

8th European Conference on Public Health, Well-being and Health- care Management

September 23-24, 2025 | Webinar

Volume : 13

Bedouin Adolescents During the Iron Swords War: What Strategies Help Them To Cope Successfully With the Stressful Situation?

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This study examined the emotional reactions and coping resources of Bedouin teenagers (ages 12–18) following the events of October 7, 2023 and the subsequent Iron Swords War between Israel and Hamas forces in Gaza. The study focused on the relationships between subjective exposure, personal sense of coherence, community resilience, and the use of different coping strategies, on the one hand, and anxiety, anger, and psychological distress, on the other. During 2024, 762 participants completed the study questionnaire, which addressed the different study variables. The findings revealed significant differences between the boys and the girls. Specifically, the girls reported higher levels of subjective exposure and emotional reactions. Personal sense of coherence was found to be a significant protective factor. In contrast, the use of nonproductive coping strategies increased distress. This study underscores the need for intervention programs tailored for this society and by gender, as well as training for educational professionals, to help them to identify and treat emotional reactions to stress in ways that take into consideration the Bedouin cultural context. This study enhances our understanding of how Bedouin teenagers cope with stressful situations and crises.

Biography

Prof. Orna Braun-Lewensohn is a Full Professor at the “Conflict Resolution and Conflict Management” Program and serves as Dean of the Kreitman School for Advanced Studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. She is a scholar in the fields of psychology and mental health, with a particular emphasis on stress, trauma, and resilience in conflict settings. Her research delves deeply into how individuals, families, and communities cope with chronic and acute stress, focusing on resilience factors that enable people to overcome adversity. A key aspect of her work is exploring the psychosocial mechanisms of minority groups, immigrants, and at-risk populations, particularly in the context of political violence and other large-scale crises. Her research highlights the differences in coping strategies between various cultural and social groups, with a focus on how community and social support networks can play pivotal roles in fostering resilience

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Abstract received : August 15, 2025 | Abstract accepted August 17, 2025 | Abstract published : December 20, 2025