, and then return to work in Israel? Why doesn't he work in Israel from the beginning? It is because he sees [the difference between] his uncles and neighbors who work in Israel, and the people who work in the West Bank. So, he says he

does not want to study. But then look at my daughter, she just graduated from the university.

She added:

There was a kid called Monjd that I taught. He was an orphan and refused to attend school for the first three years ... When he was eight years old, he enrolled in grade one. I used to follow up with him because he was unique. When he enrolled in grade ten, despite having high grades, he dropped out. I went to his house, his teachers, school consultant, and people from the ministry also went, but he refused [to return], saying he wanted to help his family and sisters. His sisters are finishing their university years, but he decided to work to support his mom and sisters ... Until today, he did not return to school.

These gender norms affect teachers as well. Since male teachers have to work multiple jobs, they cannot put their full effort into teaching, which ultimately affects students. Shatha, a 44-year-old social studies teacher, said:

No offense, but a male teacher is different than a female teacher ... A male teacher has students, a family and responsibilities to take care of, and his salary is not enough. He has to work an additional job at night to spend on the house ... His priority is not the school anymore, but to find a source of living.

However, some women also continued to face social constraints because of culture and traditions. Nada, a 29-year-old jewelry designer from Ramallah, could not work in the field she majored in:

I studied civil engineering ... but the major did not suit my parents' culture and traditions. Unfortunately, I had to study another major that pleased my parents, so I studied English. I did not like it, and I did not want to work with this degree ... As I was majoring in English, I learned how to make jewelry ... I decided to pursue this path. It has been nine years since then.

Political Activism

Interviewees also talked about the political division in the West Bank and how it affected education. Hamas supporters in the West Bank are marginalized by the PA, as well as by the Israeli government. Those who show support for Hamas can either be detained or left

unemployed after graduating. Birzeit University Student Council runs free elections every year, and almost every year Hamas wins the seats. However, they are usually arrested.

Radi, a 19-year-old student, recalled the arrest of Omar Al-Kisawni, a previous student leader:

Israelis came as Arab journalists, claiming they wanted to shoot footage of the university, since it is historical. They manipulated the security guards using verified papers from an official institution, and they were allowed inside the campus. A few hours later, around 3 p.m., I was walking near the college of literature and I wanted to visit the student council for help. Then, I saw our previous leader on the floor, while they were stepping on him and hitting him severely ... The violence was inhumane. University students tried their best to fight back by throwing rocks, but they had weapons.

Sameera, a 23-year-old political science and international relations student, said that an arrest could put students far behind in school:

When you talk about Hamas, you are talking about being chased by an occupier. ... Many students were removed from the university for six months, and this is not a short period. Six months means a semester, and for engineering students, six months means a full school year.

She said that many students were arrested in administrative detention without any charges, and that the period of time was extended repeatedly. This was not only applicable to Hamas-supporting students, but also students affiliated with other political parties. Sameera mentioned a friend, also a journalism student, who missed a full year of school while being detained without being charged for a crime.

Educational System

Many teachers complained about the educational system. Some teachers end up working with temporary contracts for years, and those who have a permanent contract can be transferred to more than three schools in less than a year. Basel, an Islamic teacher at a male school, said:

We are like soldiers; we go wherever they want us to be. The ministry has the power and can relocate us to any school whenever.

This can be exhausting to teachers who are forced to continuously adapt to different environments. For temporary teachers, it can take years to sign a permanent contract and sometimes they never do. Abdullah, a 64 year-old teacher, said he retired without any benefits:

I worked with the Ministry of Social Affairs ... I served eight years with a temporary contract on the illusion they would give me a permanent one the next year. When I turned 60 years old, they referred me to retirement, but I only had a permanent contract for eight years, which is not applicable for retirement ... I served for 16 years in total, and only eight years with a permanent contract. ... They gave me hope that the previous eight years would count for the service, but when I turned 60 they told me I am not eligible for retirement.

Besides teachers, many students complained about the current curriculum, since it relies on rote memorization. Dalia, a business student, said:

I could not wait until I graduated from school. All you do in school is memorize text, and teachers only want you to finish the assigned readings.

Students in high school also face the pressure of Tawjeehi, the General Secondary Education Certificate Examination, the college entrance exams used in Palestine and Jordan. Entire families and villages wait for high school seniors' grades to be released. Students can only pursue specific majors based on their grades after graduating from high school. Some disappointed students are forced to repeat senior year to enter the major they want, while others receive the "good" news. Tamer, a journalism professor at one of the universities in the West Bank, recalled the moment he received his grade:

It was one of the happiest days of my life when Tawjeehi grades were out. I was working at a construction site [in Israel], and returning back in the cars that take workers to the village ... Palestinians were throwing rocks ... and the Israeli military got us out of the vehicle, and asked us to pick [up] the rocks from the road. I was picking up the rocks after a very long day of work. ... I heard my friends congratulating me behind the trees that I passed. ... I was excited and scared as I picked the rocks. ...I asked for my grade ... and they told me. ... I did not know if I should side with the soldier or not, but from the excitement, I worked extra hard to pick up the rocks.

Conclusion

Palestinians until today struggle to attain their fundamental human right to education due to the ongoing Israeli occupation. From the collected interviews, Palestinians face political constraints, such as checkpoints, imprisonment, as well as university invasions and closures by the IDF. Regarding economic restrictions, students and teachers suffer from high university fees, unemployment, having to work multiple jobs, and salary cuts. Students and workers complained about unemployment after graduating and working in jobs different from their major. Therefore, many Palestinians decide to work in Israel as laborers for higher salaries. Finally, social constraints differed based on gender. From interviews with male and female students, it was evident that women tended to be more interested in education and were more likely to perform well, while men cared more about earning money. For Palestinians in the West Bank, these constraints are a reality they have no control over. Since the occupation of Palestine began, Palestinians' autonomy over their lives, land and resources has been taken away, as well as their autonomy over their own narrative. Existing research about education in the West Bank has been available since the early 2000s, but 20 years later, Palestinians continue to face the same constraints without many improvements. Does this not say much about the nature of the occupation, and its ability to halt progress and change in Palestine?

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