

Abstract

There is a large corpus of empirical research focusing on the concept of Psychological Sense of Community [PSC] and its adaptive role in a wide range of contexts such as family adaptation in war situation, health services, community happiness. These issues have been investigated in international scale.

As community psychologists, our study of any social problem should not be limited to understanding its theoretical framework only, but rather to explore the problem within its boarder and specific social context.

This study intended to investigate the role of the PSC among the Palestinian people in the West-Bank during the first Palestinian *Intifada* under the repressive practices of the Israeli occupation and within the context of the national liberation movement; its role in protecting mental health, fostering psychological well being and collective resilience for the community under the experience of military violence. The study explored such issues as volunteerism and community participation, as well as their evident decline relative to the past and the consequences beyond this decline and weakening.

In this study, I utilized qualitative research methods relying mainly on data gathered through in-depth qualitative interviews with purposefully selected sample of twenty research participants who were identified as community activists and leaders in volunteerism during the first *Intifada*. All the research participants were from the area of Ramallah. The interviews delved into the participants' experience of community activism, their understanding the PSC and its role in fostering community resilience as well as their perceptions of the reasons behind its decline and consequences.

All interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, and submitted to inductive analysis following the procedures of grounded theory techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Emerging common themes were identified inductively from the data and compared to broader theoretical conceptualization of the concept of PSC and its role in community resilience and well being.

The emerging themes included: First, the existence of PSC during the first *Intifada* and its contribution to community resilience. Second, the controversial role of the Non-Government Organizations in the PSC. Third, the weakening and decline of the PSC. Forth, a prevailing sense of frustration, social disintegration and feeling of helplessness in the community.

The results point in the direction of decline in the PSC arguing that the Palestinian political parties should bear the bulk of the responsibility for such decline, which requires further exploration in the role of the political parties in such a decline.