Study on the Slum (Informal Residence) in the Gaza Strip and Its Impact on Mental Health

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ABSTRACT:

Since human was found in this life, he started constantly looking for a shelter to protect him from the summer heat and winter cold. Thus, with the increased number of population in earth and people spreading almost everywhere, they started building cities and villages and therefore housing became an important issue concerning the human beings as well it became an interest for all authorities and governments in order to provide the necessity services. while the housing development is rising worldwide, the issue of slums appears as a cell satisfactorily within the urban. while the housing development is rising worldwide; an issue of what so called slums has appeared as a cell satisfactorily within the urban fabric of the neighborhood. The research is to study the slum (informal residence) in the Gaza Strip, as well identify the relationship between living in it and mental health among the people and its impact on individuals and population as a whole.

Keywords: Urban planning, Slums , Informal Residence, Gaza.

1. Introduction

Since human was found in this life, he started constantly looking for a shelter to protect him from the summer heat and winter cold [1].

Thus, with the increased number of population in earth and people spreading almost everywhere, they started building cities and villages and therefore housing became an important issue concerning the human beings as well it became an interest for all authorities and governments in order to provide the necessity services[2:3] while the housing development is rising worldwide, the issue of slums appears as a cell satisfactorily within the urban. while the housing development is rising worldwide; an issue of what so called slums has appeared as a cell satisfactorily within the urban fabric of the neighborhood. In addition, Policies and regulations were weak before the formation of these clusters, which appeared and imposed disadvantages on the urban configuration to create a demographic problem that can not be ignored. Despite attempts by governments and municipal councils in solving the problem of slums and the reduction of aggravation at the planning and design of cities these attempts did not take into account the side effects caused by the existence of such clusters and groupings. This has grabbed the attention of researchers and intensified international and domestic efforts to study the problem of physical dimensions, political and economic. Also the scientific research has stopped in this area and started to decline [2].

This is because such research did not take into account the human factor or social development of these disadvantaged groups, as well as the psychological and
educational study for the residents of such housing and the seriousness of the consequences of this dimension and its impact on society.

Despite the complexity of this problem; management cities usually do not move to eradicate the disease before it spreads, but rather turning a blind eye to the problem till becomes apparent, and then they start to find temporary solutions to address them. These remained disadvantaged groups of shelter are still outside of the circle of interest in the processes of urban development, in which their only role on the development for affordable housing, medium, and providing housing classes for the middle and the rich away from the concept of Islamic solidarity. Hence, the man in the slum keeps getting poorer and oppress, while in the excellent areas increasingly indispensable and still their issues pending indefinitely [3:4].

The research topic is to study the slum (informal residence) in the Gaza Strip, as well identify the relationship between living in it and mental health among the people and its impact on individuals and population as a whole.

2.2 Informal slums in the Gaza Strip

Communities growing up in places that are actually not intended for construction. Therefore, they are considered illegal, an infringement on state properties and agricultural lands. As a result, in the absence of planning, these slums have expanded, spreaded rapidly almost everywhere and became an ongoing reality. There are 38 random gathering in the Gaza Strip, some of them are not influenced by the municipal and village. The intent is to shelter by any means [5].

In 1948, about 800 thousand Palestinians emigrated from their own villages heading on their way to the Gaza Strip. They have inhabited the camps and the territory of Gaza, and formed clusters randomized in the sector. (Locusts, Mohammed, Squatter Settlement in Gaza Strip between the infringement and the need). In addition, other reasons contributed to the formation of slums within the territory of the Gaza Strip; such as the destruction of some houses in the refugee camps, the return of some immigrants from the diaspora, as well as low costs of housing, and lack of role of the authorities [2].

Geographical Distribution of the Phenomenon

The northern region contains of the 16 slums, while the central region has 7 slums; services in these areas are poor in general, while the southern region is mostly outside the boundaries of municipal and essential services and infrastructure is weak [2].

The economic situation of slum dwellers differs in the Strip, where it varies among the individuals, the current income is not sufficient to provide daily life expenses. On the other hand, individuals who have good economic situation took the opportunity to grab lands that belong to the government [2].

2.2 Random Housing and Mental Health

It is the ability of the human to feel happy and faith in different aspects of life and form sincere relationships with others, as well self-control (6).
There are a lot of factors that play a role directly or indirectly to cause individual infected in mental illness and mental Kalawaml genetic, bad events in childhood, the unstable atmosphere of family, as well as the role of social factors such as poverty, unemployment and lack of adequate housing [6].

2.2.1 Types of Mental Illness and Mental

Mental illness is divided into neurosis and psychosis, alcoholism, drugs and epilepsy. The first type of disease have been addressed because of its direct relationship with the content of the study, which is divided into Depression, fear, distress, anxiety, feeling tense, and expecting hurt and calamities [6].

**Figure 2.1**
Figure shows Types of Mental Illness and Mental

**Depression**

The ill person whether male or female becomes depressed during any age; young and old. There are certain symptoms of depression such as Kalshaour unhappy most of the time, losing interest of life, lasting sense of despair, lacking of self-confidence, and others. There may be clear reasons for the depression, and there may be no reasons. Usually there is more than one reason; varying from person to another.

However, loneliness, sense of tension, anxiety, and fear make a person more susceptible to disease with a greater sense of depression; this could contribute to even a serious problem over the time[6:13].

2.3 Analyze the situation of slums in the framework of the concepts of the mental health of the population:

Information about public mental health emphasizes on the importance of housing to health, its impact on the mental health of the population within the housing. The homes of the camps in the Gaza Strip are characterized by malaise, overcrowding and lack of privacy. The study was confirmed and made by the Ministry of Health and Human
Services in the United States, 2009. The study revealed that the lack of light and the large number of moisture are key factors in generating diseases, depression, tension and nervousness. Dr. Ziad Awad, who is the Head of Program Gaza Community Mental Health, expressed his opinion during the interview made with him that the basis of mental illness begins with tension, depression, anxiety; as those symptoms worsen over time to become serious diseases difficult to control within the community.

2.4 Political and Social Reality of the Refugee Camps

Most of the problems suffered by the Palestinian society are essentially purely political problems, reflected in the social life, and where the psychological and social are two parts are inseparable at all. Social problems make individuals more susceptible to mental illness; if we look at the reality of the Palestinian refugee camps, they are essentially the problem of purely political, formed the makeshift camps not suitable to live permanently, such implications expose the refugee to what so called to "experience shock", which is a psychiatric illness is caused because from a sudden accident that is unexpected and improbable [7].

Furthermore, the camps are systematic policy to hit the urban fabric and the Palestinian social. They are so to create psychological, social and wrangling and poverty and distress problems. The proof of this is the housing and relief agency, which its construction is the problem of lack of housing in the camps, and attempt to resettle refugees in better houses. However, this in fact did not differ from the camps in the housing space constraints, as if they always remind the people on a subconscious level that they are refugees, and stick to a specific policy aimed though indirect pressure on the population of the camps and refugees[7].

3. Research Methodology

The research was conducted through the inductive approach and the methodology of the survey, where the approach is based on finding a theoretical books and recent articles, in which the discussion of the problem of slums in the world and in the Gaza Strip had taken place.

Also, adopting an approach of field survey by random visits in the Gaza Strip, collecting information from agencies and responsible institutions to analysis the reality of housing dilapidated in the slums in order to achieve desirable results. A hundred questionnaires was distributed at the study area, so that they contain the following sections : The first section is about home and its condition, The second section is the situation of social and family relations, and behavior of children. The third part is for the direction of housing in the camp's residents and future aspirations, and finally personal information.
The reason for selecting the sample: the presence of Beach refugee camp is located in central Gaza City, where it occupies a strategic place and an important position within the city, unlike other slums on the outskirts of Gaza City; Beach Camp is classified at the level of the worst camps in the Gaza Strip, and the most crowded. The selection of the camp housing the poorest and worst off [8].

4. Case Study / the Beach refugee Camp

Beach Camp is the third largest refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, and one of the most densely populated refugee camps. The camp is located on the shore of the Mediterranean in Gaza City.

Beach Camp host 23,000 refugees who fled from Lydda and Jaffa and Be'er Sheva and other areas in Palestine, Today, the Beach Camp is hosting more than 80,000 refugees living all of them in a spot that is no larger than 0.52 square kilometers.

It characterized by shortness of the camp streets and alleys in most cases. This region is considered among the most densely populated places in the world [8]

4.1 Characteristics of housing in the camp

Beach Camp is described by the characteristics and features generally include the region as a whole, the characteristics of the one-level housing, where it is necessary to distinguish between two levels:

1- The residential area:
   • The absence of the foundations of urban planning, or in the presence spontaneously and primitive.
   • Lack of safety.
   • Weaknesses in the basic infrastructure.
   • The presence of high population densities.
   • Distortion of identity and architectural character of the areas where these slums

2- A single dwelling within the camp:
   • Lack of safety factors construction
   • Lack of privacy between the houses due to the small distances between neighboring houses.
   • Increased the size of overcrowding in housing ,and the lack of per capita housing area properly.
   • Provide the minimum health requirements of housing, mainly in terms of lighting and ventilation [14]

4.2 Social characteristics within the camp

Living in camps did not impede people from adapting to the urban community lifestyle in the Gaza Strip, since children in camps have mixed with those in other regions of the city. Those communities were not closed, in fact, the indicators and social
characteristics within the camps were similar to those found in the city of Gaza. However, those that lived in camps are characterized by social characteristics, such as:

• They formed tight social relations with one another, especially with the neighbors, given that these people lived their lives in slums. It has been shown that in the Beach refugee camp, 63% of residents have good relations with neighbors, and this is what distinguishes those poor living areas from the rest of the city.
• In these slums, some families live in closed living spaces, which may lead to permanent conflicts between the children. This may be attributed to several factors including money, anxiety and tension [14].

4.3 The problems found in populations living in Gaza Strip slums

From analysis prior to the Shati refugee camp, we can summarize the most important problems faced by slum dwellers in the Gaza Strip. In general, the most important ones are:

1- Most of the residents in these areas live in unhealthy housings due to lack of basic services (including drinking water and sanitation)
2- Excessive crowding, narrow streets, adjacent buildings, and lack of privacy
3- The breeding of animals and birds within the housing hinders traffic and leads to undesired odors
4- Failure to provide minimum housing needs for lighting and proper ventilation
5- Leakage of rainwater from the roofs and tin buildings of asbestos
6- Excessive crowding can be solved by vertical expansions, which will affect the privacy of neighbors and the surrounding houses. This can cause conflicts and social problems.
7- Failure to provide means of protection from disasters and fires, as well as first aid and health.
8- Audio and visual pollution due to overcrowding and high population density.
9- The absence of health control and the role of municipalities in the streets and markets.
10- Lasting insomnia leading to instability and discomfort
5. Simplified suggestions on how to develop those slums

For the past couple of decades, those camps were a source of architectural studies and research in the ministry and institution sectors. Many scientific conferences and workshops have been held that addressed this issue in all dimensions and scales. From the results of these conferences, it was found that the housing slums and refugee camps within the sector is facing major challenges, which require dedicated plans to provide alternative land, as well as to provide large financial resources. This is because the political apartheid prevents the possibilities of economic recovery and development [9].

Therefore, there should be intellectual changes of the camp inhabitants in order to have a problem-solving approach to the reform and development of these camps. The
Palestinian society is capable of building itself, and is also capable of building its own housing societies, which is evident from the efforts made by the slum populations [10].

6. **Slum settlements and the investments in the people**

The problem of slums is quite deep and complex, as the usage of its positive aspects is quite efficient, given that alternative solutions are found useful compared to government and municipal council traditional solutions. The need for positive perspectives requires government supports for social activities according to clear plans and steps, as well as to develop housing as much as possible and improve their appearances using local construction materials that are available in abundance. Moreover, the support made by the government should allow people the opportunity to express their ambitions for a changing environment in which they live. In this way, we can fix and improve the appearance of housing, increase the positive energies, and treat many social and psychological problems caused by poor housing. Furthermore, the increased attachment and love of people to their homes should be used to allow them to participate in building and beautifying their homes. This aspect plays an important role in supporting the emotional stability and belonging of the population, and it gives a continuing drive to fix whatever is corrupted.

7. **Results and Recommendations**

Table 7.1: Table shows the desire of people to get a better house.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
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<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
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<td>71.4</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings and recommendations count as the outcomes of the actual analysis of the study, in social, residential, and psychological aspects. In conclusion, these areas are key indicators that will help or illustrate how to use different policies to deal with the study regarding slum development and the promotion of it socially and psychologically. Moreover, these results are used to create the appropriate environment to ensure a decent lifestyle for area residents within the general urban system and in the Palestinian camp, especially the Beach refugee camp. For this, we can draw the attention of institutions and governments to some of the factors, so they can deal with the problems of the slum directly and find realistic and logical solutions, taking into account the
psychological factors of the population. The results and recommendations are as follows:

At the level of socio-demographic studies, it has been shown that 71.4% of the population wants to change the place of residence or to develop it. Furthermore, the percentage of those who feel upset from the tight and small home spaces is nearly 67%, which is an indicator of a strong incentive to move quickly towards the solution of this problem. The field study regarding the camps established a need to meet the housing requirements of the average family, as the field study has the degree of between few- and medium, a percentage of 37%.

It was shown that people feel comfortable about their opinions in many cases when they are out of the house, given that 51% of these people imagine their houses always more beautiful and larger than in reality, in order to aspire to develop and improve its appearance.

Table 7.2: table shows people's opinions about the current house to meet their needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7.1

Figure shows the views of people about their view of the future of their homes
Therefore, these percentages and statistics emphasize the seriousness of the problem and motivate decision-makers to work hard in the development and improvement of housing within the camps.

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