

The Impact of the Syrian Conflict on the Educational and Behavioral Development of Students: Insights from Intermediate School Teachers in Homs City

El impacto del conflicto en Siria en el desarrollo educativo y conductual de los estudiantes: perspectivas de los profesores de escuelas intermedias en la ciudad de Homs

O impacto do conflito na Síria no desenvolvimento educacional e comportamental dos estudantes: perspectivas de professores de escolas intermediárias na cidade de Homs

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Abstract: This study sought to investigate the impact of the Syrian conflict on the educational and behavioral development of students in the city of Homs, as perceived by teachers. The research employed a descriptive analytical approach and gathered data through a questionnaire. The study's sample comprised 130 secondary school teachers from the Directorate of Education in Homs. The findings revealed that, from the perspective of teachers, there exists a moderate effect on students' educational and behavioral development. The average response for the entire sample was 3.07, equivalent to 61.50%. Specifically, the results indicated that the influence on the educational aspect had a mean score of 3.41, whereas the effect on behavior received an average score of 2.75. Based on these results, it is recommended that efforts be made to facilitate the integration of students into schools. Additionally, it is advisable to enhance the involvement of both local and international organizations in providing financial support to students' families. Moreover, the implementation of rehabilitation and psychological counseling programs for students is crucial to alleviate the trauma resulting from the war.

Keywords: conflict; Syria; educational level; behavioral level.

Resumen: Este estudio tuvo como objetivo investigar el impacto del conflicto sirio en el desarrollo educativo y conductual de los estudiantes en la ciudad de Homs, tal como es percibido por los profesores. La investigación empleó un enfoque analítico descriptivo y recopiló datos a través de un cuestionario. La muestra del estudio consistió en 130 profesores de escuelas secundarias de la Dirección de Educación en Homs. Los hallazgos revelaron que, desde la

perspectiva de los profesores, existe un efecto moderado en el desarrollo educativo y conductual de los estudiantes. La respuesta promedio para toda la muestra fue de 3.07, equivalente al 61.50%. Específicamente, los resultados indicaron que la influencia en el aspecto educativo tuvo una puntuación media de 3.41, mientras que el efecto en el comportamiento recibió una puntuación promedio de 2.75. Basándonos en estos resultados, se recomienda hacer esfuerzos para facilitar la integración de los estudiantes en las escuelas. Además, es aconsejable fortalecer la participación tanto de organizaciones locales como internacionales en el apoyo financiero a las familias de los estudiantes. Además, la implementación de programas de rehabilitación y asesoramiento psicológico para los estudiantes es crucial para aliviar el trauma resultante de la guerra.

Palabras clave: conflicto; Siria; nivel educativo; nivel de comportamiento.

Resumo: Este estudo teve como objetivo investigar o impacto do conflito sírio no desenvolvimento educacional e comportamental dos estudantes na cidade de Homs, a partir da percepção dos professores. Para a pesquisa, foi empregada uma abordagem analítica descritiva e os dados foram coletados por meio de um questionário. A amostra do estudo foi constituída por 130 professores de escolas secundárias da Diretoria de Educação de Homs. Os resultados revelaram que, na perspectiva dos professores, existe um efeito moderado no desenvolvimento educacional e comportamental dos estudantes. A resposta média para toda a amostra foi de 3,07, equivalente a 61,50%. Especificamente, os resultados indicaram que a influência no aspecto educacional teve uma pontuação média de 3,41, enquanto o efeito no comportamento recebeu uma pontuação média de 2,75. Com base nesses resultados, recomenda-se que sejam feitos esforços para facilitar a integração dos estudantes nas escolas. Além disso, é aconselhável ampliar a participação de organizações locais e internacionais no apoio financeiro às famílias dos estudantes. Também a implementação de programas de reabilitação e aconselhamento psicológico para os estudantes é crucial para aliviar o trauma resultante da guerra.

Palavras-chave: conflito; Síria; nível educacional; nível comportamental.

Introduction

The profound impact of global warfare on the mental well-being of future generations is deeply distressing. Children, regardless of their educational stage, remain the most fragile and susceptible victims of the scourge of modern warfare, enduring psychological scars that can lead to profound psychological disturbances. According to Ruwaih (2022), alarming and disheartening statistics reported by UNICEF, in coordination with the United Nations and the international community, reveal that global conflicts have created millions of orphans, left 4.5 million individuals disabled, displaced 12 million people, and exposed 10 million to depression and psychological trauma (Ruwaih, 2022).

A disheartening aspect of this crisis is that the Middle East, which is considered the birthplace of monotheistic religions and ideally a region of peace, has experienced the highest levels of violence (Ruwaih, 2022).

The deteriorating security conditions resulting from wars in countries like Iraq and Syria have made children exceptionally vulnerable to violence, with groups like ISIS and various armed militias exploiting these circumstances wherever they establish a presence. Abu Zakhar (2017) described a report, translated into over 12 languages, which highlighted how political conflicts and civil wars result in numerous disasters, crimes against innocent civilians, and the destruction of urban areas and the environment. However, the most tragic consequences are the lasting effects they have on learners, impacting their behavior, emotions, and, not least, their academic performance and stability (Abu Zakhar, 2017).

During times of war, a culture of anxiety, fear, and displacement prevails, causing generations growing up amidst conflict to lose their connection to a normal life. These effects can endure throughout their lives (Al-Sadiq, 2009). Existing literature on the situation of students at various educational levels during wars indicates that mental health disorders increase by at least 17%, creating a fertile ground for intense psychological pressures, traumatic experiences, extreme frustration, shocks, and violent crises, all of which hinder healthy development (Saadeh et al., 2002).

Furthermore, young individuals who drop out of school often become targets for recruitment by armed militias, where they receive training in the use of weapons and participation in combat (Al-Azizi et al., 2018).

Many experts also argue that there is a noticeable deficiency in Arab countries concerning psychological support for mitigating the effects of wars and conflicts on students, while in most Western nations, parents are educated on how to support their children. This includes not only preparing for the eventuality of war on their own soil but also helping children maintain their psychological balance when exposed to the violence occurring in distant lands through media coverage. This proactive approach aims to prevent children from being negatively affected by witnessing human tragedies on their television screens (Al-Jabali, 2009).

Political conflicts and crises have become the foremost concern of intellectuals in the contemporary era due to the multitude of political factions, both internal and external, and their far-reaching consequences, which can even pose a threat to the stability of societies. While

discussions about political conflict can be traced back to the scholar Ibn Khaldun, particularly in his analysis of issues such as restlessness, tribalism, and political power, the methods of harnessing and exploiting these conflicts for the benefit of specific groups and the ways in which they are practiced have evolved relatively recently. As a result, the study of these conflicts has garnered increased attention from researchers.

Given that an in-depth understanding of political conflicts necessitates a high degree of knowledge, comprehension, analysis, inference, and the formulation of suitable resolutions, researchers have felt compelled to investigate the impact of political conflicts on the educational sphere and the behavior of students, as perceived by educators (Al-Azizi et al., 2018).

Problem Statement

Since the onset of 2011, Syria has faced an unprecedented crisis, marked by political conflicts and internal warfare across various Syrian regions. This turmoil has resulted in the destruction of urban structures, including residential, government, and other buildings, as well as a substantial loss of life and numerous injuries. Many families have been compelled to relocate from conflict zones to relatively safer areas. Moreover, in recent times, as calm gradually returned to the city of Homs, numerous families, particularly those from eastern Syria, have been displaced.

It is undeniable that these conflicts and wars exert profound influences on the behavior and educational progress of students. This assertion finds support in various studies (Al-Shami, 2019; Al-Azizi et al., 2018; Miqdadi et al., 2017; Hamza & Kazar, 2016), which have yielded findings on the consequences of wars and conflicts on the behavior and educational attainment of students. Researchers have also documented instances of students discontinuing their education in Homs during recent years. The primary research question can be framed as follows: What is the impact of the Syrian conflict on the educational and behavioral development of students in the city of Homs?

Research Questions

1. What is the influence of the Syrian conflict on the educational achievements of students, as perceived by teachers in the Homs Directorate of Education?

2. How does the Syrian conflict impact the behavior of students, according to the views of teachers in the Homs Directorate of Education?

Relevance of the Study

The study addresses a crucial subject, seeking to uncover the impact of the Syrian conflict on the academic and behavioral development of students, as perceived by teachers in the Homs Directorate of Education. The researchers anticipate that the findings and recommendations of this study will be of value to educational policymakers within the Ministry of Education, teachers, and families. They hope that these insights will be instrumental in addressing the ramifications of the Syrian conflict on students' educational progress in relatively secure regions.

Purpose of the Study

- Elucidating the influence of the Syrian conflict on the educational attainment of students, as perceived by teachers in the Homs Directorate of Education.
- Shedding light on the repercussions of the Syrian conflict on the behavior of students, according to the perspective of teachers in the Homs Directorate of Education.

Limitations of the Study

The scope of the present study is confined to the examination of the impact of the Syrian crisis on the academic and behavioral development of students, with a particular focus on the perspective of teachers in the Homs Directorate of Education.

- Geographical Scope: The study concentrates on Homs city.
- Temporal Scope: The study covers the academic year 2021-2022.
- Participant Scope: The study involves teachers affiliated with the Homs Education Directorate.

Terms of the Study

The researchers provide a procedural definition of conflict as the competitive interaction involving two or more parties striving to achieve a goal, employing both legitimate and illicit

means in pursuit of their objectives. Notably, the conflict in Syria has escalated to violent proportions.

Behavior, in this context, is described as the dynamic interplay between a living organism and its environment, with a significant emphasis on behavior as primarily learned through observation, education, and training. This learning encompasses both simple and complex behaviors (Arabiyat, 2007).

Educational level, on the other hand, is elucidated as the degree of knowledge an individual has attained, encompassing whether they have completed one or multiple stages of formal education, are currently enrolled or affiliated with educational institutions such as schools, institutes, or universities, or have never undergone any form of formal schooling (Sabawi, 2008).

The researchers proceed to define the impact of conflicts on the behavior of learners procedurally as the extent to which the behaviors of students are influenced by the ongoing conflicts and wars within Syria.

Literature review

International crises, including situations of conflict, constitute a defining aspect that shapes the political, social, and economic landscape of human existence. These crises are marked by their multifaceted nature, intertwined causes, and the intricate web of interactions that result in both direct and indirect consequences.

This phenomenon stands apart from other occurrences due to its highly intricate and dynamic nature. Research has underscored that a lack of quality education or the absence of education entirely places young individuals at risk of unemployment or lower wages, leaving them vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups that offer both income and status. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2015) has also placed a spotlight on the issue of children dropping out of school in a series of reports, including "Education Under Fire." This report highlights the impact of violence on schoolchildren across nine regions, including Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Libya, where an entire generation is growing up outside the educational system (UNICEF, 2016).

Examining the central focus of this study, two detrimental effects of the Syrian conflict become apparent:

- Increased school dropouts among children.

- A rise in youth unemployment and their attraction to military occupations (Al-Azizi et al., 2018).

Notwithstanding the gravity of the two aforementioned consequences, the researchers contend that administrative corruption within Syrian educational institutions is expanding and encompasses:

- The prevalence of mental health issues and their adverse impact on academic performance.
- A reinforcement of a culture of academic dishonesty and grade inflation.
- The persistence of opportunistic practices within private educational institutions.
- Instances of certificate forgery and unfair appointments.

Each of the six issues highlighted above possesses the potential to serve as a comprehensive study and research endeavor, given the gravity of their detrimental consequences on young individuals, the economy, and social bonds. It's imperative to acknowledge that these issues not only affect these facets but also exacerbate the political crisis and contribute to the vulnerability of the ailing state.

The researchers aim to delve into each negative impact individually, ultimately framing them within the context of their catastrophic economic implications. It is the researchers' hope that this research will culminate in persuasive recommendations for political leaders who aspire to rebuild their nation, put an end to the conflict, and embrace peaceful civil discourse. This endeavor should be managed through open dialogue and democratic mechanisms, all the while upholding the principles of citizenship as a cornerstone for resolving differences.

Throughout this undertaking, the researchers are mindful of the words of the former Secretary of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon:

Even in the worst and most devastating circumstances, education helps give students the confidence they need to face the future. And as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I want every child without exception to have the same trust that I have. Education has an absolute ability to change people's lives for the better. Ask parents what they want for their children, even in war and disaster areas, you will find that they want education before anything else. They want their children in schools, in short, quality education means development. Education is the social serum against

ignorance, poverty and disease. Improving education begins with creating a safe environment, stopping war conflict, and living in peace (United Nations, 2012).

There is a need for the Ministry of Education to develop counseling programs aimed at reducing behavioral problems, and urging specialists to take into account all psychological, social, physical and cognitive and mental aspects of the child (Al-Jabali, 2009).

Children Dropping out of School

It's universally acknowledged that depriving a child of their right to education represents a slow and silent form of harm. The consequences of war, including displacement from cities, the separation of many children from their families, and the chaos of illegal immigration, have led to a disheartening sight across various state institutions: children resorting to selling tissue paper at intersections during school hours. Many have entered the labor market, enduring low wages and excessively long working hours that disregard the sanctity of childhood. This has a ripple effect as prolonged periods of school absence and involvement in tissue sales can habituate children to the idea of handling money, which, in turn, may encourage them to discontinue their education. It's not surprising if this dire situation further deteriorates, leading to their exploitation in activities such as drug trafficking, prostitution, or even involvement in terrorist organizations, driven by a desire for retribution against a society that seemingly disregarded them in their time of need.

The researchers have gathered firsthand accounts of how terrorist organizations have preyed upon children, exploiting their innocence to recruit them into their ranks, exposing them to scenes of violence, slaughter, and murder.

According to a UNICEF report from 2016, there are more than 2.4 million children in Syria who are not enrolled in school, with roughly 40 percent of them being girls.

UNICEF (2018) reported that the literacy rate in Syria was impressively high, exceeding 90 percent for both genders. The period from 2000 to 2010 witnessed significant growth in the education system. The number of students during this time frame rose from approximately 2.8 million to 4.7 million, and the number of primary school teachers surged from 90,864 to 271,782. The key objectives of the education system in Syria have centered around infrastructure investment, reducing the average student-teacher ratio, and improving internal productivity measures. For instance, in 2005, there was one teacher for every 28 students, a ratio that

improved to one teacher per 21 students by 2010, although this varied across different regions and schools. However, despite such promising statistics, the enrollment rate in 2011 was 98 percent, which later dropped to 70 percent in 2013 (UNICEF, 2018).

Additionally, the Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA) noted in its report "Syria after eight years of war" that 40 percent of school structures had been damaged. Furthermore, the number of children entering the first grade of primary school in 2011 exceeded 726,000, but by the end of 2019, this number had fallen to approximately 434,000, a 40 percent reduction (Coşkun, 2018). The Syrian crisis has also adversely affected the percentage of students reaching the fifth grade in basic education, dropping from 96 percent in 2011 to 50 percent in 2013 (UNICEF, 2018).

To address this crisis and maintain educational opportunities, both local and international organizations have devised strategies for rebuilding schools damaged by barrel bombs and air strikes, as well as supporting underground schools. Lilah Khoja, the Coordinator of the Karam Foundation Higher Education Program, emphasizes the primary focus on elementary school education throughout Syria. She also highlights that parents are eager for their children to receive education, both within the country and abroad. Before the war, Syria played a leading role in the region concerning child education ("Syria: Two million children are out of school", 2018).

The Spread of Unemployment and the Recruitment of Young People to Military Work

Undoubtedly, one of the most substantial consequences of the war conflict in Syria is the depletion of the energies of the youth in the midst of warfare, diverting their potential away from education and development. This situation becomes even more significant in view of the severe scarcity of funds designated for developmental purposes. The researchers have discovered that substantial resources are being channeled into financing civil conflicts across various regions of Syria, as highlighted in their study (Al-Azizi et al., 2018).

The Prevalence of Mental Illness and its Impact on Achievement

The consequences of wars expose students to psychological pressures that can lead to various forms of mental illness. The psychological scars inflicted by war on students leave a profound impact on their psyche. According to Darwish (2009), the effects of wars are a major contributor to mental illness, accounting for as much as 34%, while natural disasters are in the

range of 4-5%, and incidents involving bombings and war casualties reach 34%. Other factors, such as hurricanes (7%), industrial accidents (6%), and violent attacks (19%), also play a role.

The impact of war gives rise to a state of psychological turmoil, resulting in abnormal and negative behaviors that range from cheating to depression. The war experiences endured by our students have undoubtedly left a sense of confusion in their lives. The ordeals of siege and displacement, along with the deep psychological scars, have led to a significant prevalence of depression in various segments of Syrian society. The long queues of children and youth seeking help at psychiatric clinics are a testament to this fact (Annabaa Network, 2015).

Some studies suggest that the traumatic experiences students undergo, such as witnessing explosions, shelling, and gunshots, instill a lasting sense of terror. During the Gaza war, a study revealed that girls experienced higher levels of fear and anxiety (81%) compared to boys (62.1%) (Darwish, 2009). These feelings of fear and anxiety are often accompanied by various psychological disorders, including depression, anxiety, panic attacks, anger, sadness, and nightmares. Sleep disturbances and involuntary urination are also common.

Furthermore, during times of terrorist operations, rumors spread on social media, contributing to violence and political conflicts. These rumors are strategically disseminated to induce chaos and societal disintegration (World Bank, 2017).

The findings of Al-Jabali's study in 2009 indicated the presence of behavioral issues, such as aggressive behavior, distraction, excessive restlessness, fear, and involuntary urination, among students in United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) schools for Palestine Refugees following the Gaza war. There were statistically significant variations in these behavioral problems based on gender, with males experiencing more issues. Additionally, residence and the educational level of parents were also associated with differences in behavioral problems in favor of certain variables (Al-Jabali, 2009).

Effects of Conflict on the Educational Level of Learners

The educational level of students refers to their attendance at school and their ability to maintain their academic progress, commensurate with their capabilities. It can have both positive and negative effects on their academic achievement, which is essentially the extent to which a learner has successfully met the learning objectives for a specific subject of study (Akl, 2001).

In accordance with a study conducted by Al-Azizi and colleagues (2018), conflict and war exert a substantial influence on the academic achievement of students attending basic education schools in Sanaa. Their research further revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in the impact of conflict and war on academic achievement based on gender, although statistically significant variances were observed in relation to the years of experience variable concerning both academic achievement and learners' behavior (Al-Azizi et al., 2018).

Numerous factors come into play when considering the educational level and academic achievement of students. Among these factors, which represent the common denominator in academic achievement, are the following:

Individual factors

These are learner-related factors, such as physical, mental and technical factors, which are detailed below.

Physical Factors: Physical factors encompass issues related to the physical well-being and overall health of learners. Often, physical growth disorders directly impact their social and cognitive development, including attention and concentration. This makes them more susceptible to psychological fatigue or illness. Conditions such as weak senses, alopecia, visual impairments, birth defects, and speech disorders all have a bearing on academic performance (Desouki, 1988).

Psychological Factors: Psychological factors have a profound influence on the behavior and interpersonal relationships of learners. Issues like loss of self-confidence, mental restlessness, and laziness can lead to subpar academic performance (Yaqubi, 1973). These psychological problems may result in students failing to achieve their academic potential, experiencing test anxiety, underperforming, struggling with low self-esteem, unrealistic worry, and fear or uneasiness that disrupt their normal functioning (Beharu, 2018). Conflict and war significantly impact learners' behavior, although their effect on learner motivation in basic education schools is considered moderate (Al Azizi et al., 2018). There is a recognized need for psychological and social rehabilitation for individuals affected by armed conflicts and wars (Shtewi, 2007).

Mental Factors: Mental factors, including intelligence, concentration, reasoning, and memory, are key determinants of academic success for learners. Various studies have established a link between intelligence and academic achievement, as exemplified by the works of Abu Hilal & Al-Tahan (2002) and Souad et al. (2021). This underlines the idea that high educational

attainment is indicative of high cognitive abilities. However, while there is a consensus on the positive correlation between intelligence and performance, some learners exhibit high intelligence levels without a commensurate level of academic achievement. Therefore, it is clear that academic success is not solely determined by mental factors; other variables may come into play (Al-Qadi, 1981). According to Al-Shami (2019), behavior disorders resulting from the trauma of war among primary school students in Sana'a are of moderate intensity, with an average score of 1.78 on the assessment scale. Sleep disturbances are the most prominent, followed by emotional disturbances, behavioral disorders, mental/physical disorders, and school activity disruptions, with no significant gender-based differences observed.

Family environmental factors

Social Factors: The family's role in shaping a child's physical, mental, and cognitive development cannot be understated. The family serves as the primary source of a child's initial information and plays a pivotal role in the child's individual and social personality development. It is within the family unit that a child's character is molded, both on an individual and societal level.

Economic Factors: Deteriorating economic conditions and a declining standard of living rank among the most pressing challenges that threaten families. These circumstances lead to inadequate environments for learning and, consequently, result in diminished academic achievement (Mustafa, 2004). It's important to note that learners in semi-stable areas are adversely affected in terms of their academic performance and achievement due to the absence of these crucial factors.

Throughout the late 19th century and into the 20th and 21st centuries, the Arab world has experienced the hardships of war, involving significant risks of displacement, loss of life, and infrastructure destruction. These events have far-reaching consequences on the living conditions of Arab families, particularly in terms of income, employment, health, education, and changes in the roles within the family unit, with specific implications for women. This illustrates the severe impact of wars on family living conditions and their subsequent effects on society as a whole, as evident in various human development indicators and other relevant measures (Shtewi, 2007).

Method and Procedures

The study employed a descriptive analytical approach, which is characterized by its aim to provide an accurate and unbiased depiction of the phenomenon under investigation. This method involves a thorough examination of the phenomenon in its natural state, with a focus on delivering both quantitative and qualitative descriptions without any undue influence from the researcher (Diab, 2003).

Population and sample

The study population for this research comprised teachers within the Homs Education Directorate for the academic year 2021-2022. A random sample of 130 teachers was chosen for the study.

Instrument

The researchers opted for a closed questionnaire as their research instrument, deeming it appropriate for this particular type of study. They meticulously crafted this questionnaire after a comprehensive review of existing research and studies pertaining to the research subject, as indicated by Jedouri (2017, 2020). The questionnaire was structured into two sections, each focusing on different aspects: the impact of conflict on the educational level of learners and learner behaviors. These sections contained multiple items for assessment.

It's noteworthy that in this study, the primary emphasis was on gauging the effects of the Syrian conflict on the educational achievements of learners. Consequently, no attention was given to demographic variables such as age, gender, and the educational level of teachers. Furthermore, it's worth mentioning that secondary schools in Homs are segregated by gender, with separate institutions for male and female students, ensuring that teachers are of the same gender as their students.

Instruments' validity and stability

In order to ascertain the content validity of the instrument and to ensure its alignment with the study's objectives, the initial version of the instrument was presented to a panel of experts. This panel assessed the dimensions and sections of the questionnaire, evaluating its

comprehensiveness and coverage of the research areas. Furthermore, they considered its linguistic formulation, clarity, and suitability for practical application.

The researchers retained the questionnaire items for which the panel reached a consensus of 75% or higher agreement. Items that required modifications were duly amended as per the panel's recommendations, and any items that the experts deemed unnecessary were removed. Table 1 provides a summary of the items both before and after the expert review process.

Table 1

Number of paragraphs of the questionnaire axes before and after arbitration

| Dimensions of the effects of the Syrian conflict | Before arbitration | After arbitration |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Educational level | 9 | 9 |
| Learners' behavior | 15 | 12 |
| Total | 24 | 21 |

The participants responded the questionnaire items according to a five-point Likert scale (5: *very large*, 4: *large*, 3: *medium*, 2: *weak*, 1: *very weak*).

Internal consistency of the questionnaire

Following the implementation of the adjustments suggested by the expert panel, the questionnaire, in its original form, was administered to an exploratory sample. This sample consisted of 45 teachers selected from the research population, but they were not considered part of the primary study sample. Subsequently, the researchers collected and analyzed their responses. To assess the dimensions' validity, the researchers computed the correlation between the degree of each axis and the overall score of the questionnaire. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlation of the axis with the total score of the tool

| Dimensions of the effects of the Syrian conflict | Before arbitration | After arbitration |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Educational level | .718** | .000 |
| Learners' behavior | .912** | .000 |

The table reveals that all of the dimensions exhibit a significant and reliable relationship when compared to the total score of the questionnaire. This observation signifies that all of the dimensions possess a validity that renders them suitable and applicable for the present study.

Table 3

Correlation of the item with the total score of the dimension to which the paragraph belongs

| No. | Educational level | | No. | Learners' behavior | |
|------------|--------------------------|-------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| | Validity | Indication | | Validity | Indication |
| 1 | .554** | .000 | 1 | .600** | .000 |
| 2 | .486** | .000 | 2 | .604** | .000 |
| 3 | .629** | .000 | 3 | .593** | .000 |
| 4 | .486** | .000 | 4 | .764** | .000 |
| 5 | .723** | .000 | 5 | .700** | .000 |
| 6 | .750** | .000 | 6 | .755** | .000 |
| 7 | .764** | .000 | 7 | .744** | .000 |
| 8 | .682** | .000 | 8 | .873** | .000 |
| 9 | .494** | .000 | 9 | .767** | .000 |
| | | | 10 | .795** | .000 |
| | | | 11 | .744** | .000 |
| | | | 12 | .699** | .000 |

Observing the data presented in Table 3, it becomes evident that there is internal consistency among all the items, with statistical significance levels set at 0.05 and 0.001. This internal consistency is determined by examining the correlation of each item with the total score

of the respective dimension to which the item belongs. The results confirm that all the items within the questionnaire are both reliable and valid for the study.

Stability

The researchers assessed the instrument's stability by performing a half-segmentation analysis of the tool. The reliability coefficient is presented in Table 4 for reference.

Table 4

Stability of the questionnaire by halfway segmentation

| No. | Axes of the effects of the Syrian conflict | No. | Stability coefficient |
|--------------|--|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Educational level | 9 | 0.68 |
| 2 | Learners' behavior | 12 | 0.88 |
| Total | | 21 | 0.86 |

Table 4 reveals that all stability coefficients for both axes exceeded 0.68, indicating high levels of stability. Notably, the overall resolution stability coefficient was 0.86, signifying a strong degree of stability. Additionally, the researchers computed the questionnaire's reliability coefficient using Cronbach's alpha (see Table 5).

Table 5

Stability of the resolution dimensions using Cronbach's alpha

| No. | Dimensions of the effects of the Syrian conflict | No. | Stability coefficient |
|--------------|--|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1 | Educational level | 9 | 0.76 |
| 2 | Learners' behavior | 12 | 0.88 |
| Total | | 21 | 0.92 |

Table 5 highlights the instrument's overall stability coefficient, which was 0.92, signifying a high level of stability. Furthermore, the stability coefficient for both dimensions exceeded 0.76, affirming the questionnaire's strong stability and its suitability for the present study.

Consequently, the questionnaire, in its final form, is deemed valid for implementation in the study sample.

Table 6 presents the touchstone or cutoff point at which respondents reached, along with the corresponding scale to which they responded (Mansi, 2000).

Table 6

Touchstone or level of cut

| No. | Average | The degree of impact of the Syrian conflict |
|------------|----------------|--|
| 1 | 1 - >1.8 | Very low |
| 2 | 1.8 - >2.6 | Low |
| 3 | 2.6 - >3.4 | Average |
| 4 | 3.4 - >4.2 | High |
| 5 | 4.2 - 5 | Very high |

Procedure

The researchers collaborated with the Ministry of Education office in the city of Homs, Syria, to streamline the study's implementation process. Approval was granted approximately one month after the initial request, and the study was initiated. The questionnaire was administered to a sample comprising 130 teachers within the Homs Directorate of Education. Following the collection and tabulation of questionnaire responses, the researchers conducted statistical analysis using the SPSS 23 software.

Analysis

The researchers subjected the collected data to a range of statistical analyses, including calculations of percentages, frequencies, arithmetic means, and standard deviations. Furthermore, they conducted T-tests for two independent samples and employed one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to identify significant study variables.

Results

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Table 7 displays the findings of the study sample concerning the paragraphs of the first dimension, organized in a descending order.

Table 7

Results on the paragraphs of the first dimension, arranged in descending order

| No. | Effects of the Syrian conflict on the educational level | Sum Average % | Standard deviation | Percentage | Rank | Impact degree |
|--------------|--|---------------|--------------------|--------------|------|---------------|
| 1 | Left school due to poor economic conditions. | 3.95 | 0.90 | 78.50 | 1 | High |
| 2 | Late to school at the beginning of the school year. | 3.70 | 0.94 | 74.70 | 2 | High |
| 3 | Low level of academic achievement. | 3.60 | 1.02 | 72.50 | 3 | High |
| 4 | Slow understanding. | 3.35 | 0.83 | 66.22 | 4 | Average |
| 5 | Fail to perform homework. | 3.30 | 0.79 | 65.79 | 5 | Average |
| 6 | Not participating in activities with colleagues. | 3.27 | 0.94 | 65.20 | 6 | Average |
| 7 | Neglect the tasks in his hands. | 3.22 | 0.77 | 64.40 | 7 | Average |
| 8 | Unable to continue their studies because the documents were lost or damaged. | 3.18 | 0.88 | 63.20 | 8 | Average |
| 9 | Constantly absent of school. | 3.12 | 0.85 | 62.20 | 9 | Average |
| Total | | 3.41 | 0.54 | 68.10 | | High |

From Table 7, we observe that the responses from the sample regarding the first dimension reflect a significant impact of the Syrian conflict on the educational attainment of learners in the partially secure areas of Homs. The average response for the paragraphs within this dimension was 3.41, with a standard deviation of 0.54 and a percentage of 68.10%. This percentage indicates a substantial level of influence based on the established standards.

Additionally, there is noticeable variation in the sample's responses to the individual items within this dimension. "Some of them left the study due to bad economic conditions" emerged as the most impactful item, with a percentage of 78.50%. Following closely, the paragraph "Late attendance at the beginning of the academic year" received a 74.70% rating, and the item "Low

academic achievement" ranked third with a percentage of 72.50%, indicating a significant level of impact. The remaining items suggest an average impact of the Syrian conflict on the educational levels of learners in the Homs Directorate of Education.

The Impact of the Syrian Conflict on the Behavior of Students in the City of Homs

Table 8 shows the results of the study sample on the items of the second dimension, arranged in descending order.

Table 8

Results on the items of the second dimension, arranged in descending order

| No. | Effects of the Syrian conflict on the behavior of learners | Sum Average % | Standard deviation | Percentage | Rank | Impact degree |
|--------------|---|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Little concern for outward appearance. | 3.41 | 1.02 | 68.00 | 1 | Average |
| 2 | Suddenly becomes frightened. | 3.10 | 1.16 | 60.58 | 2 | Average |
| 3 | Talkative. | 2.99 | 1.14 | 59.60 | 3 | Average |
| 4 | Violent when dealing with others. | 2.88 | 1.00 | 58.00 | 4 | Average |
| 5 | Often quarrel with colleagues and others. | 2.90 | 1,07 | 57.95 | 4 | Average |
| 6 | Talk about death a lot. | 2.85 | 1.29 | 56.80 | 5 | Average |
| 7 | Constantly change assigned seat in class. | 2.70 | 1.11 | 53.70 | 6 | Average |
| 8 | Often go to the bathroom while studying. | 2.65 | 1.01 | 53.15 | 7 | Average |
| 9 | Tear up books and tools. | 2.50 | 1.02 | 50.50 | 8 | Low |
| 10 | Use any tool when quarreling with his colleagues. | 2.40 | 1.11 | 47.40 | 9 | Low |
| 11 | Break school doors and windows. | 2.35 | 1.22 | 46.30 | 10 | Low |
| 12 | Interfere with the activities of others without permission. | 2.30 | 0.97 | 45.80 | 11 | Low |
| Total | | 2.75 | 0.79 | 54.80 | | Average |

As per the data presented in Table 8, the responses from the sample indicate a moderate impact of the Syrian conflict on the behavior of students in the partially secure areas of Homs. The average response to the items within this dimension was 2.75, with a standard deviation of 0.79, and a percentage of 54.80%. This percentage signifies a moderate level of impact, as determined by the criteria established by the researchers.

The majority of the items had an average effect, with the exception of four items: "tearing up books and tools," "using any tool during disputes with colleagues," "damaging school doors and windows," and "interfering in the activities of others without permission." These four items were rated as having a low impact according to the perspectives of the sample.

The Impact of the Syrian Conflict on the educational and behavioral level of learners

The analysis of the results of the two dimensions, taking the questionnaire as a whole, is presented below.

Table 9

Analysis of the results of the whole questionnaire

| No. | Effects of the Syrian conflict on the educational level | Sum Average % | Standard deviation | Percentage | Rank | Impact degree |
|------------|--|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Educational level of the learners. | 3.41 | 0.54 | 68.10 | 1 | High |
| 2 | Learners' behaviors. | 2.75 | 0.79 | 54.80 | 3 | High |
| | Total | 3.07 | 0.63 | 61.50 | | Average |

Table 9 reveals that, according to the perspective of teachers, the impact of the Syrian conflict on the educational and behavioral aspects of students in Homs city is considered to be at a moderate level. The average response of the sample to the entire questionnaire was 3.07, with a standard deviation of 0.63, and a percentage of 61.50%. This percentage signifies a medium level of impact based on the criteria established by the researchers.

Notably, there is variability in the sample's responses across the dimensions. The educational dimension ranked highest with an average score of 3.41, a standard deviation of 0.54, and a percentage of 68.10%, indicating a significant degree of influence. In the second place, the dimension related to students' behavior received an average score of 2.75, a standard deviation of 0.79, and a percentage of 54.80%, signifying a notable degree of impact.

Discussion

The responses to the first dimension indicate a substantial impact of the Syrian conflict on the educational achievement of students in the partially secure areas of Homs. The researchers attribute these findings to the economic hardships faced by families in these regions, with many losing their livelihoods and breadwinners. This has, in turn, led some students to leave school in order to assist their families in coping with these challenging economic conditions. Additionally, the loss of academic documents further exacerbates the challenges faced by learners, ultimately affecting their academic performance and stability. These findings align with prior studies conducted by Al-Azizi et al. (2018), Al-Shami (2019), and Al-Sadiq (2009), all of which highlight the adverse impact of conflicts and war on the educational attainment of students.

Conversely, the responses to the second dimension indicate a moderate influence of the conflict on the behavior of students in the partially secure areas of Homs. This effect is attributed to the varied experiences and challenges students in these regions have encountered. Those who have endured the demolition of their homes or the loss of family members have been particularly affected, with their behavior showing more pronounced changes. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Al-Shami (2019), Hamza and Kazar (2016), and Al-Jabali (2009), which also underscore the impact of conflict on student behavior.

When considering both educational and behavioral aspects, the results indicate that, from the teachers' perspective, the impact of the conflict is at a normal level. This can be attributed to the fact that teachers are more attuned to students' academic performance and educational progress, given their direct involvement in the educational process. These results are in line with previous studies by Al-Shami (2019), Al-Azizi et al. (2018), and Hamza and Kazar (2016), which emphasize the role of teachers in assessing the effects of conflict on students.

Conclusion

The present study has drawn a crucial conclusion: the detrimental effects of wars and political conflicts are profoundly influencing the behavior and academic performance of students. These effects manifest in various ways, including increased rates of school dropouts, students becoming involved with armed forces, neglect of the educational aspect, and a desensitization to the harsh and traumatic experiences they witness daily. Moreover, parents themselves are

compelled to deprioritize education due to the economic hardships brought about by the ongoing conflicts in the region. This cumulative evidence underscores the extensive impact of the conflict on both the educational level and the behavior of students.

Overall, the researchers have unequivocally demonstrated that the Syrian conflict exerts a significant influence on the academic achievement and behavior of students, with broader societal repercussions. These findings emphasize the pressing need for addressing the issues of low educational attainment and the rise in behavioral disorders among students. The study's results underscore the importance of intensifying psychological rehabilitation programs to assist students in coping with the psychological crises they face.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Facilitating Learner Enrollment and Financial Support:

- Efforts should be directed towards streamlining the enrollment of students in schools, simplifying registration procedures, and reducing administrative barriers.
- Collaboration with local and international organizations should be enhanced to provide financial support to families affected by conflict, thus relieving them of the economic burden associated with education.
- Creating a conducive learning environment and conditions that ease students' pursuit of education is essential.

2. Behavioral Monitoring and Psychiatric Evaluation:

- A comprehensive system for monitoring and documenting the behavior of students, especially those displaced from conflict zones, should be put in place.
- Students displaying signs of psychological distress or behavioral issues should be promptly referred to a qualified psychiatrist or mental health professional when deemed necessary. Early intervention is critical.

3. Psychological Rehabilitation and Counseling Programs:

- Specialized programs for psychological rehabilitation and counseling should be developed and implemented to address the traumatic effects of war on students.

- These programs should be tailored to help students cope with the psychological challenges arising from their exposure to conflict-related trauma.

4. Parental Perspective Study:

- Consider conducting a complementary study that focuses on the parents' viewpoint to gain insights into how they perceive the effects of war on their children's education and behavior.
- Such a study can provide a more holistic understanding of the impact of conflict on students and help in devising comprehensive strategies to support them.

These recommendations aim to address the immediate and long-term consequences of conflict on students' education and well-being, emphasizing the importance of a multi-faceted approach involving educational, psychological, and parental perspectives.

Practical implications

The researchers placed a significant emphasis on gauging the impact of the ongoing war in Syria on the students, given the critical threat it poses to their education and the potential for a surge in illiteracy among this vulnerable demographic. The repercussions of the conflict have been especially pronounced in the semi-safe areas of Homs, where families have grappled with the loss of income and job opportunities. Tragically, some families have also lost their primary breadwinners, compelling educated individuals to abandon their studies in order to support their families in these trying economic circumstances. Additionally, the loss of essential academic documents further compounds the challenges faced by students, negatively affecting their academic progress and overall educational stability.

Students who have experienced the brunt of these conflicts, including witnessing the demolition of their homes or the loss of family members, have borne the heaviest burdens, with the conflict leaving a lasting impact on their behavior and overall lives. The study unequivocally concludes that wars and political conflicts have produced adverse effects on students, influencing both their behavior and their academic achievements.

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