

The Dynamics of Palestinian Children's Resilience in Pursuing Education in the Midst of Protracted Conflict and Indonesia's Role in Supporting It

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Abstract— The protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict has devastated the educational infrastructure of Palestine, particularly affecting children's access to safe and quality schooling. In this context of systemic violence and occupation, education becomes more than a pedagogical endeavor—it emerges as a form of cultural resistance and a symbol of national hope. This study explores the educational resilience of Palestinian children amidst armed conflict, emphasizing how learning becomes both a survival strategy and a political act. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, data were gathered through in-depth interviews with humanitarian workers and analysis of secondary sources spanning 2018–2024. The findings identify four major themes: (1) strong personal motivation to pursue education despite trauma; (2) the role of community and family support in sustaining access to learning; (3) structural barriers such as school bombings, blockades, and displacement; and (4) innovative adaptive strategies including learning in refugee camps, mobile e-learning, and community-run schools. Notably, the study also highlights Indonesia's strategic role as a Global South actor in supporting Palestinian education through humanitarian diplomacy, scholarships, and civil society solidarity. This research contributes to postcolonial education studies by framing resilience not merely as psychological endurance but as a collective, political articulation of identity and resistance. The study calls for stronger international collaboration to safeguard education in conflict zones and to reaffirm the right to learn as a pillar of human dignity and peace.

Keywords— *armed conflict; educational resilience; humanitarian diplomacy; Indonesia; Palestinian children*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has lasted for more than seven decades, has created a multidimensional crisis that has devastated the social, economic, and cultural fabric of Palestinian society. One of the most vulnerable and directly impacted sectors of this prolonged conflict is education, especially for children living in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Airstrikes, the economic blockade, the destruction of schools, and military intimidation of students and teachers have deprived Palestinian children of their basic right to access a decent and safe education. In this context, education can no longer be understood merely as a pedagogical process, but as both a victim and an arena for resistance against systematic and planned structural violence. Amidst this destruction, various forms of silent resistance have emerged, manifested through educational resilience. Palestinian children, despite all the limitations and threats they face, continue to demonstrate a strong passion for learning. They study in refugee camps, makeshift tents, or in ruined buildings; utilize limited technology to continue online learning; and some even seek scholarships abroad to continue their higher education. This resilience does not exist in isolation; it is built through the support of local communities, volunteer teachers, international humanitarian organizations, and global solidarity networks that strive to keep the flame of hope alive for the Palestinian generation.

Within this landscape of international solidarity, Indonesia holds a strategic position as a Muslim-majority country that consistently supports the Palestinian struggle. This support is not only political in international forums such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the United Nations, but also concretely through scholarship programs, educational aid, and the establishment of educational institutions such as the Nurani Kindergarten in Gaza. Indonesia's role in Palestinian education is part of humanitarian diplomacy and soft power in the Global South, demonstrating how developing countries can play an ethical and strategic role in advocating for the right to education for people living in conflict zones. This research offers a new approach to understanding the educational resilience of Palestinian children. Unlike conventional approaches that often view resilience as merely an individual's psychological response to trauma, this study positions resilience as a structured political and symbolic practice. Education is understood as a space for identity articulation, a symbol of collective hope, and a form of nonviolent resistance to occupation and colonialism. Furthermore, this research strengthens the discourse on the role of Global South countries, such as Indonesia, in revitalizing solidarity diplomacy based on universal justice and humanity.

Thus, the primary objective of this study is to explore in-depth the dimensions of educational resilience among Palestinian children in the context of protracted armed conflict, while simultaneously analyzing the strategic role Indonesia plays in supporting their educational sustainability. This research is also expected to enrich the literature on education in conflict and broaden the horizons of thinking about education as a tool of liberation in the context of modern colonialism. The urgency of this research lies in the need to construct an alternative narrative that views education in Palestine not as a passive object of suffering, but as an active subject in cultural and political struggle. By documenting the forms of struggle and cross-border support that occur, this research also calls for strengthening global collaboration in guaranteeing the right to education for children in conflict zones as part of efforts to achieve justice and world peace.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

III. METHOD

A. Research Design

This research uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with an interpretive basis and a phenomenological orientation. This design was chosen to capture the subjective meanings and personal experiences of Palestinian children living in a situation of prolonged conflict. The main objective of this approach is to explore in depth how education is experienced, accessed, and interpreted as a form of struggle within repressive socio-political conditions. Using a phenomenological approach, the researcher seeks to understand how participants—both Palestinian children and actors supporting education—experience the reality of education within the context of colonization, humanitarian crisis, and collective trauma.

B. Research Location and Subjects

This research focuses on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in Palestine as geographic areas that have symbolically and factually experienced the destruction of their education systems due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Meanwhile, data was also collected virtually and institutionally through humanitarian and educational actors based in Indonesia and directly involved in educational assistance programs for Palestine, such as the International Networking for Humanitarian Affairs (INH) and the Nusantara Palestina Center (NPC).

The primary subjects of the research were expert informants involved in implementing emergency education programs for Palestinian children. They were selected purposively, taking into account their field experience, strategic positions within the organization, and direct involvement in decision-making and program implementation.

C. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques included a combination of in-depth interviews and systematic literature review. Interviews were conducted with the humanitarian program manager from INH, responsible for the "Gaza Back to School" program. Interviews were conducted online on May 20 and June 14, 2024, using a semi-structured approach to allow for in-depth exploration.

In addition to primary data, researchers collected relevant secondary data from scientific journals, UN reports (UNICEF, UNRWA, OCHA), international media articles, NGO publications, and social media documentation that show the reality of education in Palestine from 2018 to 2024.

D. Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke, modified according to the resilience theoretical framework of Wagnild & Young (1993) and Van Breda (2001). The analysis process involved several stages: data transcription, thorough reading, open coding, the formation of thematic categories, and thematic interpretation linked to the theoretical foundation. Four main themes were found and used as a basis for the discussion, namely: (1) personal motivation to continue learning, (2) community and family support, (3) structural and repressive barriers, and (4) alternative strategies such as learning in refugee camps or online.

E. Discussion

1) Resilience as Psychosocial Capital for Palestinian Children

The educational resilience of Palestinian children cannot be understood simply as individual survival skills, but as a form of collective struggle structured within the context of military occupation. Referring to Wagnild & Young's (1993) theory of resilience, five main aspects meaningful life, perseverance, equanimity, self-reliance, and existential aloneness appear to be embodied in the narratives of Palestinian children's struggle. Amid blockades, airstrikes, and school destruction, the children continue to demonstrate extraordinary determination to continue learning. They view education not merely as a cognitive activity, but as a form of nonviolent resistance imbued with existential meaning.

2) Adaptation Strategies in Uncertainty

This study found that Palestinian children developed various adaptive strategies in accessing education, including: (1) Learning in refugee camps: many camps set up makeshift learning spaces with the help of volunteers and local activists. (2) Utilization of technology and e-learning: despite very limited access to electricity and internet, children still try to attend online classes via mobile phones or laptops powered by solar power. (3) Informal learning in ruins or homes: religious education, such as memorizing the Qur'an, becomes a medium for psychological recovery as well as the transmission of values of resistance. (4) Seeking scholarships abroad: Palestinian students actively seek educational opportunities in supportive countries, including Indonesia. (5) These dimensions show that education in Palestine has become a form of articulation of national identity and collective hope for an independent future.

3) Education as an Arena of Cultural and Symbolic Resistance

Education serves not only as a means of learning but also as a field of cultural struggle. In this context, the resilience of Palestinian children represents resistance to Israel's epistemic colonial project, which attempts to erase Palestinian collective memory through the destruction of schools and curricula. Through education, Palestinian children maintain their historical narrative, Arabic language, and the values of their national identity. This aligns with the view of Quneis and Rafidi (2023), who call Palestinian education a "symbolic front" in confronting modern colonialism.

4) Indonesia's Role in Supporting Palestinian Education

Indonesia holds a unique position as the most populous Muslim country and a Global South actor consistently supporting the Palestinian cause. Indonesia's role in the Palestinian education issue can be categorized into three dimensions:

- a)* In humanitarian diplomacy and international politics, Indonesia is active in international forums such as the UN, the OIC, and the Non-Aligned Movement, advocating for the right to education for Palestinian children. Official statements and political assistance demonstrate Indonesia's consistent position as a moral voice in the realm of global diplomacy.
- b)* Direct Educational Assistance, through various collaborations, Indonesia has provided: Scholarships for Palestinian students at various domestic universities; Establishment of schools and kindergartens in Gaza (e.g., Nurani Indonesia Kindergarten by NPC); Distribution of educational supplies such as in the "Gaza Back to School" program by INH.

- c) **Civil Society Empowerment and Public Donations:** Indonesian civil society plays a crucial role through public donations, fundraising, and advocacy activities on social media. This reflects a people-to-people diplomacy model that strengthens solidarity across nations.
- d) **Education as a Path to Recovery and Sovereignty:** The educational resilience of Palestinian children not only signifies psychosocial resilience but also paves the way for social reconstruction and national recovery. Education enables children to envision a more just future, free from structural violence. As Skinner (2024) notes, a post-conflict education system will require a child-friendly environment, a trauma-healing curriculum, and specially trained teachers. In this context, international cooperation and the role of friendly countries like Indonesia are highly strategic.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

1) *The Resilience of Palestinian Children in Accessing Education*

This research shows that Palestinian children demonstrate remarkable resilience in maintaining access to education, despite the pressures of the blockade, bombing, and systemic damage to school infrastructure. In an intense war situation, education remains a symbol of hope and a form of nonviolent resistance. Children continue to learn even under rubble, in refugee camps, or through online learning with very limited access to electricity and internet. They recognize that education is the only path to a better and more dignified future.

This resilience stems from an inner drive to persevere, as reflected in aspects of meaningful life, perseverance, and self-reliance. Even in extremely difficult situations, Palestinian children's enthusiasm for continuing to learn remains unwavering, despite the loss of parents, homes, or even limbs.

2) *Adaptive Education Strategies in Conflict Zones*

Palestinian children and communities have demonstrated remarkable capabilities in creating alternative education systems that are adaptive and responsive to the constraints of conflict. One of the most striking examples is the Palestinian government's establishment of "Challenge Schools," which have been continuously rebuilt despite repeated destruction by Israeli military attacks. Furthermore, children also receive informal education in refugee camps and emergency tents provided by activists and humanitarian agencies.

TABLE I. Forms of Educational Resilience Strategies

Resilience Strategy	Implementation Description
<i>Study in a safe place</i>	<i>Utilizing mosques, family homes, and basements</i>
<i>Education in refugee camps</i>	<i>Organized by volunteers and local organizations, such as "Al Quds Camp"</i>
<i>Emergency e-learning</i>	<i>Using a solar-powered phone to access online lessons</i>
<i>Scholarships and study abroad</i>	<i>Support from external institutions such as Indonesia, Türkiye, Malaysia</i>
<i>Challenge Schools</i>	<i>A semi-permanent school that was rebuilt after being destroyed</i>

3) *Structural Barriers to Palestinian Children's Education*

The study also identified key structural barriers significantly disrupting Palestinian children's education. One of the main obstacles is direct attacks on educational facilities, including the destruction of schools and universities by the Israeli military. Furthermore, the economic blockade has led to a shortage in education funding, leaving teachers without adequate salaries and students without stationery or transportation. In some cases, schools have been converted into emergency shelters due to the worsening humanitarian crisis.

The following conditions reflect the real impact on education: 446 students were reported to have died as a result of military aggression, 14 higher education institutions were completely destroyed, 3,141 students died and 4,863 others were injured as a result of direct attacks on schools.

4) *Indonesia's Strategic Role in Supporting Palestinian Education*

Indonesia plays a crucial role in strengthening Palestinian educational resilience through humanitarian diplomacy, international advocacy, and direct assistance. Specifically, Indonesia, through institutions such as INH and NPC, has established the Nurani Indonesia Kindergarten in Gaza, distributed emergency educational supplies through the "Gaza Back to School" program, and provided scholarships to Palestinian students. This demonstrates

the implementation of Global South diplomacy, which positions education as an issue of justice and humanity. Indonesia's support comes not only from the government but also from civil society through donation drives, public awareness campaigns, and social media platforms that foster solidarity and empathy across nations. This demonstrates that the issue of Palestinian education has become part of Indonesia's moral agenda at the global level.

B. Discussion

1) Educational Resilience as a Social and Political Practice

The findings of this study reinforce the idea that Palestinian children's educational resilience is not simply a psychological ability to survive extreme situations, but rather an expression of structured social and political practices. Palestinian children's persistence in accessing education—even under rubble or in refugee camps—represents a symbolic form of resistance against systemic efforts to erase the identity, history, and future of the Palestinian people. This aligns with the views of Van Breda (2001) and Wagnild & Young (1993), who argue that resilience is shaped not only by individual strength but also by social context and community support. In the Palestinian context, education becomes an arena for political articulation that extends beyond the classroom. Children learn not only to acquire knowledge but also to maintain their collective existence. Education, in this context, becomes a symbol of cultural and spiritual resilience. This concept also aligns with postcolonial approaches that view education as a field of discourse and agency struggle within the colonial sphere (Fanon, 1963; Said, 1979).

2) Community Strategies: From Emergency Camps to Alternative Schools

Community responses to the education crisis demonstrate a highly dynamic system of adaptation. The emergence of initiatives such as emergency schools in refugee camps, solar-powered e-learning, and "Challenge Schools" are concrete examples of how Palestinian communities have created autonomous, resilient education systems amidst the destruction of infrastructure by colonial powers. These initiatives demonstrate that resilience is the result of collective effort, not simply individual effort. Moreover, the emergence of education activists from both local and diaspora Palestinian communities has become a crucial catalyst in maintaining the spirit of learning among children. The role of volunteer teachers like Dua Qadeeh, who teaches in refugee camps, emphasizes that education can be a space for producing hope amidst limitations. This model also demonstrates that in times of disaster, education can continue if there is social will and a collective ethic to resist the chaos.

3) The Contradiction of Human Rights and Structural Violence

These findings also demonstrate the profound irony between the global commitment to children's right to education, as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the reality of systematic structural violence perpetrated by the occupying state. The destruction of hundreds of schools, the detention of schoolchildren, and the use of schools as military targets constitute gross violations of international humanitarian law. This situation demonstrates that resilience does not emerge in a neutral space, but in the tension between colonial power and the claim to a dignified life. Within this framework, the education of Palestinian children has become a highly significant political arena and demands greater attention from the international community, not only in the form of sympathy but also in concrete action to stop the aggression and build sustainable educational infrastructure.

Indonesia's Role and Global South Education Diplomacy. One important dimension of this research is how Indonesia, as part of the Global South, plays a strategic role in supporting Palestinian education. Through humanitarian diplomacy, educational assistance, and public solidarity, Indonesia demonstrates a model of ethical and transformative engagement. Scholarship programs, the establishment of schools like Nurani Indonesia Kindergarten, and the distribution of educational tools by institutions like INH demonstrate that education can be an effective diplomatic tool in supporting colonized communities. Indonesia's involvement also provides a moral dimension in Asia-Middle East geopolitics, while also proving that global solidarity does not have to come from large countries, but can also be driven by developing countries through an approach based on humanitarian values and global justice.

V. CONCLUSION

This research shows that education in Palestine is not only a casualty of the conflict but has also transformed into a primary arena of symbolic and existential resistance for Palestinian children and society. Amidst the destruction of infrastructure, restricted access, and ongoing systemic violence, Palestinian children demonstrate extraordinary resilience in defending their right to education. Their resilience is not innate but is built through personal motivation, community support, and solidarity-based alternative educational innovations. Education in Palestine has become more than just a learning process—it has become a form of struggle to preserve the nation's identity, hope, and future. In this context, educational resilience is not only a response to trauma, but also an

articulation of political agency that refuses to submit to colonialism. On the other hand, Indonesia's role as an actor in the Global South demonstrates a concrete form of humanitarian diplomacy that emphasizes the values of solidarity, justice, and the defense of human rights. Through educational programs, humanitarian aid, and political advocacy, Indonesia supports the vitality of education in Palestine while strengthening its moral standing in the global constellation.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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