Quality of Life and Determinants of Parents’ School Satisfaction in War Contexts: A Mixed-Method Exploratory Study in Palestine

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Abstract
The present mixed-method exploratory study aims at exploring how families’ perceptions of education are influenced by the availability of resources promoting well-being and the ability to cope with political and military violence. A convenience sample of 120 households selected in the Gaza Strip was administered using two self-reported instruments: WHOQOL-BREF (WHO Quality of Life-BREF) adapted to the Palestinian context, and items adapted from the Teacher Involvement of Parents (TIP) Questionnaire. The quantitative results showed interactions between different domains of quality of life—namely, basic needs ($B = .361, p < .01$) and psychological distress ($B = .307, p < .05$)—while perceptions of education had a statistically significant effect on school satisfaction. Three main themes emerged from the qualitative survey: economic constraints, constraints on the school environment, and issues with the curriculum. The ongoing disruption of general economic, environmental, health, and living conditions affects the domain of education, contributing to further undermining opportunities for improvements in subjective well-being and familial quality of life.

Keywords
quality of life, subjective well-being, education, ongoing conflict, political violence

Introduction
When families affected by armed conflict are asked to speak about their quality of life (QoL), education is mainly referred to as a key dimension affecting the well-being of the younger generations (Bragin & Opiro, 2012; Veronese, Castiglioni, Barola, & Said, 2012; Veronese, Castiglioni, Tombolani, & Said, 2012; Veronese & Castiglioni, 2013; Veronese, Fiore, Castiglioni, & Natour, 2014). In fact, the community frequently views education as a means of providing hope and a better future for the youth. In addition, providing education in response to conflict and to promote early recovery may be considered a key element of humanitarian aid, along with food and water, shelter, and health (Machel, 2001). The importance of education in war-affected areas is emphasized in the 2011 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report, The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2011). According to this report, wars in poor regions are one of the obstacles to strengthening the role of education systems in preventing poverty and enhancing QoL in civilian populations. In war-affected regions, it is estimated that 28 million school-aged children are unable to attend primary school, accounting for 42% of the world’s out-of-school children. The countries in which they live are often characterized by protracted internal political violence, in turn associated with exploitation, juvenile labor, imprisonment, and overall abuse (Barakat, Connolly, Hardman, & Sundaram, 2013). Frequently, schools, teachers, and pupils are considered to be combatants and therefore targeted (UNESCO, 2011). Few studies have examined the field of education in emergencies and post-conflict transition scenarios. It is therefore crucial to conduct further research on the link between the reconstruction and enhancement of the educational system, and the contribution of education to

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QoL and well-being in war-like environments (Harber, 2004; Smith, 2005). There are a small number of country-based case studies that set out to conceptualize the “impact of education” on protective and risk factors for subjective well-being (Davies, 2011).

Given the complexity of the phenomenon, it seems crucial to explore the ecological dimensions affecting people’s QoL, viewing education as a factor that is closely connected with the environmental, socio-relational, and individual domains of well-being (Boothby, Strang, & Wessels, 2006; Thabet, El-Buhaisi, & Vostanis, 2014; Veronese & Castiglioni, 2013; Veronese, Castiglioni, Barola, & Said, 2012).

A recent work based on data from focus group discussions with different groups of Palestinians on the determinants of QoL (literally translated into Arabic as “Jawdata-l-hayat”) found that participants’ perceptions could be grouped into four domains: the financial situation, the consequences of ongoing military occupation for people’s lives, the internal Palestinian context (e.g., lack of basic needs), and family issues (Giacaman et al., 2007). More focused cross-sectional quantitative studies of representative samples of households in the Gaza Strip found that, generally speaking, Palestinian scores on QoL measures (physical, psychological and environmental) were lower than in other countries (Abu-Rmeileh et al., 2009; Massad et al., 2011). Giacaman strongly emphasized military occupation, war, and constraints imposed by military violence as local determinants of QoL (Giacaman et al., 2007). Veronese, Pepe, and Afana (2014) identified two “macro” dimensions of QoL: a first factor called personal well-being (composed of both objective and subjective aspects) and a second called political well-being (composed of both micro- and macro-contextual dimensions) including the role of education as a form of resistance that promotes well-being (Veronese, 2013).

Based on the viewpoint that education is an important component and determinant of QoL, we set out to explore the following variables: on the one hand, parental satisfaction with schools and education (education; Khamis, 2013), and on the other, multiple domains of QoL, namely, (dis) satisfaction with living environment (environment), safety and security (human security; Giacaman et al., 2007), stressful living conditions (psychological distress; Thabet, Abed, & Vostanis, 2002, 2004), sociality (social support), and family relationships (family; Thabet, Ibraheem, Shivram, Winter, & Vostanis, 2009).

Working within from the perspectives on QoL just outlined, our mixed-method study had the aim of exploring how families’ perceptions of education might be influenced by the availability of resources promoting well-being and the ability to cope with political and military violence. We hypothesized that education would be a factor in well-being that was influenced by and circularly influenced the other QoL domains. In other words, we expected that education could not be isolated from other determinants of QoL and health. The study comprised both quantitative and qualitative components, and the results were analyzed and compared to construct a broader picture of families’ perceptions of education, school, and childhood in the Gaza Strip.

The Study Context

Palestinians commonly experience direct and indirect exposure to violence, especially those living in the Gaza Strip; political violence has led to restrictions being imposed on the movement of Palestinian goods and people across borders and within the Palestinian territories: These restrictions have seriously compromised the welfare of households, giving rise to a loss of income, decreased quantity and quality of food, and a lack of access to health care (Matari et al., 2009; Thabet, Abed, & Vostanis, 2001; Thabet & Vostanis, 2000).

Since 2000, poverty has risen dramatically, with more than 38.8% of Palestinians currently living below the poverty line (less than US$2/person/day; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

June 2012 saw the beginning of the sixth year of the intensified blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip by Israel. The 5-year closure had and currently continues to have disastrous effects on the lives of the 1.6 million of people inhabiting these 365 square kilometers of land, in every respect: social, economic, political, educational, and in terms of human security (Safadi & Easton, 2014). The measures applied to restrict the movement of people and goods leave the Palestinian population trapped in a vast, unhealthy jail (Abu-Rmeileh et al., 2009). It is genuinely difficult to travel outside the Strip; the restrictions have negative consequences: they prevent the inhabitants of Gaza from traveling abroad for training or study purposes or from keeping down a job in Israel, and they also reinforce the distance and separation from the Palestinian community in the West Bank (Hanafi, 2012).

Operation “Cast Lead” was initiated in December 2009. Officially justified as a response to the firing of rockets from the Strip under the leadership of Hamas, it worsened a situation that was already highly unstable. During the 23 days of the Israeli military offensive, over 1,380 Palestinians were killed, including more than 300 children and civilians (Giacaman et al., 2009). More recently, on November 2012, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) launched an airstrike that targeted and killed the acting chief of Hamas’ armed wing, Ahmed Al Jabari, marking the start of the Israeli military action (“Operation Defensive Pillar”) that lasted for 8 days. Early accounts indicate that 174 Palestinians were killed, including at least 43 children and 11 women. According to the Ministry of Health, 1,399 Palestinians were also injured. Six Israelis (4 civilians and 2 soldiers) were killed and 224 were injured. In Gaza, approximately 300 to 400 housing units were destroyed or sustained major damage, while another 1,700 houses suffered minor damage. At the height of the conflict, approximately 12,000 individuals in Gaza City and the governorate of Northern Gaza fled their homes.
and sought refuge in emergency shelters set up in 14 United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and 2 government schools. According to the Ministry of Education, 42 schools were destroyed and 141 schools sustained damage (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2012). We completed our survey in the run up to the September/October 2012 hostilities.

Finally, the most recent episode in the conflict was the devastating Israeli attack named Operation Protective Edge that took place in summer 2014. The 50-day war killed 2,168 Palestinians, of whom 1,666 were civilians, 501 children, and 257 women. At least 138 schools, including 89 run by UNRWA, were bombed or damaged, with the full extent of damage still unknown according to the latest report by the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, 2014).

Currently, most of the school buildings are in bad repair and in need of maintenance; usually there are no playgrounds or classrooms equipped for extra-curricular activities. Extreme overcrowding in schools and the double shift system have negative consequences for the quality of education: the school day is shortened, there is neither time nor staff for after-school activities, and it is impossible for teachers to adequately follow up all their students (Jabr, 2009). Furthermore, the restrictions on movement do not allow the school staff to attend training courses or workshops outside Gaza and therefore to keep the educational system abreast of developments in educational science. Within this overall framework, little or no support is provided to children with disabilities or learning difficulties; there is effectively no policy of inclusion in force. As a result, in many cases children with difficulties are withdrawn from school and kept at home.

Although the Palestinians are nonetheless considered to be one of the most educated Arab peoples—and this is the trend also in the Gaza Strip with a literacy rate of 96% in 2010—the lack of opportunity to study abroad and the high unemployment rate make parents very pessimistic with regard to their children’s future careers.

Method

Participants

A convenience sample of 120 individuals was randomly selected at a private school managed by a well-established local non-governmental organization (NGO) and located in the Jabalya area. We chose to conduct our pilot study with participants recruited at a private school in which it was possible to select a stratified socio-economic sample. Specifically, the NGO running the private school involved in our research was able to balance higher and middle-income families with very poor families who were eligible for an internationally funded sponsorship program enabling children from low-income populations to attend a high quality educational program. This choice allowed us to pilot our research design with a non-representative but demographically well-balanced sample.

Sixty married couples with school-aged children completed a questionnaire designed to collect information about parents’ own levels of QoL and their satisfaction with the educational system. Specifically, 60 fathers ($M_{age} = 38.35 \pm 9.56$; range = 18-65) and 60 mothers ($M_{age} = 34.20 \pm 6.37$; range = 18-55) participated in the survey. The selected families had five children on average ($M = 4.6$). More specifically, women aged 18 to 25 years had a mean of 3.5 children, women aged 26 to 35 years 4.3 children, and those aged 36 to 45 years 5.2 children. The percentage of school-aged children was 47% ($M_{age} = 6.5$): 41% of these were attending private schools, 33% UNRWA schools, and 21% public schools. The income of these families ranged from US$200 to US$7,500 per annum (2,269 ± 1,684); in other words, they ranged from medium to very poor economic status (according to World Bank, 2013).

In addition, a purposive snowball sample of households ($n = 18$) from the same group of participants was recruited to participate in in-depth interviews at the school where the questionnaire had been administered (9 fathers, $M_{age} = 37.5 \pm 4.7$; 9 mothers, $M_{age} = 33.1 \pm 6.2$). Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is used by researchers to identify potential subjects in studies in which subjects are hard to locate. Researchers use this sampling method if potential informants are rare or limited to a very small subgroup of the population. This type of sampling technique is based on chain referral. After collecting data from an initial informant, the researcher asks this participant to help identify people with similar characteristics and so on (Babbie, 2001).

Instruments and Procedures

WHO Quality of Life-BREF (WHOQOL-BREF). The QoL of the parents was measured using items from the WHOQOL-BREF (Skevington, Sartorius, & Amir, 2004). This instrument was developed as a means of assessing health and well-being that goes beyond objective descriptions of fatal and non-fatal health outcomes and includes individuals’ subjective, affective, and cognitive appraisals of states of health. It has facilitated cross-cultural comparisons of QoL (World Health Organization [WHO], 1993). The WHOQOL-BREF instrument aims to assess individuals’ perceptions in the context of their culture and value systems and of their personal goals, standards, and concerns (WHO, 1993). The instrument consists of 26 questions measuring—by aggregating respondents’ answers to the different questions and applying an appropriate rescaling strategy—the broad domains of physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment. A set of questions related to the Palestinian context has been added to the instrument and...
validated by the Institute of Community and Public Health of Birzeit University (Abu-Rmeileh et al., 2009; Mataria et al., 2009). On the basis of these additional questions, Giacaman and colleagues (Mataria et al., 2009) identified the main clusters of determinants of QoL, as well as the outcomes of QoL, in Palestinian samples (West Bank and Gaza Strip). Translation, adaptation, and validation of the resulting Palestinian QoL instrument (PQoL) were carried out in 2005 by Rita Giacaman with a team from the Institute of Public Health at Birzeit University (Giacaman et al., 2007). The PQoL questions are grouped into five domains (physical, psychological, social, environmental, and war) using the algorithm proposed by the WHOQOL team, with each domain earning scores from 0 to 100 and higher scores indicating better QoL. The fifth domain relates to war-like conditions and the influence of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian QoL and is a context-specific addition to the earlier WHO instrument as mentioned above. In line with the research aims of the current study, selected items from the PQoL were grouped into the following dimensions: basic needs (4 items; $\alpha = .801$), social support (4 items; $\alpha = .842$), human security (3 items; $\alpha = .721$), psychological distress (4 items; $\alpha = .766$), and family support (2 items; $\alpha = .766$).

**Teacher Involvement of Parents (TIP) Questionnaire.** Finally, to assess the satisfaction of parents’ with their involvement by the schools, items adapted from the TIP Questionnaire (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Jones, & Reed, 2002) were administered. More specifically, participants completed eight items from the Beliefs About Parental Involvement subscale (answers provided on a 5-point Likert-type scale; $\alpha = .763$).

The present study adopted a mixed-method approach primarily because this kind of research design lends itself to connecting micro, meso, and macro levels of explanation of a given construct (Bergaman, 2010, 2011; Bryman, 1988; Creswell, 2009). Indeed, comprehension of a complex phenomenon such as parents’ school satisfaction encompasses an array of factors affecting the family’s evaluation of school contexts and involves different levels of explanation: from the micro-system level (e.g., demographic variables such as gender, age, and socio-economic status; Pepe & Addimando, 2014) to the meso-system (e.g., network of relationships, social support) and, finally, the macro-system (e.g., the environmental and economic situation).

The data analysis comprised two steps: first, the quantitative measures and demographic information about participants were analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression techniques to identify the main determinants of school satisfaction; then, the quantitative results were cross-validated and integrated with the qualitative findings via thematic content analysis of the in-depth interview transcripts. This kind of mixed-method strategy is known as complementary analysis (Bazeley & Kemp, 2012), and it is usually used to complete, enhance, and detail a significant whole, with each piece of quantitative and qualitative information contributing to building up a total representation.

More specifically, in the quantitative analysis, hierarchical multiple regression (see Cohen & Cohen, 2003; Stanovich & Cunningham, 2004, for methodological procedures) was used to explore the impact of specific measures of well-being on school satisfaction when the effect of gender, age, and family income were controlled for. To this end, the enter method was used to add the independent variables step by step in the desired order: demographic variables (age, gender, and family income) were entered first, the PQoL measures (basic needs, social support, human security, psychological distress, and family support) were entered next at Step 2, and, finally, interaction terms were evaluated at Step 3 (All Quantitative Measures × Gender). The regression model was assessed at each step for statistically significant variation in the coefficient of determination ($R^2$). Unstandardized beta weights ($B$) were also used to assess the variables added to the regression model (Meier, Brudney, & Bohte, 2012). All data were checked for potential violation of regression assumptions (i.e., homoscedasticity, multivariate normality; see Petrocelli, 2003, for further detail) and Mahalanobis distances (at $p > .001$) were calculated to identify and skip multivariate outliers.

The interviews with the families were conducted following an ethnographic procedure (see above for details of the snowball sampling recruitment method): The participants were asked to speak about their living conditions and their children’s experience at school in a context characterized by ongoing conflict and occupation. To analyze the qualitative data, thematic content analysis was applied (see Braun & Clarke, 2006 for background on this methodological procedure) to the interview transcripts to inductively identify common themes regarding parents’ perceptions and evaluation of school-related issues. To this end, the authors first transcribed all the interviews, then, within a single unit of text (i.e., an interview), similar themes were grouped together, collapsed and labeled according to their explicit meanings (this process was repeated for all the interviews), and, finally, the occurrences of the categories thus identified were counted to assess which themes were more salient within the texts.

**Results**

In Table 1, we present descriptive statistics regarding QoL in Palestinian families.

With regard to demographic variables, gender was positively correlated with satisfaction with education ($r = .310$, $p < .01$): specifically, women were more satisfied with education than men, while number of children was negatively correlated with basic needs ($r = -.390$, $p < .01$), social support ($r = -.281$, $p < .05$), and satisfaction with the educational context ($r = -.246$, $p < .01$). In addition, parents’ level of education was positively correlated with basic needs ($r = .450$, $p < .01$), social support ($r = .434$, $p < .01$), and...
human security \((r = .216, p < .01)\), and negatively with psychological distress \((r = -.186, p < .05)\) and number of children \((r = -.300, p < .05)\). Finally, economic status was positively correlated with basic needs \((r = .600, p < .05)\), social support \((r = -.186, p < .05)\), education \((r = .264, p < .05)\), and parents’ level of education \((r = .539, p < .05)\), and negatively with the number of children \((r = -.301, p < .05)\).

Zero-order correlations between each of the dimensions of QoL are shown in Table 2. Social support is positively correlated with basic needs \((r = .463, p < .01)\) and sense of security and safety \((r = .247, p < .01)\), whereas environmental conditions are negatively correlated with psychological distress \((r = -.318, p < .01)\). Finally, the dimension of education is positively correlated with basic needs \((r = .250, p < .01)\) and social support \((r = .294, p < .01)\); in other words, the more families were satisfied with their living conditions and felt that they had a good relational network supporting them, the more they felt satisfied with the education system. When the effect of satisfaction with basic needs were controlled for, first-order positive correlations were confirmed between social support \((r = .259, p < .01)\) and human security dimensions.

Three-step multiple regression analyses were conducted to assess the influence of selected quantitative variables (determinants) on the dependent variable satisfaction with education (see Table 3).

At Step 1, \(F(3, 83) = 5.692, p < .001; R^2 = .141\), both gender \((B = 3.15, p < .001)\) and family income \((B = 001, p < .05)\) showed statistically significant effects, whereas age did not. At Step 2, \(F(8, 78) = 4.08, p < .001; R^2 = .223\), the effect of gender was still statistically significant \((B = 3.31, p < .001)\) whereas age and income were not. On the contrary, basic needs \((B = .361, p < .01)\) and psychological distress \((B = .307, p < .05)\) had a statistically significant effect on school satisfaction, while other quantitative measures (social support, human security, family support) did not. At Step 2, a highly statistically significant variation of \(R^2 (\Delta R^2 = .125), F(1, 85) = 2.76, p < .05\), was observed.

At Step 3, \(F(12, 74) = 2.91, p < .01; R^2 = .210\), the variation of \(R^2\) was not statistically significant \((\Delta R^2 = -.025), F(1, 85) = 0.614, p = .614\), suggesting that the inclusion of the multiplicative terms \((QOL\_variables \times Gender)\) in the regression equation did not explain significantly more variance with respect to Step 2. Finally, all the multiplicative terms had \(p\) values ranging between .586 and .404 meaning that none of them had an effect that was statistically significant enough to justify their inclusion in the model.

**Discussion**

Analysis of the main themes in the qualitative data may be used to qualify our discussion of the picture that emerged from the quantitative regression analysis, in which satisfaction of basic needs (based on family income) along with degree of psychological distress (a negative correlate of basic need fulfillment) displayed statistically significant effects on school satisfaction. The thematic content analysis of 18 in-depth interviews (approximately 36,000 word occurrences) identified, in the words of the participating parents, three main categories of relevant themes (please note that two or more themes could feature in a single interview): economic constraints (58%), constraints on school environment (41%), and teaching curriculum issues (38%).

**Economic constraints.** The economic domain emerged as the main factor limiting access to adequate education and schooling (Giacaman et al., 2009; Thabet et al., 2014). Lack of economic resources, lack of water and electricity, family financial circumstances, unemployment, and dependence on international aid were all factors making access to higher education, in particular, increasingly difficult and uncertain (Ziadni et al., 2011). This issue was cited by 58% of interviewees. With regard to educational opportunities for children, access to high quality schools is severely limited due to family poverty. Despite strong awareness that future of the younger generations hinges on educational opportunities, severe economic limitations mean that parents are unable to guarantee good careers to their children (Khamis, 2013).

I didn’t re-enroll my son at the Salaam school because my financial situation is very bad and I wanted to enroll him at the UNRWA school but, again, I’m not able to do that because I don’t have his certificate. The Salaam school will not give me his certificate because we did not pay the fees; so my son is currently without any education [. . . ] There is no work in Gaza and the borders are always closed. The economic situation is getting worse than before. (K.M., 24 years, jobless)

I regret that I will not be enrolling them at the school again, but I cannot afford to on account of my financial situation. (A.A., 31, housewife)

The quantitative data also show the economic conditions to be a crucial challenge for Palestinian families (Giacaman et al., 2007). The more families must struggle to cover basic needs and obtain minimum economic resources, the more they appear to be dissatisfied with educational opportunities. In a similar fashion, the more income increases the more the

| Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Dimensions of Familial QoL. |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Environment       | 12.17 | 3.73 | 0.08 | -0.99 |
| Social support    | 11.20 | 3.87 | 0.00 | -0.44 |
| Human security    | 9.13  | 1.55 | 0.46 | 0.44  |
| Psychological distress | 15.69 | 3.15 | -0.77 | 0.61  |
| Family            | 9.13  | 2.80 | -0.88 | 0.16  |
| Education         | 20.66 | 4.44 | -0.33 | -0.37 |

Note. QoL = quality of life.
families benefit from educational opportunities insofar as family income is a means of obtaining resources to fulfill basic needs (see Step 2 of regression equation).

The fees . . . I am a government employee and my salary is not very high and the school asks me to pay all the fees in one instalment; I tried to convince them not to apply this procedure to me, and I succeeded. (O.A.R., 29 years, office worker)

I am concerned because my children will not be able to complete their education. Here, in Gaza, there is no future, the money we earn is only just enough for our basic needs. (A.R. 31 years, office worker)

School buildings are not safe. (F.A.F., 42 years, housewife)

The number of children per family plays a key role in diminishing education opportunities: considering that the lowest income families have the highest numbers of children, it is easy to infer the difficulties encountered by these families in trying to ensure an adequate level of education for all their offspring (Thabet et al., 2009). Nonetheless, the majority of parents explicitly mention the importance of education for personal and societal development:

Education is important because it makes society develop; educated people deal well with other people and better than uneducated ones. (O.A., 38 years, housewife)

It is really important for our children, especially for women: they will be able teach their children. Moreover, it is the basis for life and it builds society. It is especially important for Palestinians because of the situation we are living in. It is easier to deal with educated than with un-educated people. For example, maybe an un-educated person would not allow their wife to participate in this kind of interview or to have a job, or to speak with other people. (S.A., 36 years, housewife)

The teachers are good but schools need supervisors to monitor and follow up the teachers. (A.W., 44 years, doctor)

School environment. The conditions of the school are generally cited (41% of respondents) by the parents as a major source of problems: Overcrowding appears to be the leading issue in the eyes of families. Overcrowded classrooms undermine the school environment and affect the work of teachers who are forced to follow up on too many students. According to UNESCO’s (2011) Institute for Statistics, the teacher/pupil ratio in the West Bank and Gaza is 28 a very high value if compared with the United States (14), Germany (13), or the United Kingdom (18).

Table 2. Zero-Order Correlations of School Satisfaction With Measures of Environment, Social Support, Human Security, Psychological Distress, Family, and Education.

| Variables       | Basic needs | Social support | Human security | Psychological distress | Family needs | Education |
|-----------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Basic needs     | 1           | .463***        | .106           | -.318***               | -.094        | .250***   |
| Social support  | .463***     | 1              | .247***        | .013                   | .018         | .299***   |
| Human security  | .106        | .247***        | 1              | -.07                   | .036         | .074      |
| Psychological distress | -.318*** | .013          | -.07           | 1                      | .052         | .13       |
| Family needs    | -.094       | .018           | .036           | .052                   | 1            | -.059     |
| Education       | .250***     | .299***        | .074           | .13                    | -.059        | 1         |
| **Note. PQoL, TIP Questionnaire adapted. PQoL = Palestinian quality of life instrument; TIP = Teacher Involvement of Parents.***p < .01, two-tailed significance.**p < .001, two-tailed significance.**p < .05, two-tailed significance.|

Table 3. Standardized Coefficients, p Values, and Explained Variance From Regression Analysis of the Education Domain of QoL in Parents (N = 120).

| Variables   | B          | t         |
|-------------|------------|-----------|
| Gender      | 3.150 (β = .358) | 3.530 (.001) |
| Age         | 0.044 (β = .084) | 0.834 (.407) |
| Income      | 0.001 (β = .222) | 2.223 (.029) |
| Intercept   | 4.26 (non-significant) |         |
| Gender      | 3.309 (β = .377) | 3.811 (.001) |
| Environment | 0.361 (β = .301) | 2.336 (.01)  |
| Psychological distress | 0.307 (β = .221) | 2.165 (0.33) |

Step 1: R = .413, r² = .141, Δr² = .141, F = 5.692 (.001); Step 2: R = .543, r² = .223, Δr² = .125, F = 2.757 (.024); Step 3: R = .566, r² = .210, Δr² = .025, F = 0.614 (.614); Step 1: F(3, 83) = 5.692, p = .001; Step 2: F(8, 78) = 4.083, p = .000; Step 3: F(12, 74) = 2.901, p = .002.
The classes are too crowded and it is difficult for the teacher to follow up all the students: we need more teachers, more classes, more materials and more care to be taken with activities. . . . the schools have to operate a double shift system. (S.H., 35 years, driver)

The classes are too crowded at school, there is no electricity, no computer lessons. There are not enough chairs and desks in the classrooms for students to feel relaxed and comfortable. (A.W., 44 years, doctor)

There are crowded classrooms, this means that students’ right to education is not respected; this also means that most of them are prevented from following the lessons. Moreover, the schools are far from our homes, the families need transport for their children and sometimes their financial situation doesn’t allow them to provide for this. (D.S., 39, housewife).

**School curriculum issues.** Teaching methods, curriculum issues and poor teacher behavior were cited by 38% of respondents. The families reported low-quality school curricula as a consequence of disimprovements in the social welfare system. Despite the Palestinian Authority’s traditional commitment to providing 100% scholarization, lack of resources and lack of political self-determination drastically reduce the means available to ensure high-standard school curricula and methods (Giacaman et al., 2009). The deterioration in the higher education system has also undermined the training of teachers and administrators, negatively influencing school teaching programs and educational methods. In this regard, two major sources of complaint emerged: (a) the teaching program and (b) teachers’ level of training and professionalism. In the first case, parents frequently used terms such as too difficult and too vast to refer to the school curriculum, which has not been developed or fitted to suit the overall context in the Gaza Strip. In addition, working with severely curtailed economic and financial resources forces schools to reduce the number and the variety of extra-curricular activities and the families seemed to identify this as a further lack (Veronese, Castiglioni, & Said, 2010).

The curriculum is difficult and it is not suitable for the students’ ages. Moreover, schools do not give students the chance to decide what to study in the future; at school, students do not study subjects in depth, but just superficially. Moreover, at school the students do not get to put into practice the notions that they have learnt. (J.A., 31 years, general worker)

There are no summer camps, no activities and the teachers are really bad with the students: that’s why children don’t like going to school. (M.D., 31 years, housewife)

There is no educational material, no activities, no entertainment. (A.W., 44 years, doctor)

With regard to teachers’ professionalism, parents expressed concern with both teacher quality and school organization. This category encompassed a wide array of school dimensions: from teachers’ lack of interest to poor school–parent communication to rudeness on the part of teachers and in a small number of cases corporal punishment at school.

The quality of education is not good because some teachers are bad. (F.A.F., 43 years, housewife)

There is a bad communication between parents and teachers and students. The teachers are not good; the quality of education is not good. (D.S., 39 years, housewife)

Sometimes I have found uncorrected questions in the books, wrong answers given by the teachers that should be corrected by teachers. Moreover, when we went to the school, we discovered that our son had not been doing his homework for a long time and the teachers had not informed us about this. I spoke with them about the uncorrected answers, they said “it is only a small thing and we are human and we can make mistakes,” but in the end I think that the teachers are not professional. (A.G., 33 years, office worker)

Once my daughter’s teacher said bad words to her. Moreover, when we went to the school we could not find the person in charge of running it. (A.M., 42 years, engineer)

In sum, this last theme reflects the quantitative result showing that social support as a determinant of QoL is positively correlated with socio-economic status (Massad et al., 2011). In fact, higher socio-economic status can also ensure better social opportunities for children at school; parents view the higher standards of teaching in private schools as a crucial opportunity for their children, compared with the poor social environment provided by public schools.

**Conclusion**

Although Palestinians continue to be among the best-educated peoples in war and poverty affected zones (Høigilt, 2013; Nasser, Berlin, & Wong, 2011), the ongoing disruption of general economic, environmental, health, and living conditions also affects the education domain, contributing to further undermining opportunities for improvements in subjective well-being and familial QoL (Batniji, 2013; Hammoudeh, Hogan, & Giacaman, 2013). Families are forced into a paradox: on the one hand, they identify education as the one of the few opportunities for their children to cope with adversity and daily suffering; on the other, they see excellent educational opportunities as an extremely remote prospect for the children of Gaza (Khamis, 2013). From another perspective, vindication of the right to good education opportunities shifts the difficulties of Palestinian families from a “humanitarian” to a human security and human development framework (Barber, 2013; Ziadni et al., 2011).
**Limitations**

Like other studies in this area of research, the present work has some limitations that should be taken into account in interpreting its findings. First, the research was conducted with a convenience sample recruited in a specific area of Jabalya and does not reflect the heterogeneity of the Palestinian milieu. This, along with the relatively small sample recruited for this pilot study, precluded us from conducting more sophisticated statistical analyses and means that caution is required in generalizing the findings to other populations. In particular, our non-representative though demographically well-balanced sample may have caused bias in terms of the overrepresentation of certain socio-economic sectors within Palestinian society. Second, perceptions of QoL, satisfaction with education, levels of involvement, and participants’ socio-economic status (i.e., income, quality of neighborhood) may be interrelated and, consequently, the findings may be affected by an interactive confounding factor. Third, we tested for linear associations between selected determinants and QoL; however, some studies have identified a curvilinear relationship between environmental characteristics and the different domains of satisfaction. Further studies should be conducted, especially from a cross-cultural perspective, with a view to developing a more in-depth understanding of the potential differences among determinants as well as differences in how they may interact to affect QoL.

**Implications**

Educational intervention and empowerment should adopt more “ease”-oriented perspectives, acting on the ecology of suffering and restoring competence and dignity to Palestinian citizens who are experiencing ongoing occupation and chronic political and military violence. In conclusion, the political dimension of well-being could provide practical guidance for international aid system and national policy agendas, as well as for human rights governmental and nongovernmental agencies.

Despite the limitations of this pilot study, field experience and international research on education in contexts of political violence confirm our findings (Brown, 2011; Novelli & Lopes Cardozo, 2008). We consider it crucial to continue to focus on well-being and community-driven interventions, while developing more sophisticated and culturally sensitive measures supported by qualitative surveys.

**Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Funding**

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article: The first author’s work was funded by the FSE (Fondo Sociale Europeo) “Dote Ricercatore,” a program of the Lombardy Region.

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