Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) for the Disabled Persons of Palestinian Al-Aqsa Intifada

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Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) for the Disabled Persons of Palestinian Al-Aqsa Intifada

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis entitled “Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) for the Disabled Persons of Palestinian Al-Aqsa Intifada” is the result of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not currently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the use of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) programme to improve the psychological and social adaptation of a selected group of physically disabled persons of Al-Aqsa Intifada (uprising). The study was conducted in response to a lack of supportive and rehabilitative programmes for the thousands of people injured as a result of the uprising. The study was conducted in two stages, in the first stage, a total of 150 disabled people, aged between 16 – 40 years old, were selected in order to explore their psychological feelings and to measure their level of social adaptation, psychological adaptation and irrational ideas. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed. The qualitative method used a set of open-ended questions to explore their experiences particularly the difficulties they faced, the care and services they received, and their needs for psychological and social support. The quantitative method was a cross sectional survey using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher to measure their social adaptation, psychological adaptation and irrational ideas. The results were analysed and 40 participants with the highest scores on the irrational ideas scale and the lowest scores on a psychological and social adaptation scale were selected. They were then randomly divided into two groups, 20 in an experimental group and 20 in a control group for the second stage of the study. This second stage involved the running of the REBT programme developed by the researcher, and implemented together with a clinical psychologist. The programme, consisting 30 sessions, was conducted over a period of two months. At the end of programme, a parametric test on the analysis of data showed the effectiveness of the programme in improving the level of psychological and social adaptation as well as in reducing the degree of irrational thoughts of the participants. The values of the significance level on all scales were 0.00, 0.00, and 0.01 respectively. Based on the findings,
the conclusion of the study was that REBT, which was applied using principles of social group work practice, helped to improve the level of psychological and social adaptation among the physically disabled of the Palestinian Al-Aqsa Intifada, through the refutation of irrational thoughts that affected the psychological situation of this group. Therefore REBT could be used as a valid therapeutic approach for survivors of the Intifada and the libertarian revolution. The study recommended firstly, for REBT to be introduced as a therapeutic approach to be taught to social work students at training institutes as well as to existing social workers; and secondly, for future research to consider studying the use of REBT with families of disabled person as they play a significant role in the psychological and social status of disabled people.

**Keywords:** Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy, physically disabled persons, Al-Aqsa Intifada, social adaptation, psychological adaptation, irrational ideas.
Terapi Rasional Emotif Tingkah Laku (Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy) untuk Orang Kurang Upaya Intifada Al Aqsa Palestine

ABSTRAK

dijalankan bersama-sama dengan seorang ahli psikologi klinikal. Program REBT yang terdiri daripada 30 sesi telah dijalankan dalam tempoh dua bulan. Pada akhir program tersebut, analisis data terhadap ujian parametrik yang dilakukan telah menunjukkan keberkesanan program REBT dalam meningkatkan tahap adaptasi psikologi dan sosial serta mengurangkan pemikiran tidak rasional dalam kalangan peserta kajian. Nilai aras keertian pada semua skala masing-masing adalah 0.00, 0.00, dan 0.01. Berdasarkan dapanan, kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa REBT yang diapplikasikan dengan menggunakan prinsip-prinsip praktis kerja kumpulan sosial membantu meningkatkan tahap adaptasi psikologi dan sosial dalam kalangan orang kurang upaya fizikal daripada Al-Aqsa Intifada Palestin melalui penyangkalan pemikiran tidak rasional yang telah menjejaskan keadaan psikologi kumpulan ini. Oleh itu, REBT boleh digunakan sebagai pendekatan terapeutik yang sah untuk mangsa yang terselamat daripada Intifada dan revolusi kebebasan (libertarian). Cadangan kajian yang pertama ialah supaya REBT diperkenalkan sebagai pendekatan terapeutik untuk diajar kepada pelajar kerja sosial di institut latihan dan juga untuk pekerja sosial semasa. Cadangan kajian kedua adalah kepada pengkaji pada masa hadapan untuk mempertimbangkan penggunaan REBT dengan keluarga orang kurang upaya kerana mereka memainkan peranan penting dalam status psikologi dan sosial orang kurang upaya.

**Kota kunci:** Terapi Rasional Emotif Tingkah Laku, Orang kurang upaya fizikal, Al-Aqsa Intifada, adaptasi sosial, adaptasi psikologi, pemikiran tidak rasional.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Political conditions in Palestine over many decades have caused an increase in the number of wounded and disabled people\(^1\). The Palestinian Al-Aqsa Intifada saw the violent practices of the Israeli occupation against unarmed Palestinian civilians leaving many more disabled. Rehabilitative services and programmes introduced by the Palestinian welfare centres and organizations have not been able to meet the multitudes of needs, particularly with regard to the social and psychological adaptation of the disabled persons.

This study explores the use of Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) to facilitate the psychological and social adaptation of people injured and physically disabled as a result of the Palestinian Al-Aqsa Intifada. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the development of professional intervention approaches suited to the needs of this group of people in Palestinian society.

This chapter addresses the background of the study, the problem statement, research questions, study objectives, research methods and the operational definition of terms.

\(^1\) The terms ‘disabled people’, ‘disabled person’, ‘people with disabilities’, and ‘person with a disability’ are used interchangeably in this thesis.
1.2 Background to the study

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines disabilities as:

“Disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.” (World Health Organization 2013, p. 71).

The United Nations (2008) reported that the number of disabled people in the world in 2006 was nearly 650 million, with 80 percent living in developing countries. According to the latest UN reports, the number of disabled people in the Arab world was 29.2 million for a population of 292 million that means 10 percent of the total population (The United Nations report 2006). Based on the first annual report of disability in the Arab world, prepared by the National Council of Arab Childhood and Development in 2002, physical disabilities represent 30 percent of disabled persons in the Arab world. This situation calls for further consideration for rehabilitation; the need for direct support; the development of health care; preventive measures; treatment programmes; and increased attention to children’s health (The Arab Council for Childhood and Development 2002).

The number of persons with disabilities in a society changes from time to time due to economic, social, public health and cultural conditions. Among these circumstances, war and conflict are known as leading factors which cause disability in a society. It is estimated that the proportion of disabled people in Palestine is high, a total of 109,035. This constitutes 3 percent of the total population of 3,634,495 in all governorates (PCBS 1997-2010).
The political conditions in Palestine over the last five decades have led to an increase in the number of disabled people as a result of popular uprisings by the Palestinian people against the Zionist Israeli occupation in pursuit of national independence and the establishment of an independent state (PCCR2001). The uprisings are known as ‘Intifada’.

The first Intifada in 1987 was an unarmed uprising against Israeli occupation. The Second Intifada in 2006, referred to as Al-Aqsa Intifada, was an armed uprising, and considered the bloodiest and most painful for the Palestinian people (PCCR 2001).

Israeli actions during the Al-Aqsa Intifada resulted in deaths, arrests and the injuring of Palestinians within various sections of society. There were also psychological and social impacts on the disabled persons and their families after the event. It is estimated that more than 60,000 persons were left with permanent disabilities. Those who sustained permanent disabilities required therapy and psychological guidance programmes tailored to their needs. These programmes would be able to help integrate the disabled persons back into the community and help them adapt socially and psychologically (Amr 2001).

1.3 Problem statement

People with disabilities sustained during the Al-Aqsa Intifada suffer from psychological and social maladaptation within their family and society at large. Many people with disabilities develop negative attitudes and emotional and psychological disorder that lead them to employ unsuitable modes of coping with their day to day living.

Based on studies conducted in other Arab countries, and a report on disabilities in Palestine by Al-Farra and Auf (2007) psychological and social effects resulting from exposure to difficult situations are greater when physical injuries or permanent disabilities are present. Often this led
to the emergence of a number of psychological symptoms such as depression, feelings of isolation, withdrawal from others, which impact on daily activities such as eating, sleeping, going to school, going to work and social participation. The disabled person can suffer from a lack of purpose in life. He may feel, post-injury, that he cannot fulfil his role in society and fall prey to negative thoughts which affect his ability to adapt psychologically and socially (Al-Farra and Auf 2007). Al Sayyid’s study (1979) aimed at identifying the most pressing problems of people in Egyptian society disabled by war, was conducted on a group of disabled persons undergoing treatment and on another group who had finished their rehabilitation and returned to the armed forces. His study showed that the participants suffered many family and social problems, for example there was an inability to earn a living resulting in a decrease in income and increase in family burden as well as a loss of social status due to disability. Also there was a clear rise in unemployment and loss of productive capacity within the study group.

Another study by Al-Najjar (1997) focusing on the first Intifada-related physically disabled people in the Gaza Strip, aimed to identify the effect of paraplegia on self-esteem and their psychological adjustment compared to non-Intifada-related disabled people. His study showed that the notion of sacrifice accorded the Intifada-related disabled people made them more appreciated and respected. However, this higher self-esteem has affected the way Al-Aqsa Intifada disabled people interpret events, resulting in exaggerated demands and illogical ideas, which impacts on emotional and behavioural conditions. The participants of Al Sayyid’s study (1979) discussed above were members of a paid military force, whereas those in Mohamed Al-Najarr’s study were civilians. Although the two studies were conducted in different eras and in different societies, the findings suggested that there is a difference in the nature of psychological effects caused by injury among volunteers, when compared to those abiding by military law and working for a salary and benefits. Al Sayyid (1979) noted a loss of social status in soldiers