PSYCHOSOCIAL PROGRAM INFLUENCES ON THE ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT AMONG PALESTINIAN ORPHANS IN THE GAZA STRIP: A STUDY AT DAR AL ARQAM SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT--The purpose of this study is to highlight the influences of the psychosocial support program on the academic achievement among Palestinian orphans in the Gaza strip as evidence from Dar Al Arqam school. Two focus group discussion (FGD) were conducted with seven orphans to two groups from Dar Al Arqam school. The results pointed out the importance of programs in enhancing the emotional support and knowledge engagement for orphans through their had ability to enjoy the positive thinking about-facing their problems and the ability to think about the future. It also builds the relationship between the psychosocial program and the Academic achievement by increasing their academic engagement within the classroom. The research resulted in helping them to progress and achieve academic excellence and helped them to get rid of the trauma they faced during and after the war.

Keywords--Psychosocial Program, Academic Engagement, Orphans, Gaza.

I. INTRODUCTION

Wars has serious psychosocial consequences and acute. The emotional wounds less visible than the destruction of homes. However, it usually the recovering from emotional impact takes far longer than to overcome material losses. There is no doubt that child is the most affected and more vulnerable during war, especially orphans they lost the parental care this lead to face different kinds of risks and defaults (Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015). The term of psychosocial refers to the close of relationship between the all aspects either individual or the collective for any social entity. Zaizul, Siti Norul Huda, Muhammad Nuruddin, Azianura Hani and Norulhuda (2018) explained that psychosocial is related to biological and non-biological (spiritual). Psychosocial support used to respond to the psychological and physical needs by helping them to accept the situation and deal with it (Maldonado et al., 2015; Dias et al., 2015; Purdy et al., 2015). According to Mwoma & Pillay, (2015) the psychosocial support aims to

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reduce or prevent the negative impact from crisis situations on the emotional well-being of child and their families,

and it also are designed to reach to the people concerned are the most in need of psychosocial support. The

programs include community-based activities that promote the ability of families to support each other to resume

everyday activities and heal from psychological distress (Amzel et al., 2013). It also aims to achieve the adaptation

of orphans with surrounding environment, especially school and classroom and interaction with the teacher and

colleagues where class participation is a way to overcome the internal challenges of the orphans (Chiumento et al.,

2017). The psychosocial support program is valuable to attract students to academic engagement in the classroom

and this gives harmony in the school, which leads to their progress and interest in school (Estell & Perdue, 2013;

Sinatra, Heddy, & Lombardi, 2015; Tuominen-Soini & Salmela-Aro, 2014).

Psychosocial Support Program

Psychosocial support program is a main element in caring for orphans, either in home or in school. In this case,

the orphans are in dire need of psychosocial support especially after wars, not only needed from the parents but also

from the teachers and the school administration as the second partner in the care (Suleiman, 2013). Orphans in the

Gaza strip who have been directly abused, demolished, arrested, or killed their families, often have a high tendency

for violence, general mood change, loss of appetite, feeling of instability, sleep disorders, anxiety, depression,

sadness, fear, lack of initiative and hesitation, brain fragmentation and poor memory, related to the study and the

school (UNICEF, 2014). They also show feelings of anxiety, fear and the problem of involuntary urination, and

some complain of physical illness, and are in dire need of those who deal with them concepts of psychological

support, and take into account their privacy (Atef,2014). Psychosocial programs refer to a continuum of care and

efforts to meet ongoing emotional, social and spiritual needs of individuals as they cope with life's challenges.

People provide psychosocial support to each other constantly in their daily lives by listening, sharing, hugging,

caring and offering physical and spiritual support. Parenting, and even friendship can be defined by the quality,

frequency and depth of this kind of support for children throughout the stages of development required to reach

psychological maturity (Figure 1) (UNICEF, 2018).

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Figure 1:Development stages of psychological maturity.

Source: UNICEF, 2018

Psychosocial program is multifaceted and can be expressed through basic approaches such as kindness, care, respect, understanding, tolerance and acceptance, treating children with dignity and respect, and acknowledging feelings and challenges (Whitlatch & Orsulic-Jeras, 2018; Schonfeld & Demaria, 2015) Program components involve staying with the same orphans over time rather than making one-time interventions; providing explicit training sessions on such issues as grief and loss; and dealing with anger, the imbalance of power in relationships, stigmatization, isolation, loneliness, violence, sexual abuse, etc. Program delivery modes such as discussion groups, personal reflection journals, role playing and practice sessions help participants to integrate and process new and more helpful coping strategies for dealing with challenges (UNICEF, 2018).

The psychosocial program has general goals and specific goals, The general goals have three main goals, this are Reduce of the psychosocial and physical suffering, Enhancing adaptive ability and Protection against disturbances (Figure 2).

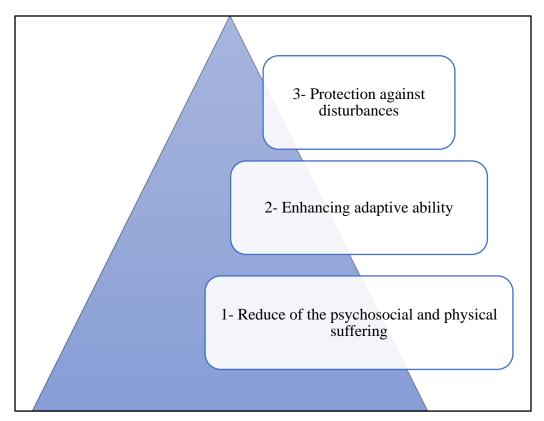


Figure 2: levels of psychosocial program

The specific goals of the programs consist of five main goals as follows 1). Re-establish the sense of protection by providing educational experience to them in a safe place as far as possible from the place of danger and calm and reassure them, 2). Try to understand their impressions and reactions towards attitudes and traumatic experiences.3). To draw the child's fearful attention to the fact that there are other children who have overcome the crisis of fear with courage and have continued to live despite losing things and people in their lives. 4). Involve the child in physical activities and various games, enhance their talents and invest in scientific lessons and enhance drawing activities because these activities are important in the projection of negative feelings repressed deep in itself. 5). Assign the child to small tasks and tasks to strengthen his sense of competence and self-confidence (Branje & Koper, 2018).

Conflict and war greatly effect on well-being of child and their psychological and social development. Exposure to violence and wars can lead to loss one of parents or separation from parents and friends, deteriorating living conditions and inability to provide support to members of family. The psychosocial and social support are needed for orphans during and after wars where they are help them to overcome difficult experiences and wars. These efforts include cultural activities which appropriate for different age groups, safe and stimulating activities such as sports and games to develop life skills and resilience support. Enhancing the ability of orphans to communicate and live through a variety of skills and training life. One of the most important goals of psychosocial support programs is to work on psychological compatibility by working to modify what can be modified in

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behaviour and accept the new natural and social environment. Wars are a shock to orphans where its do on

breakdown of conscious rational thinking and activating of the subconscious language through dreams and

nightmares, so through many of the psychosocial support program and participation between friends can be

mitigated and resolved the problems.

Academic Engagement

The researchers and educators have exhibited a growing interest in the concept of academic engagement as a

way to improve disaffection, to avert student boredom, to enhance students' motivation (Nasrudin, Mohd Suhaimi,

Junaenah, Manisah & Noor Rahmah, 2016) and involvement in school-related activities, to increase successful

student achievement levels, and to understand students' positive development (Masika & Jones, 2016; Carter et al.,

2012; Li & Lerner, 2011; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2014). Academic engagement is also a valuable construct for

capturing the gradual process by which students a tool to alleviate those problems that orphans suffer (Alrashidi,

Phan, & Ngu, 2016). Given that orphans they suffer from many psychosocial problem, academic engagement

considered as a tool to alleviate those problems and to enhance positive performance and encourage school

completion (Brock, 2015; Alrashidi, Phan, & Ngu, 2016). Academic Engagement is a complex term that

emphasises students' various patterns in motivation, cognition, and behaviour (Alrashidi, Phan, & Ngu, 2016;

Alrashidi, Phan, & Ngu, 2016; Phan, 2014; Sharma & Bhaumik, 2013). Phan (2014) known the academic

engagement is as the psychological investment needed to master and understand skills and knowledge explicitly

taught in educational institutions. Alrashidi, Phan and Ngu,(2016) have known the academic engagement is

investment in and commitment to learning, belonging and identification at school, and participation in the

institution environment and initiation of activities to achieve an outcome.

Dimensions of Academic Engagement

Although Academic engagement is relatively diverse in its definitions and coverage, researchers have reached

a consensus that the construct is multidimensional and encompasses different aspects (e.g., behavioural, cognitive,

and emotional), operating together to reflect students' positive approach to learning (Carter et al., 2012; Phan, 2014;

Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013). However, researchers have consistently disagreed on the types and number of the

dimensions of engagement (Li & Lerner, 2011 Alrashidi, Phan, & Ngu, 2016; Phan, 2014; Sharma & Bhaumik,

2013). Lu, Lu, Gursoy, & Neale, (2016) conceptualised that the engagement as having three dimensions (i.e.,

vigour, dedication, and absorption). as opposed to Joo, Lim, & Kim, (2016) who identified two components of the

construct (i.e., behavioural and psychological). Academic engagement is typically conceptualised as having two,

three, or four dimensions. Researchers (Phan, & Ngu, 2016; Joo, Lim, & Kim, 2016; Sharma & Bhaumik, 2013)

adopting a two-dimensional model have included behavioural (e.g., participation in academic and non-academic

activities) and psychological (e.g., identification with school, valuing learning outcomes, and belonging) subtypes

in their conceptualisation of the construct (Ugwu, 2018; Alrashidi, Phan, & Ngu, 2016; Phan, & Ngu, 2016) have

proposed a tripartite model that includes a cognitive dimension (e.g., thoughtfulness and willingness to master

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difficult tasks), as well as the psychological and behavioural subtypes. Joo, Lim, & Kim, (2016), similarly, adopted

three dimensions, but labelled these components as dedication, vigour, and absorption (Alrashidi, Phan, & Ngu,

2016; Phan, & Ngu, 2016; Sun & Bin, 2018; Tuominen-Soini & Salmela-Aro, 2014). Alrashidi, Phan, & Ngu,

(2016) have, in addition, proposed a fourth dimension of engagement. Appleton et al. (2006) called the fourth

dimension 'academic engagement', which includes aspects such as completing assignments and time on task.

However, most previous studies have subsumed this dimension (i.e., academic) under behavioural engagement

(Coleman, 2012; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012). In this study we will focus on the most influential dimensions of

academic engagement behavioural, cognitive, and emotional (Phan & Ngu, 2016).

BehaviouralAcademic Engagement

According to Fredricks and McColskey (2012) three ways are commonly utilised in defining behavioural

academic engagement. The first way involves positive conduct, such as adhering to the norms of the classroom,

following the rules, and refraining from engaging in disruptive behaviours (e.g., being troublesome or skipping

school) (Alrashidi, Phan, & Ngu, 2016; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012). The second way pertains to participation in

learning and academic-related tasks, and involves behaviours such as discussion contribution, asking questions,

paying attention, concentrating, exhibiting persistence, and putting forth effort (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Joo,

Lim, & Kim, 2016). The third and last way is the involvement in activities related to school that include, school

governance and sports (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012). Therefore, behavioural engagement is a directly observable

dimension of engagement, and the salient indicators of this dimension include truancy, preparation for school,

attendance, participation in curricular and extracurricular tasks, and discipline referrals (Alrashidi, Phan, & Ngu,

2016; Fredricks & McColskey, 2012; Tuominen-Soini & Salmela-Aro, 2014).

Cognitive Academic Engagement

The cognitive academic engagement dimension refers to students' investment in learning and involves aspects

such as willingness and thoughtfulness to expend the effort required to understand and master difficult tasks (e.g.,

students' use of elaboration rather than memorisation), challenge preference, and self-regulation (Fredricks &

McColskey, 2012). Indicators of cognitive engagement include asking questions for clarification of ideas,

persistence in difficult activities, flexibility in problem solving, use of learning strategies (e.g., relating new

information to existing information), and use of self-regulation to support learning (Fredricks & McColskey,

2012). One of the learning strategies is using ICT as a tool. Previous research has found out the ICT will motivate

students to study (Hussein & Norizan, 2019). Besides, flipped classroom is also one of learning strategies which

will motivate students to study.

Emotional Academic Engagement

Scholarshave variously identified emotional academic engagement as motivational engagement (Joo, Lim, &

Kim, 2016), psychological engagement (Bhaumik, 2013), and affective engagement (Archambault et al., 2009).

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Motivation refers to the emotional tendency move and drive towards the achievement of goals (Chan Siok Gim &

Rodziah, 2012). However, allof these terms refer to the same features of emotional academic engagement, which

describes students' positive and negative emotional reactions toward teachers, classmates, academic works, and

school in general (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012). It includes indicators such as the presence of interest and

happiness and the lack of boredom, anxiety, and sadness. Further, students exhibiting emotional engagement have a

sense of identification with and belonging to the school, value school outcomes, and feel as though they are

supported by their peers and teachers (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012).

The Relationship the Psychosocial Support Program on Academic Engagement.

Several researches have shown the importance of psychosocial support for academic engagement of orphans

(Von Der Embse, Barterian, & Segool, 2013; Bornstein, 2018; Bangpan, Lambert, Chiumento, & Dickson, 2016;

Betancourt et al., 2014). The psychosocial support program aims to develop the personality of orphans, including

social skills and attitudes. One of these attitudes is academic engagement, which is an important factor in the

success and excellence of students (Harper et al., 2018; Nies et al., 2018; Vernon, Modecki, & Barber, 2018). The

academic engagement gives orphans hope for life and develop their personal skills to be able to face the future

(Karimi & Maingi, 2019).

II. METHODOLOGY

This study was using qualitative method; focus group discussion (FGD). Two FGDs has been conducted which

consisted seven orphansfrom Dar Al Arqam School in Gaza Strip. The FGD method is relevant in this study as

previous studies involve children in school such as a study by Yong Hie Hie, Ku Hasnita, Zatul Himmah, Mohd

Daud & Adlina (2018) and Muhamad Nadhir and Alfa Nur Aini (2016). The interview took place on 11 November

2019. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: 1) The orphans should be between the ages of 13-

16; 2) the orphans to have some degree of awareness; 3) orphan was participate to the psychological and social

support programs evaluate by the school and 4) to be nominated by the social worker. The FGD lasted for an hour.

A set of semi-structured questions was created designed as a guide in handling FGD. Data obtained from focus

group discussions were analysed thematically with the help of Nvivo software as a tool to manage data. All their

comments will be kept confidential and each will be saved under a pseudonym this explained and assured to all

students from the FGD before interview. It was agreed with the school administration and the social workers and

get the approval to conduct these interviews. The session would be audio recording this was explained to

participants before began of the session and accurate translation by the researcher. The social worker also described

a role in the interview and the role of the researcher.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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The study dealt with seven orphans in two groups, who meet the criteria of the interview. All their comments will be kept confidential and each will be saved under a pseudonym this explained and assured to all students from the FGD before interview. It was agreed with the school administration and the social workers and get the approval to conduct these interviews. the session would be audio recording this was explained to participants before began of the session and accurate translation by the researcher. The social worker also described a role in the interview and the role of the researcher. During discussion, the researcher asked some of questions to students that make the participants asked to take time to think something before answering questions while some students began to interact surprise this lead to make the discussion was positively. Findings of the qualitative analysis revealed that the psychosocial program improves academic engagement, instil religious values, improves psychosocial aspects of the life of the orphans, interpersonal relationship among the orphans, leads to the improvement of self-development skills, and encourage sports and exercise. Ali (12-year-old) said:

"The programs helped me in my family life, I psychosocial Programs have helped to strengthen my role in confronting the problems which I faced after the war on Gaza".

Mahmoud (13-year-old)adding "These programs acquired me various of religious values such as honesty, sincerity, love for others, respect of my peers and teachers, teamwork and memorize parts of the Qur'an".

Hassan (15-year-old) continued saying "I received great benefit while receiving the programs that held by school and which helped me to improve my Psychosocial conditions and the overcome many of the problems which I faced in my life and It also motivated me to be able to participate academically with my classmates".

This is logical given the fact that among the main aims of the psychosocial program is to achieve these results and a host of others. Various studies found a link between psychosocial program and the reduction of anxiety and the feeling of isolation (House 1981; Kessler & McLeod 1985). Conversely, the lack of psychosocial support from family, friends and the surrounding environment was found to be related to psychological, social and emotional problems (Roy, 2013).

The results also pointed out the importance of programs in enhancing the emotional engagement and knowledge engagement for orphans through enjoyed the positive, thinking about facing their problems and the ability to think about the future. Afaf (14-year-old) said:

"There is no doubt that the programs helped me solve many of the problems I was facing and gave me the ability to deal positively and flexibly withmy colleagues and teachers," Sead (13 - year - old) adding "The programs helped me not to drop out of school and think logically in my future, it also encouraged me to interact with my classmates inside the classroom and this increased my love for school".

This shows how importance the programs in promoting academic engagement. It also builds the relationship between the psychological and emotional support program and the academic engagement to the extent of the impact of orphans programs to increase their academic engagement within the classroom, which helps them to progress and achieve academic excellence. This result also shows the importance of the relationship between psychosocial program in promoting academic engagement based on the program objective to develop the personality of orphans, including social skills and attitudes. Harper et al., (2018), Nies et al. (2018) and Vernon,

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Modecki, and Barber(2018) stated the academic engagement gives orphans hope for life and develop their personal

skills to be able to face the future.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study provides a valid foundation for further research and interventions. Where this study Psychosocial

support Program Influences on the academic engagement of Palestinian orphans in the Gaza Strip in Dar Al Arqam

School to ability to integrate orphans into society and school and improve academic engagement. This research

provides clarity on the real problems and a basis for appropriate responses to the academic engagement to orphans.

Where the researcher tried to assess the impact of psychological and social support program on academic

participation also to identify the relationship between the program and academic engagement, to solve some of the

problems facing orphans within the school and to make them more adapted to the school environment. Many

international organizations (UNICEF, UN and Save the Children) recommend the urgent need to redouble efforts in

providing psychosocial support programs in an effort to integrate these children into the environment, especially

after the trauma they experience after crises. In order to improve academic engagement to orphans, international

organizations should increase their efforts on intervening with bereaved orphans in the Gaza Strip and

strengthening ongoing of Psychosocial support Program commensurate with their surroundings to orphans in Gaza.

School social worker can play an important role in encouraging teacher involvement that supports children to

increase the academic engagement to orphans. Taking advantage of daily teaching opportunities, teachers can model

adaptive coping strategies to orphans. By implementing these strategies, teachers encourage students' academic

engagement and strengthen social connectedness, reducing isolation. Ultimately these efforts instill hope and move

grieving orphans from a passive victim role to activate the survivor role, through a psychosocial support program to

improve academic engagement within the school to orphans.

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