

A Review of the Israel-Gaza War and Its Effects On Women and Children

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Abstract

This work critically examined the effects of Israel-Gaza war on women and children. The main objective of this study was to critically examine the socio economic, psychological and health effects of Israel-Gaza war on women and children. It further examined the extent the war has restricted access to essential amenities like health care for pregnant women and infants, including education and housing for women and Children. The study adopted a qualitative case study research design based on the analysis of secondary data from a variety of credible sources, including reports, academic articles, government documents, NGO publications, and media coverage. Secondary data was analyzed to assess the effects of the Israeli-Gaza War on women and children, exploring physical, economic, and psychological consequences, as well as the role of women and children in post-conflict recovery. The study employed document analysis and content analysis techniques to extract relevant data from secondary sources. The secondary data for this research was gathered from multiple sources. Findings from the study showed that children were more victims of socioeconomic impacts of the Israel-Gaza war. The result from the study also showed that Gaza had a far more negative impact from the armed conflict compared to Israel. The research recommends that efforts must be made and directed toward ensuring the safety, health, and emotional wellbeing of children, even during conflict. International organizations such as the United Nations should urgently seek for ways to end the war so as to prevent further negative impacts of the war on women and children.

Keywords: War, Israel, Gaza, Women, Children, Consequence

Introduction

Conflicts, disagreements, and arguments are natural possibilities in every human relationship, as individuals often differ in ideologies, beliefs, perceptions, behaviours, and attitudes. This potential for friction exists within close-knit circles and on a broader scale, such as among nations. A vivid example of this is the ongoing war between Hamas and Israel. The conflict in Gaza, marked by extreme violence and widespread destruction, has drawn global attention to the political dynamics of the Middle East. Efforts aimed at fostering regional stability, such as the recent Saudi-Israel Peace Deal and the Arab-Israeli reconciliation initiatives following the Abraham Accords, have been disrupted. Continuous hostilities in Gaza have shifted Arab nations' focus away from peace negotiations and altered the priorities of international alliances. Iran, in its bid to improve ties with Saudi Arabia, has issued warnings of pre-emptive strikes on Israel if it proceeds with a Gaza invasion (Safdar, 2024). The long-term consequences of war significantly hinder societal progress and development (UN, 2020). The number of women and children impacted by armed conflicts has steadily increased since the turn of the millennium, due to global population growth, the urban nature of modern warfare, and a consistent rate of conflict occurrences. Armed confrontations contribute heavily to the illness and death rates among non-combatant populations. One of the central goals of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is to reduce the prevalence and severity of armed conflicts. In 2017, it was estimated that about 10% of women and 16% of children globally—representing roughly 630 million individuals—were either displaced or living in direct proximity to zones of armed violence. Even those who remain in their homes are not immune to the traumatic and destabilizing effects of war (Eran et al., 2021).

In the face of divergent views and perspectives, war can hardly be considered the most reasonable or desirable solution for individuals, communities, or sovereign states. Some leaders wrongly equate war with the demonstration of power and dominance, believing that diplomatic approaches are signs of weakness. Such perceptions can lead to the hasty embrace of violence over peaceful engagement. However, war can never serve as an effective substitute for dialogue and amicable agreements. The harsh and destructive consequences of war are far-reaching—affecting not just the young and the elderly but also stalling economic progress and national development. Armed conflict halts the advancement of any nation striving for transformation and growth. Unarguably, war takes a heavy toll first on the population and then on the nation's structure and systems. Every year, millions of lives are lost to violent confrontations. Among those most susceptible during conflict periods are vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, women, and persons with disabilities. The aftermath often includes elevated mortality rates, widespread disease, economic downturns, political chaos, and societal collapse. Furthermore, war diminishes the global image of participating nations, portraying them as dangerous and deterring tourism and international goodwill (Amnesty International, 2025). It is therefore critically important to emphasize that war is a poor choice compared to peaceful alternatives like compromise and constructive negotiations. These negative ramifications, often referred to as indirect impacts of war, encompass far more than just deaths from combat, making them methodologically difficult to measure and assess (Wise et al., 2021).

Some of the effects of the Hamas-Israeli War on children are hereby highlighted thus:

The murder and disfigurement of children: As of January 11, 2024, reports indicated that more than 10,000 children had lost their lives in Gaza. In addition, data from January 22, 2024, showed that 36 children were killed in Israel by Palestinian armed factions, and another 91 were killed in the West Bank by Israeli forces and settlers. The hostilities have also led to the forced displacement of approximately 1.7 million individuals within Gaza. Among them, at least 50,000 displaced persons from northern Gaza have taken refuge in 21 designated shelters located in Khan Younis City, which had a pre-conflict population of about 117,000 residents. This followed the Israeli military's emergency evacuation directive for nearly one-fifth of the city on December 3, 2023. Children across Gaza are in urgent need of secure environments, along with dependable access to essential resources such as food, water, sanitation, and shelter (Save the Children International, 2023). Amnesty International has reported the suspected use of heavy ordnance, possibly weighing up to 2,000 pounds, in the ongoing bombardments (Amnesty International, 2023). The deployment of such large-scale munitions in crowded civilian zones has led to devastatingly high casualty rates. Moreover, Human Rights Watch has documented claims that Israeli forces have employed white phosphorus in densely inhabited urban regions of Gaza during the current offensive, a tactic also observed in previous military operations (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Survivors often endure intense physical pain, permanent scarring, disabilities, and profound psychological trauma, which can lead to long-term social exclusion. Scientific literature highlights that children are particularly susceptible to the harmful effects of chemical agents due to their smaller body size and developing physiology (Shenoda et al., 2018).

Child abduction: Over 30 children who were kidnapped by Palestinian armed groups during their October 7, 2023, attacks were freed during the humanitarian halt, however it's unclear how many are still in captivity. According to Human Rights Watch, using children in "hostage videos" is an "outrage on personal dignity" (Minsberg, 2023). According to news reports of the child captives, the kids suffered from psychological anguish, poor nourishment, and unsanitary and unhygienic circumstances. The UN Human Rights Office has documented a sharp rise in Palestinian arrests and detentions since October 7, 2023, with most of these cases including no proof of criminal activity. Children are not exempt from this; it is estimated that 500–700 Palestinian children are arrested and detained by the Israeli military each year through administrative detention procedures where no charges are ever brought and through military courts that lack the fundamental protections for a fair trial (Defense for Children, 2023). Furthermore, dozens to hundreds of Palestinians, including boys as young as 15, who were taking refuge at a school on December 7, 2023, were arrested, stripped, bound, and taken to an unidentified location (Defence for Children International-Palestine, 2023). Children's physical and mental health are known to suffer when they are abducted and held captive, and survivors frequently have long-term effects (Shenoda et al., 2018).

Assaults on healthcare and educational facilities: Between October 7 and December 8, 2023, UNICEF recorded attacks on 352 educational establishments (UNICEF, 2023). By January 20, 2024, a total of 151 staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) had been reported killed (UNRWA, 2024). The mass displacement of civilians has forced many school buildings to be repurposed as emergency shelters, thereby increasing the number of casualties when these locations come under attack. A striking example is the UNRWA Al Fakhoura School situated within the Jabalia refugee camp, which housed around 20,000 displaced individuals when it was struck (Education Above All Foundation, 2023). Attacks have not been limited to schools—medical infrastructure has also suffered significantly. As of January 22, 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) had verified more than 300 assaults on healthcare facilities, which included damages to 56 hospitals and 59 ambulances. Furthermore, Médecins Sans Frontières has reported that Israeli military forces deliberately targeted their vehicles. Children's fundamental rights to health and education, enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), are under direct threat. Article 24 guarantees every child the right to the highest attainable standard of health, while Article 28 affirms their right to receive an education. The current onslaught in Gaza demonstrates a profound violation of these provisions, as both health and educational systems have been gravely compromised (United Nations Children's Fund, 2023). The widespread devastation of civilian services, particularly those crucial to children's wellbeing, highlights the dire humanitarian consequences of the ongoing conflict. Schools and hospitals, meant to be safe havens, are now sites of extreme peril, undermining the essential frameworks needed to protect and nurture children in crisis.

Refusal to provide humanitarian access: Over the course of the 16-year siege of the Gaza Strip, Israeli authorities have restricted travel and placed import limits on necessities including food, building supplies, vital medical equipment, and gasoline (Save the Children International, 2023). Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant has described the latest offensive as a "complete siege" in which Israel has cut off fuel, electricity, and aid supplies to Gaza. Additionally, Israel has attacked telecommunications infrastructure, making the already dire humanitarian situation worse (United Nations, 2023). UN authorities described the first 20 assistance trucks since October 7, 2023, which brought limited emergency supplies into Gaza through the Rafah border on October 21, 2023, as "a drop in the ocean of need." Israel permitted minor quantities of gasoline for vital humanitarian operations starting on November 18, 2023, and a total of 1723 relief vehicles had entered before the humanitarian halt began on November 24, 2023 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023). Children of all ages, especially newborns in need of incubators that run on power from fuel-dependent generators, are suffering in Gaza's hospitals due to the limitations on fuel and help entering the territory. Over the weekend of November 11 and 12, 2023, 37 preterm newborns were moved to an operating room without their incubators due to the absence of electricity at Al Shifa Hospital; by Monday, November 13, 2023, six of them were said to have passed away (Save the Children International, 2023).

Apart from the effects of the Hamas-Israeli War on children, studies have also shown that women are also greatly affected. The perspectives and lived experiences of individuals in war-affected regions—as civilians, combatants, survivors, or perpetrators—are deeply influenced by gender roles. Feminist movements and peace advocates have long emphasized the contributions of both Israeli and Palestinian women, promoting the ideals of solidarity and envisioning avenues for harmonious coexistence.

However, following the October 7 events, the narrative around gender in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict shifted dramatically, particularly with the increased politicization of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Accusations against Hamas and other Palestinian factions involving sexual violence targeting Israeli civilians and military personnel highlight the weaponization of SGBV in warfare (Marteu, 2024). On October 7, 2023, during an operation dubbed “Al-Aqsa Flood,” Hamas launched an unexpected attack on Israel, which resulted in the deaths of approximately 1,200 people and the abduction of 253 others. In retaliation, Israel initiated an extensive air campaign and a ground invasion of Gaza, formally declaring war on Hamas. By December 20, 2023, figures from the Hamas-controlled administration indicated that over 20,000 people had perished in Gaza (Zanotti et al., 2023). The conflict’s human toll is staggering; Professor Michael Spagat, an authority in conflict-related casualty data, emphasized its extraordinary scale (Crowden, 2023). In Gaza alone, roughly 951,490 women have been forcibly displaced. Additionally, over 2,700 women are now widows and must assume the roles of household heads. The trauma is especially severe for girls who have lost their families or homes, as they face disruptions in education and access to healthcare. The destruction of housing and the overcrowding of temporary shelters create highly unstable living conditions. Moreover, the collapse of law and public services generates an atmosphere filled with fear and insecurity for these young girls (Ramadan & Abouzid, 2024).

The term “women in the Gaza war” encapsulates the diverse involvement of Israeli and Palestinian women as fighters, survivors, community leaders, and information disseminators during the ongoing conflict. Gender-specific violence has been a brutal feature, including serious accusations of rape and sexual assault perpetrated by Hamas. Various accounts and visual documentation from the aftermath of the October 7 attacks reveal acts of torture, including sexually violent assaults against Israeli women and minors. In response, several Israeli women’s groups have mobilized efforts to secure the release of female hostages and draw international attention to their plight. Nearly 100 Israeli women were reportedly abducted and held in Gaza. Global bodies such as UN Women and the UN Secretary-General have strongly condemned these gender-targeted acts (Tapper et al., 2024).

Throughout the duration of the conflict, there has been a notable surge in sexual harassment, discrimination, and abuse targeting women and girls, particularly across the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The conflict has also severely strained Gaza’s healthcare infrastructure, with 64% of primary healthcare centers now non-operational, exacerbating an already critical health emergency. Pregnant women, who are inherently more susceptible to medical complications, are facing heightened dangers due to the ongoing collapse of essential services. With about 50,000 pregnant women currently in Gaza, the likelihood of delivering under life-threatening and unsanitary conditions is extremely high. Each day, over 180 women are forced to give birth amid scarcity and instability, with around 5,500 pregnancies expected to reach full term in the coming days (OH-CHR, 2023). In northern Gaza, only Al-Awda Hospital—operated by ActionAid—remains functional for maternity care. Despite relentless bombings and a mid-November fuel shortage, the hospital continues to assist in delivering up to 20 babies daily (Shepherd, 2023). The absence of anesthesia, sterilization, and necessary medical interventions makes childbirth highly dangerous. The shortage of fuel, clean water, medications, and medical tools poses a severe threat to both maternal and infant survival (Faddoul et al., 2023).

Current expert assessments and United Nations reports reveal that women and children are suffering disproportionately from the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza. Since the renewed hostilities began on October 7, more than 10,000 people have been reported dead and over 25,000 injured in Gaza. In contrast, Israeli sources confirm that at least 1,400 individuals have died and over 6,900 have sustained injuries following Hamas’ initial attacks. Approximately 67% of all casualties in Gaza are women and children, with many more suffering from injuries. Men typically take on combat roles, whereas the civilian toll mostly includes women, children, and the elderly, making them the most affected demographic in such conflicts (Kekatos, 2023). Women and children often become the most exposed to exploitation and abuse during such times of instability. Post-conflict periods offer no reprieve, as many children continue to suffer abuse, including sexual assault, trafficking, and abduction. Living in environments marked by war and refugee displacement leaves these young individuals vulnerable to continued neglect and harm. (Snoubar and Duman, 2016). Unfortunately, some national leaders often fail to consider the grave, harrowing, and long-lasting impacts of warfare before hastily engaging in armed confrontations. This pattern is evident in the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, where diplomatic resolutions have been overshadowed by military aggression. The aim of this work is to examine how the Israel-Hamas war has affected women and children. Ultimately, the goal is to provide compelling reasons to discourage continued participation in this international conflict while urging political leaders to pursue peace through dialogue and meaningful compromise.

Statement of Problem

It is opined that war can hardly be considered the most reasonable or desirable solution for individuals, communities, or sovereign states. Some leaders wrongly equate war with the demonstration of power and dominance, believing that diplomatic approaches are signs of weakness. Such perceptions can lead to the hasty embrace of violence over peaceful engagement. The harsh and destructive consequences of war are far-reaching—affecting not just the young and the elderly but also stalling economic progress and national development. Armed conflict halts the advancement of any nation striving for transformation and growth.

Among those most susceptible during conflict periods are vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, women, and persons with disabilities. The aftermath often includes increasing mortality rates, widespread disease, economic downturns, political chaos and societal collapse (Amnesty International, 2025). Nevertheless, certain scholars have argued that, under certain circumstances, war might be unavoidable. However, it is undeniable that women and children face overwhelming health risks and mortality due to such violent conflicts. Research has outlined both the direct effects—those resulting from physical violence—and the indirect effects that wars impose on women and young individuals, including adolescents. Between 1995 and 2015 alone, more than ten million deaths were recorded among children under five as a result of armed conflicts worldwide. Women of childbearing age residing near highly volatile regions were found to experience three times the mortality rate of those in non-conflict areas (Bendavid et al., 2021).

Armed conflict remains a profound threat to public health, particularly for children, both in the immediate and distant future. Direct health implications for children include experiencing various forms of violence, injuries, disabilities, or death resulting from shootings, bombings, or structural collapses. Moreover, exposure to armed conflict also has prenatal consequences. In Gaza, around 50,000 pregnant women are reportedly facing risks of negative birth outcomes due to heightened maternal stress, physical trauma, food insecurity, and the destruction of health infrastructure. The broader, less visible effects include exposure to infectious diseases, chronic health problems caused or worsened by insufficient living conditions, displacement, loss of family members, orphanhood, and lack of access to basic human needs such as security, shelter, nutritious food, clean water, hygiene, medical services, and education (Boukari et al., 2024).

Across many parts of the globe—particularly in the Middle East—ongoing wars and armed confrontations significantly influence every facet of daily life, especially in directly affected communities. These conflicts result in the destruction of vital community infrastructure, including healthcare, educational institutions, and social welfare systems. In areas like the Middle East, the impact of war on families and individuals has been deeply unsettling. Families are broken apart, with roles shifting dramatically due to displacement and asylum-seeking. On an individual level, psychological, social, and physical wellbeing is greatly diminished. Women and children often become the most exposed to exploitation and abuse during such times of instability. Post-conflict periods offer no reprieve, as many children continue to suffer abuse, including sexual assault, trafficking, and abduction. Living in environments marked by war and refugee displacement leaves these young individuals vulnerable to continued neglect and harm. Some are even used as human shields, while others, particularly those taken into custody by occupying forces, suffer inhumane treatment including sexual and physical assault while imprisoned. The long-lasting, devastating impact of armed conflict on these defenseless groups is profound and demands urgent attention (Snoubar and Duman, 2016). While several studies have explored the consequences of the Israel-Gaza conflict, most have not paid close and systematic attention to its specific effects on women and children. Hence, this study seeks to critically analyze and document how the Israel-Gaza war continues to affect these two vulnerable groups.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- i. critically examine the socio economic, psychological and health effects of Israel-Gaza war on women and children.
- ii. examine the extent the war has restricted access to essential amenities like health care for pregnant women and infants, education and housing for women and Children.

Research Questions

- i. What are the major socio economic, psychological and health care effects of the Israel-Gaza conflict on women and children in the affected region?
- ii. In what ways has the war restricted access to basic amenities like healthcare, education and housing for women and children in Gaza and Israel?

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative case study research design based on the analysis of secondary data. Secondary data was gathered from multiple sources, including academic literature, reports from international organizations, government and legal documents, media coverage, and humanitarian data. The research employed document analysis and content analysis to identify themes, patterns, and insights about the physical, economic, and psychological impacts of the Hamas-Israeli War on women and children. Secondary data was analyzed to assess the impacts of the Hamas-Israeli War on women and children, exploring physical, economic, and psychological consequences, as well as the role of women and children in post-conflict recovery. The research employed document analysis and content analysis techniques to extract relevant data from secondary sources.

The secondary data for this research was gathered from multiple sources: Academic Literature (scholarly articles, books, and dissertations on the Hamas-Israeli conflict, gender-based impacts of war, human security, and the role of women and children in conflict zones); reports from International Organizations and NGO (reports by organizations such as the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and UNICEF that provide data on the humanitarian situation, with a focus on the impacts of conflict on women and children), Government and Legal Documents (documents from governments, such as national reports, policy papers, and legislative responses to the conflict, particularly focusing on the protection of civilians and the rights of women and children), Media Coverage (News articles, press releases, and feature stories from credible media outlets (e.g., BBC, Al Jazeera, Reuters) that cover the experiences of women and children during the conflict, including testimonies, human interest stories, and on-the-ground reports) and well as Humanitarian and Development Agency Data (data from humanitarian and development agencies that focus on the aftermath of the conflict and the rehabilitation of women and children. This includes assessments of mental health, displacement, and recovery programs).

Results

Research Question 1: What are the major socio economic, psychological and health care effects of the Israel-Gaza conflict on women and children in the affected region?

Table 1: Fatalities and Injuries of Palestinians and Israeli as effects of the Israel-Gaza War from 2008-2025

Years	Palestinians		Israeli	
	<i>Fatalities</i>	<i>Injuries</i>	<i>Fatalities</i>	<i>Injuries</i>
2008	873	2325	37	844
2009	1059	6401	16	133
2010	87	1572	8	178
2011	117	2260	12	150
2012	259	4677	7	571
2013	39	4031	6	154
2014	2327	17534	88	2709
2015	174	14639	26	313
2016	108	3464	12	211
2017	77	8470	17	158
2018	300	31274	13	117
2019	138	15491	12	123
2020	30	2754	3	106
2021	328	19182	11	175
2022	191	10345	21	253
2023	548	13349	37	265
2024	503	3144	34	159
2025	125	1556	8	54
Total	7283	162468	368	6673

(Source, OCHA, 2015)

Secondary information collected in this research (table 1) revealed that the Israel-Gaza conflict has had numerous far-reaching socioeconomic, psychological, and healthcare consequences on women and children. Among the major socioeconomic effects identified are food shortages, hunger, heightened poverty levels, economic instability, inflation, and a general scarcity of essential goods. The psychological toll on affected individuals includes rising cases of trauma, child abduction and trafficking, feelings of desperation, and exposure to physical and sexual abuse, including rape. In addition, the healthcare impacts documented in the study comprise widespread malnutrition, illnesses, fatalities, injuries, and abortion, all of which are increasingly becoming prevalent in conflict-affected zones among women and children.

One year into the ongoing war, the humanitarian situation in Gaza has deteriorated to catastrophic proportions. Casualty figures have soared, critical infrastructure has been destroyed, and food insecurity is rampant. The conflict has severely undermined essential sectors such as education, healthcare, the economy, and environmental sustainability. Many schools have been demolished, with students and teachers losing their lives, and the educational system in disarray. Gaza's healthcare infrastructure is nearing collapse due to acute shortages in drugs and equipment, alongside widespread malnutrition particularly affecting children. The environmental damage resulting from the conflict remains difficult to quantify and may take years to fully understand. Meanwhile, the availability of social services has declined drastically, leaving most civilians to survive without basic governmental support. In the West Bank, intensified Israeli military activity has resulted in significant loss of life, infrastructural damage, and deep economic setbacks (United Nations, 2024).

By January 11, 2024, more than 10,000 children had been killed in Gaza. In addition, by January 22, 2024, at least 91 children had lost their lives due to actions by Israeli forces and settlers in the West Bank, while 36 children were reportedly killed in Israel by Palestinian armed groups. The war has forced approximately 1.7 million people in Gaza into internal displacement. Following Israeli evacuation orders affecting about 20% of Khan Younis City on December 3, 2023, nearly 50,000 displaced persons are now sheltering in 21 designated locations within a city that initially had a population of about 117,000. All children in Gaza urgently require secure environments, sufficient food, clean water, adequate shelter, and access to sanitation facilities. The enduring effects of war on children are profound and long-lasting, and with Gaza's healthcare infrastructure significantly weakened, there is an anticipated rise in child mortality and morbidity once the current hostilities subside (Boukari et al., 2024). Since the escalation of Israeli military operations in Gaza on October 7, 2023, following attacks by Palestinian militants, the Ministry of Health in Gaza has reported over 30,717 deaths, including 12,550 children. On the other hand, the Government of Israel stated that 1,200 individuals, among them 33 children, were killed, and more than 240 persons were taken hostage, including at least 30 children. A dire hunger crisis is unfolding, with almost all children in Gaza facing the risk of starvation due to the acute lack of food and clean water. Reports indicate that at least 15 children in northern Gaza have already died from starvation and dehydration. Children's mental health has deteriorated markedly, with conditions worse than in previous conflicts.

Symptoms reported include persistent anxiety, sleep disturbances, bedwetting, hypervigilance, behavioral regression, aggression, and weakened emotional bonds with parents (Save the Children International, 2024). Gaza, home to approximately 2.3 million people and part of the occupied Palestinian territories, has experienced continuous siege for over 16 years. On October 7, 2023, Palestinian fighters killed 1,200 civilians, including 36 children, and kidnapped others, prompting Israel to commence ground operations and aerial bombardments. The study emphasizes that the severe social, psychological, and medical consequences of such conflicts deter many nations from engaging in warfare as a policy option (Boukari et al., 2024).

While the precise number of children still being held hostage remains unknown, reports confirm that over 30 minors were freed after their abduction by Palestinian armed groups during the October 7, 2023, assault. Human Rights Watch described the public use of minors in hostage videos as a blatant violation of personal dignity. These children reportedly endured emotional trauma, malnutrition, and unhygienic living conditions during captivity. Amnesty International has reported the use of massive explosives, estimated to weigh up to 2,000 pounds, in densely populated areas—inevitably leading to extremely high civilian casualties. Additionally, Human Rights Watch has gathered evidence of Israeli forces deploying white phosphorus in populated Gaza neighborhoods, as was documented in previous military engagements. Exposure to white phosphorus can cause deep chemical burns and systemic organ failure, resulting in lifelong disability, disfigurement, and psychological scars. Children, due to their smaller size and physiological vulnerability, are particularly susceptible to the devastating effects of chemical warfare. The targeting of innocent youth—who bear no responsibility for the root causes of the conflict—is both a moral and humanitarian travesty (Boukari et al., 2024).

Research Question 2: In what ways has the war restricted access to basic amenities like healthcare, education and housing for women and children in Gaza and Israel?

Secondary data obtained during the study indicated that Israel has restricted access to essential services in Gaza, effectively leaving the civilian population—particularly women and children—isolated and vulnerable. Reports highlighted the denial of water-related assistance, intentional destruction of water infrastructure, prevention of maintenance activities, and obstruction of humanitarian relief efforts from NGOs and international aid organizations. These blockades have intensified the suffering of the affected population. With healthcare systems nearly non-operational and many families severed from medical care, it is presumed that actual casualty figures are significantly higher than reported. This dire situation has led to an alarming increase in anxiety and psychological distress among both children and adults. Prior to the October 7 escalation, many children in Gaza were already experiencing severe mental health issues stemming from repeated cycles of violence, restricted movement, limited access to vital services, economic deterioration, and the emotional trauma of separation from loved ones (Save the Children International, 2024). Since October 7, 2023, around 1,100 children have reportedly been arrested by the Israeli military, while approximately 39,000 have lost one or both parents due to ongoing violence (Al Jazeera, 2025).

On top of an ongoing siege that has lasted over 17 years, children in Gaza have been exposed to relentless psychological anguish over the past five months, fueled by widespread violence, displacement, starvation, and disease (Save the Children International, 2024). Conversations with parents and guardians have revealed that many children have lost the ability to imagine a peaceful existence, a sentiment echoed by frontline child welfare organizations. The emotional burden on caregivers has become increasingly overwhelming as they attempt to protect their families from gunfire and air raids, grieve lost relatives, flee through ravaged streets, and wake daily with no guarantee of food or safety. The inability to access basic resources and support systems is making it almost impossible for caregivers to fulfill their responsibilities. Child protection experts from Save the Children have emphasized the urgent need for a permanent ceasefire and unimpeded humanitarian access, warning that without immediate intervention, the ongoing conflict will continue to inflict irreversible psychological trauma on the younger population, significantly reducing any future chances of recovery. In these unsanitary and hazardous conditions, waterborne diseases such as hepatitis A, polio, and diarrhea have surged, posing life-threatening risks especially for children under the age of five. The reemergence of type 2 poliovirus (cVDPV2) in Gaza in July 2024, after more than two decades, reflects the deteriorating health environment. Furthermore, education in Gaza has suffered severely. Nearly 658,760 school-aged children are currently unable to attend regular classes due to persistent displacement mandates and repeated airstrikes targeting educational institutions, which have been repurposed as emergency shelters. The academic calendar remains indefinitely suspended, resulting in the complete loss of the current school year. Projections suggest that the cumulative educational deficit could amount to five lost academic years for affected children (United Nations, 2024).

Discussion of Findings

This study explored the effects of Israel-Gaza on women and children. The study comprised of two research questions which were analyzed. Research question 1 delved on the major socioeconomic, psychological, and health care impacts of the Israel-Gaza conflict on women and children in the affected region. The study showed that children were more victims of socioeconomic impacts of the Israel-Gaza war. This means that from the study children were more affected by armed conflicts, due to their level of innocence, naivness posing greater level of vulnerability. The study also showed that hunger and food shortage/scarcity were predominant socioeconomic impacts amongst women and children. This study is in agreement with studies conducted by International Rescue Committee (IRC, 2024) which stated that “The Ministry of Health estimates that 8,000 of the confirmed deaths in Gaza are minors, and many more are unaccounted for. Tens of thousands more people have been abandoned or cut off from their loved ones. The cumulative impacts of ongoing violence, forced relocation, and missing a whole school year are likely to affect youngsters for the rest of their lives, putting an entire generation at risk of being “forgotten.” Children who are left without people to care for them or who have been separated from their family are among the most vulnerable.

An estimated 17,000 youngsters may be left alone or separated from their parents and other caretakers. But according to the IRC, based on prior crises, this figure may be three times higher". According to IRC research, there has been a significant increase in the likelihood of family separation in recent months, which has been made worse by several rounds of displacements, arrests, Israeli forced relocation orders, and fatalities. In hospitals, some kids have been discovered living alone.

According to reports, as of 2024, the lives of children and their families throughout the State of Palestine, Israel, and the surrounding area have been severely disrupted by a year of war that has been characterized by deaths, injuries, kidnappings, displacement, disease, malnutrition, dehydration, ongoing fear, and severe trauma. At least 14,000 children are said to have died and several more injured in Gaza; thousands more are probably buried beneath the debris, and an estimated 17,000 more are either unattended or separated from their caretakers (United Nations, 2024). According to the UN organization, it confirmed the information of 8,119 persons who were murdered in Gaza between November 2023 and April 2024. According to their investigation, 26% of confirmed casualties were women and 44% were children. The majority of the deceased were between the ages of five and nine. Residential structures or comparable dwellings accounted for almost 80% of the fatalities (Mallory, 2024).

The study's secondary data highlighted that Gaza has endured disproportionately harsher consequences from the armed conflict compared to Israel. Gaza has suffered from underreported fatalities, disease outbreaks caused by water shortages, deliberate obstruction of water-related aid, destruction of water infrastructure, and active interference with repairs. Additionally, healthcare and housing facilities, agricultural systems, and sanitation networks have been severely damaged. Infants, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and people with disabilities have been especially affected. Attacks targeting wastewater treatment plants, reservoirs, and water workers, along with deliberate deprivation of water, electricity, and fuel, have restricted essential services and contributed to disease and mortality due to poor sanitation and hygiene.

These findings align with a 2016 report by the UN Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It noted that limitations on economic activity, especially restrictions on the movement of goods, have significantly hindered Palestinian growth and market development. With the private sector hamstrung, the economy has become heavily reliant on public-sector employment and foreign aid, often leaving Palestinians dependent on government or donor support. Gaza's economy has been further weakened by recurrent military operations and the prolonged blockade, which have impeded reconstruction and amplified the impact of economic shocks. High Israeli tariffs, import quotas, and non-reciprocal trade rules have also tilted commercial relations in Israel's favor. Palestinian manufacturers shifted focus toward the Israeli market, while Israeli products flooded Palestinian retail, eroding the competitiveness of local producers.

Research question 2 explored ways the war restricted access to basic amenities like healthcare, education and housing for women and children in Gaza and Israel. The study showed that Israel has restricted access to essential services in Gaza, effectively leaving the civilian population—particularly women and children—isolated and vulnerable. A 2022 UN analysis emphasized that Israeli policies after the Oslo Accords fractured and crippled the Palestinian economy, making it fully dependent on Israel. The policy environment severely damaged the Palestinian industrial base and diversified economic activities, while Israel's much larger and more diverse economy remained unscathed. The UN noted that Israel, as the occupying power under international humanitarian law, has not implemented any macroeconomic or monetary policies in support of the Palestinian economy; security control, rather than economic development, has been the focus of its policy. During the 16-year blockade of Gaza, Israeli authorities have restricted travel and imposed import bans on vital goods such as fuel, food, construction materials, and medical supplies. As Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant described, this amounts to a "complete siege"—cutting off gasoline, electricity, and relief supplies. Telecommunications infrastructure has been hit as well, deepening the region's humanitarian crisis (Boukari et al., 2024). Medical shortages have worsened dramatically, with as much as 60% of essential medicines either depleted or in critically low supply. Restrictive import policies have led to severe shortages in healthcare. More than 500,000 women of reproductive age in Gaza lack access to prenatal, postnatal, family planning, and STI services, increasing risks of life-threatening complications. They also face a higher prevalence of chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension, while evacuation for serious illnesses or injuries is virtually impossible (United Nations, 2024).

Conclusion

This study delved into the wide-ranging impacts of armed conflict, examining its repercussions across economic, health, and cultural dimensions, including the destruction of significant heritage landmarks. In particular, the research highlighted the disproportionate effects of the Israel-Gaza conflict on women and children. Women have frequently endured harassment, intimidation, and violence within their homes and communities, especially while navigating through conflict-affected areas and military checkpoints. Many women have been coerced into sheltering and supporting combatants, which exposes them to retaliation and endangers their safety and that of their families. This additional burden, often accompanied by scarce resources, creates deeply distressing and precarious situations. Furthermore, the prolonged conflict poses serious threats to the physical, psychological, emotional, and social development of children in Gaza. Ongoing violence severely disrupts their cognitive growth and emotional well-being, placing an entire generation at risk of long-term developmental impairments. This research further emphasized the need to envision the peaceful coexistence of two sovereign states, Israel and Palestine, as the cornerstone of a durable resolution. Addressing the developmental vulnerabilities of children caught in the crossfire of the Gaza conflict necessitates an integrative strategy that balances urgent protective interventions with sustained developmental support.

Immediate measures should prioritize safeguarding children from further violence, trauma, and displacement. In parallel, long-term solutions must focus on rebuilding educational and healthcare systems, enhancing psychosocial support, and creating safe environments that allow children to thrive. Such a comprehensive approach would ensure not only their survival but also their potential to lead stable, healthy, and fulfilling lives in the aftermath of war.

Recommendations

The researcher in view of the above subject matter, proffers the following recommendations among others thus:

1. Deliberate efforts should be focused on safeguarding the physical health, mental stability, and emotional welfare of children, even amid ongoing hostilities. Accordingly, it is recommended that priority attention be accorded to women, elderly individuals, and children in the distribution of care and essential services throughout the duration of the conflict, particularly while diplomatic negotiations and peace-building initiatives are still underway.
2. The Israeli government must act swiftly to comply with the provisional directives issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). This includes halting all assaults on civilians as well as on vital repair personnel and ceasing the unlawful demolition of water-related infrastructure across the Gaza Strip. The government should also immediately lift the blockade on Gaza, reinstate access to essential utilities such as electricity and water, and allow the unrestricted delivery of critically needed supplies including fuel, food, medical aid, and water through all available land entry points. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities must facilitate and accelerate the rehabilitation of water facilities that have been damaged, ensuring the restoration of safe and reliable water access to the population.
3. In order to stop genocide and other crimes, governments and international organizations—particularly those that have sway over the Israeli government, such the US, UK, and EU states—should intervene immediately. This is meant to put real pressure on the Israeli government to abide by the ICJ's provisional measures and its other duties under IHL and human rights law, this includes actions like targeted sanctions, halting arms transfers and military aid, and reviewing bilateral trade and political agreements.

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