

Original Paper

Fear and Anxiety, as Reflected in Israeli Children's Books

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“Forever, the first thing I will do in any new place is to look for the shelter” (Ifrah, 2020).

Abstract

This article aims to show elements of fear and anxiety in children's books written about children living in the Gaza Strip region of Israel. Since the 1950s, this area has been a source of active terrorism against Israel, although it should be noted that there have also been periods of relative calm alongside the waves of terrorism. The research methodology is based on a text analysis of 20 children's books on this subject that reflect social processes during wartime and their effects on residents, who are mostly children. The vocabulary related to fear and anxiety highlights certain sociocultural contexts—in this case, a period of war—and the lexicon use expresses the unique atmosphere that was created in the Gaza Strip

Keywords

war, fear, anxiety, trauma, children's book, Israeli Gaza strip

Theoretical Background

Life in the Gaza Strip

In Israel, in the border area in the Gaza Strip, children live in a unique sociopolitical context. As early as in the 1950s, the Gaza Strip was an active center of terrorism against Israel, although the wave of terror at that time was accompanied by periods of relative peace. Since 2001, the residents of the *Otef Gaza*, as the area is known in Hebrew, have lived under a continuous security threat, during which several rounds of fighting have taken place, namely Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009), Operation Pillar of Defense (2012), Operation Protective Edge (2014), Operation Guardian of the Walls (2021), and Operation Breaking Dawn (2022). These were followed by the most recent operation, Operation Shield and Arrow. Israeli citizens are accustomed to living in the shadow of violent events as they go about their daily routines. They are exposed to a state of continuous threat and traumatic reality that may

produce regressive symptoms in the emotional development of some children as a natural and normal reaction when they are confronted with reality. The meaning of “anxiety” is the perception that the world is not a safe place and that parents, who are a child’s primary source of security, are not immune to harm and cannot be trusted to protect the child at all times (Masten & Narayan, 2012).

Books are recognized as an important therapeutic instrument in all cultures. This is especially the case for children’s literature written in the context of the conflict in *Otef Gaza*, since children’s books are places of endless possibilities, where young people can open their minds to broad horizons, create new perspectives, find possible alternatives or solutions to problems, and develop strengths such as self-confidence and resilience (Pulimeno et al., 2020). Adults who avoid discussing the issue of war can provoke a sense of helplessness and additional fear in children. Studies have shown that patterns of political behavior, such as support for a certain political party, tolerance of minorities, and support for freedom of speech, are formed and internalized during an individual’s childhood and early adolescence (Ichilov, 2001).

Exposure to war zones can affect children’s feelings and behaviors and impede a normal way of life (Yahav & Cohen, 2007). Fear and anxiety are part of normal child development, and for most children, these phenomena are mild and transient; however, unlike typical fears, the fear of war arises mainly when a threat is close in terms of time and place, and its effect is evident over time (Cohen et al., 2017). A variety of psychological phenomena have been linked to children’s exposure to war (American Psychological Association, 2010; Rakhman et al., 2022), with the symptoms reported being post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety disorders. The experiences that children have to endure during and as a consequence of war are in harsh contrast to their developmental needs and their right to grow up in a physically and emotionally safe and predictable environment.

The “Qassam rocket”, “red alert” signals, exploding balloons, and “spending” long periods of time in shelters (a protected residential space) can create feelings of anxiety, which may lead to traumatic situations (Sha’ar, 2015). The traumatic reality can create regressive symptoms in the emotional development of some children as a natural and normal reaction in the face of the reality that children and adults alike are being forced to live every day under constant threat in a war zone (Nuttman-Shwartz, 2017). War, which is essentially a great humanitarian catastrophe, provokes various reactions in mental functioning. Children who grow up under continuous threat live in a situation that creates existential anxiety. The range of reactions in mental functioning provoked by war is quite broad, from social tension and psychosocial adjustment disorders to the development of clinically defined forms of pathology. Among these manifestations, anxiety is dominant, and it occurs in the vast majority of cases in the event of a humanitarian catastrophe (Rakhman et al., 2022).

A Semantic Approach

Communication is established between people and groups based on their autonomous cultural identity—by having the same knowledge about an icon (Wittgenstein, 1953). Language is not a means

of representing reality (a picture) but one of action (a tool). We use this tool to do things (describe, command, convince, ask, etc.), and so every expression in a language has the purpose of an action. Understanding language therefore involves understanding the actions we perform with it (Wittgenstein, 1953). Emotional language is a term used to describe the channel through which one expresses one's deepest feelings, fears, and needs (Amir, 2013). In this way, the starting point for examining the emotional semantic field of fear and anxiety as a result of war is the expression "Red Alert", which is a voice announcement (a voice alert) system that warns about short-range rockets being fired toward settlements surrounding Gaza. When the system detects a rocket being launched toward a populated area, the "Red Alert" signal is sounded, and shelter must be taken quickly. This is known as being "reminiscent of fear" (Pat-Horenczyk et al., 2019), since the mere sound of the alarm can cause feelings of panic and anxiety, and fear needs to be construed by a developed brain that is able to perform complex cognitive operations, supported by being embedded in a specific social and cultural environment/context, and largely shaped by our native language (Chrzanowska-Kluczevska, 2021). Furthermore, language cannot be disassociated from the social contexts in which it is used, and every utterance is a unique expression of sociolinguistic interaction in a specific social context. As Bakhtin (1981) claimed, an authoritative voice is disembodied and sounds reliable and objective. It expresses a rigid ideological position that rejects as out of hand, using various rhetorical devices, all "strange speech"—that is, every "voice" that is not in harmony with the ruling official ideological opinion of the time. "It demands that we acknowledge it, to make it our own. It handcuffs us in a way that almost does not depend on its power to be able to persuade us; in a way ... its authority has already been acknowledged in the past" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342).

In language, words and phrases are interwoven or added to other existing words, and the connections between different elements in a text are combined into an overall meaning (Fillmore, 1992). An analysis of a word or a concept is not isolated or dictated by the limits of its applicability in the world. It is conducted according to a preoccupation with the semantic and syntactic relations between a word and other words close to it within a common content framework, namely between words and the categories they belong to, between a category and the background for its creation, and between different categories. Words are organized in knowledge frames that have been called by different names, such as "framework", "script", "cognitive model", or "base template" on which what is happening is highlighted, and in the past, even "semantic field" was used. These are cognitive structures that underlie the concepts denoted by words, and based on the human experience and its understanding, they can be reduced or expanded depending on the circumstances (Fillmore, 1977, 1982). All these cognitive structures contribute considerably to understanding language assimilation and socialization processes in a given society. There is a strong correlation, or even overlap, between identity and language. Gee (1996) emphasized that discourse is a whole complex of common relations that define the usage of language and other symbolic utterances and their by-products, namely the thinking, feeling,

beliefs, values, and activities one can use to identify oneself as a member of a meaningful social group or a social network in order to convey to others one's meaningful social function. A language is a basic component of culture within which one's identity is formed as part of a unique and established group in that language (Girtz, 1999).

Since war can have many detrimental effects on people's mental health, well-being, and social functioning, children should be exposed to war literature (Kelmendi et al., 2022). Bat-Ami (1994) listed the reasons why this should be done. First, children are afraid of war; therefore, they have misconceptions that produce anxiety. Moreover, children have the ability to think critically and the opportunity to examine multiple perspectives in order to be able to create a better world in the future (Mohr, 2014), especially those growing up in a conflict zone, which produces a sense of helplessness because of the trauma resulting from war (Keselman, 2019).

The "Red Alert", linguistic icon evokes fear and anxiety in those who hear it because its meaning is based on social and cultural contexts (LeDoux, 2015). It is also based on human psychology, according to which words can be found in organized knowledge frameworks, sourced from cognitive models of concepts, and each word that is heard conjures up a meaning in the mind based on an internal context of experience, belief, or habit (Fillmore, 1985). The "Red Alert", icon provides a functional definition that focuses on the process of metaphorical thinking, which allows one type of thinking to be replaced with another. This is the way the human mind transfers thoughts from one mental reality to another and uses the framework of thinking created when dealing with certain "worlds", even when dealing with a completely different world (Minsky, 1988).

Between Fear and War

LeDoux (2015) described the differences between fear and anxiety as conceptual. In fear, attention is focused on a specific external threat—one that is present or close—whereas in anxiety, the threat is usually not easily identified, and its occurrence is less predictable. It is more internal; there is an expectation, rather than a fact; and it can also be an imaginary possibility with a low probability of occurrence. "Conscious emotions denoted by basic emotional terms are not pre-packaged innate states that are released by external stimuli, but are cognitively constituted in consciousness" (LeDoux, 2015, pp. 123-124). Fear as a cognitive structure, and the way it is shaped by humans, is influenced by sociocultural contexts, as discussed in detail in the article by Mobbs et al. (2019). Fearful associations create an atmosphere of danger, and as a person becomes more emotionally experienced, situations of fear become more distinct and create feelings ranging from fear to panic, from panic to terror, and from concern to caution and nervousness. This is due to the labelling process, which depends on the personal learning process and the personal interpretation ability, so the use of these terms may vary for each person (LeDoux, 2015). Anxiety is to some extent a normal and psychologically adequate emotion in a dangerous situation. A person feels inner anxiety, overflowing with thoughts of approaching something

unpleasant, combined with fear at the physical level, with rapid breathing and heartbeat and bodily discomfort (in the chest, back, abdomen, and limbs). Anxiety is a combination of emotions, such as fear, sadness, shame, and guilt, at the same time; it is not a stable state, but it develops according to certain patterns.

Lewis (2013) claimed that children act out of fear and anxiety long before they feel these emotions. Logically, this is considered to be a sequence of cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions that are actualized as a result of human exposure to stressors. In this case, stress can be due to both external and internal factors, which are interpreted by the subject as dangerous or threatening. Cognitive hazard assessment thus actualizes a state of anxiety or an increase in the level of its intensity. The role of anxiety as a danger indicator is leading and ultimately decisive in finding the threat and stimulating defense mechanisms in the body. It should be noted that the alarm function extends far beyond the real situation and takes into account the individual's past experience, and it also works in accordance with their vision of the future (Mobbs et al., 2019).

LeDoux (2015) added that the language of fear is necessary for children for at least three reasons, as follows: (a) to shape thinking patterns that will help them deal with more direct danger (and anxiety later in life); (b) to tame death and reduce the fear of it—that is, one of the basic sources of horror in one's own life; and (c) to prepare children for the treatment of fear using techniques that increase/reduce it. LeDoux (2015) reminded us that language is the most powerful tool for dealing with fear and a useful one for dealing with fear and anxiety in psychotherapeutic approaches.

Reading can be a lot of things, such as entertaining, exciting, or relaxing, and educational reading is also known to help lower stress. Well-being during times of crisis can be achieved by reading, because it works as an escape. Thus, a children's literature text creates two spaces: a "reflective space", which helps participants reflect on sensitive topics, such as institutional environments, roles in interdisciplinary teams, and gender discrimination, and a "narrative space", which allows them to tell powerful stories that provide cultural insights and challenge cultural hegemony. They describe conscious and subconscious identity transformations that evolve secondary to struggles with local power dynamics and social demands involving the impact of family, peers, and country of origin (Zaidi et al., 2016).

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to examine how children's books written since 2009 reflect the fear and anxiety of children who live in the Israeli *Otef Gaza* region. The discourse reflected routine hours; that is, regular activity that builds a daily routine with clear boundaries, as opposed to an emergency routine, which is a state of uncertainty that causes stress and anxiety due to a situation in the shadow of war. The following research question was posed: How useful are word groups related to fear and war content frameworks for creating meaningful relationships and thus illuminating the world of children's

emotions.

The research methodology was based on an analysis of texts examining the social and cultural processes that have been described, that influence the writer's point of view, and that have an impact on the reader. "Every verbal communication is related to the selection of certain elements and structures from within the system of language, which are responsible for the perspective created in conveying the message" (Alter, 2001, p. 38). Researchers perform several procedures on a text in order to derive significant distinctions and generalizations from the text itself (Weber, 1990). In this process, patterns that recur in stories and constructed discourses can be identified, so that the derived meanings can be understood (Stephans, 1992). Through discourse (language), and also through story and meaning, assumptions can be derived about human existence, and from the meaning, we derive lessons, insights, and desired behaviors through which we can learn about the social being, ideologies, and opportunities for offering aesthetic and educational experiences to children.

The database was based on a search of interpretive, signifying, symbolic, action, and cultural codes (Barthes, 1974). These helped to build a semantic field focused on war and from which the fields related to excitement, occurrence, and cognitive knowledge were derived. These fields were rooted in a cultural code that helped to reveal details related to the sociocultural knowledge through which the author or narrator described fear and anxiety.

The research corpus included about 20 children's books written about the situation in the Israeli Otef Gaza region that can be found in the National Library.

Findings

A rich lexicon of words, concepts, and vocabulary related to fear and anxiety is associated with the main theme. Choices are based on the neuroscientific concept of LeDoux (2015), in that the two emotions are related to each other, and examples show that the feeling of fear is not innate but a cognitive structure resulting from the use of one's mother tongue in a certain sociocultural context—in this case, periods of war and the use of a lexicon expressed the unique atmosphere that had been created.

Verbal/Linguistic Usage

The use of the words "afraid" and "fear" is in accordance with the dictionary meanings. The words "fear" and "afraid" are repeated in all the stories as literal language that took precedence over figurative expressions in the texts.

Examples of this include the following:

Everyone is afraid when there is a war. ... My mother was afraid that a missile might hit her in the middle of the road. (Cohen, 2021, p. 38)

Red alerts were heard from all sides, and people were frightened and afraid, both at night and during the day. I hugged my mother and told the children to take care of grandma and grandpa—both father

and mother, Jews and Arabs—almost every resident. (Sternberg, 2015)

And what do we do if there are booms? ... I'm afraid to leave the house. (Ailon, 2013, p. 2)

In the latter book, the word 'fear' was counted 78 times out of 1008 words. The repetition of the word creates an unpleasant atmosphere; in addition to it, there are more descriptions of feelings, such as heart palpitations, sweating, and shaking.

Synonyms, or words that are related semantically to the word "fear", were collected. These words strengthen not just the personal feeling but also the collective perception of those living in the Israeli Otef Gaza. The words refer to the sounds that are heard, the placement of the shield, and the physiological phenomena that will be discussed later. The first sound is an alarm or the red alert. The signal even has a nickname, "Ola", which comes from the onomatopoeic feeling of the sound of the alarm—a sound that reminds people of the thing it signifies.

The Jews invented Ola; Ola knows exactly when a missile is flying, and she quickly exclaims: "Oooooooooooooo! Oooooooooooooo!" (Ofri, 2009)

Ola appears in the book 13 times as a personified entity. The role of personification in the alert is to reduce the threat to children, although the word is associated with war. Other words include "bombs", "rockets", and "missiles".

Bombs and rockets fell all over Israel, but the attack was overcome by "Iron Fist" shelters, and protected areas were immediately opened where parents and children would sleep on mattresses. In the communities surrounding Otef Gaza, the residents suffered greatly—it was a difficult experience not only for the residents of the cities but also for those throughout the country. In settlements far away from Gaza, the alarms sounded and were silenced, with the smoke of date palms rose into the sky. Red alerts were heard from all sides; people were alarmed and afraid, both at night and during the day. "Hug me Mother", the children asked, taking care of Grandma and Grandpa, Father and Mother, Jews and Arabs—almost every resident (Sternberg, 2015).

The following examples illustrate the shelter that is taken during the alarm:

Mom explained that the initials of the word *mmad* (shelter in Hebrew) refer to a residential protected space, meaning a protected place in an apartment, and every house should have a shelter (Israeli, 2021, p. 17).

She quickly went to the security room in the house ... Everyone entered the security room in a hurry. Mother quickly closed the steel door, and Omari closed the heavy window. The children tried to catch their breath. They realized that it was a real alarm and waited to hear the boom ... A Qassam rocket fell in one of the areas of the Western Negev—the settlements announced this on TV ... Let's hope it fell in an open area and didn't hurt anyone (Israeli, 2021, p. 14).

The child summarized the situation in his own words:

The child heard his parents talking in the language of adults and using words that he did not understand at all. They used strong words like "terror", "war", and "hate", and he didn't understand what the fuss

was about, but he started to worry terribly (Bar-Halpern, 2013, p. 13).

The body language of the characters was expressed using all the senses to express fear (seeing, hearing, tasting, and touching, in this category):

This is a true alarm. The enemy is launching missiles into Israel to hit us. ... At that moment, the kibbutz announcement system announced: “red alert”, “red alert”. Tamar’s legs were a little shaky, and so were her hands, but she still gathered Kip Fun (the cat) in her arms and quickly headed for the security room inside the house. ... Everyone hurried into the security room. The mother quickly closed the steel door, and her brother closed the heavy window (Israeli, 2021, p. 17).

Crying, shivering, and with snot dripping onto my mother’s shoulder, I was shaking all over. Is this what fear looks like? (Cohen, 2016, p. 12)

When there is a red alert, my heart beats so violently that for a moment, I stop breathing, and my hands sweat as if I’m hot (Ailon, 2013, p. 4).

Although I could not feel my eyes, mine began to cry (Ailon, 2013, p. 8).

We ran to the shelter, and my sister wet herself again. ... This war is like a monster to us; “I’m locked in a room and I’m a little nauseous” (Cohen, 2021, p. 48).

The alarm rang inside my body, bursting into every corner and thought, even in places from which happy things like hopes and dreams usually emerge (Cohen, 2016, p. 12).

I became afraid and was under pressure, and tears flooded my eyes (Cohen-Biton, 2019, p. 6).

Mental and Physiological Characteristics—Between Fear and Anxiety

In the following excerpt, the use of multiple words related to war creates an emotional and mental compression that indicates not only the experience of the war but how fear is also replaced by anxiety; the child wants to stay away from sounds that suggest terror, such as noisy toys, creaking windows, or doors slamming. Anxiety finds its expression in the desire to stay close to the protected space or in dialog about fearing the return of war. The child talks about anxiety in the two concepts of routine time and emergency routines, when he is aware of each of the characteristics of time. The anxiety is intensified or replaced by collective anxiety. The child is not only anxious for his father, who is going to war, or his mother, who is supposed to bear the burden when she is left alone at home, but also for the soldiers who are going off to fight. New words seep into his world—ones that we do not know in everyday life—such as bombs falling, death, leaving home, and becoming a refugee—and these words devour not only his agenda but his feelings.

Please don’t shoot firecrackers at me. On my birthday, don’t buy me balloons. When you close a door, don’t slam it hard. Don’t make siren noises—they remind me of an alarm. Don’t you dare say that my sister looks like a bomb; I’m not ready to hear it (Cohen, 2021, p. 10).

The fear that accompanies the child, living in a war environment, manifests itself in mental and physical sensations. Fear and anxiety stem from the concrete threat of missiles and bombs, while anxiety comes from the dread of the possibility of returning to such a situation. The product of fear and

anxiety is the traumatic situation that accompanies the child as a result of the events of war. The rhetorical question asked by the child sums up the question of how to turn the abstract concept of fear into something concrete, and indeed, through the personification of fear, it is possible to identify a multitude of phrases that attempt to define or describe dictionary, psychological, and philosophical concepts.

I don't like hearing the alarms and the calls of "red alert" "red alert" all the time, and it's also quite scary. We ran to the shelter (p. 12), and we heard a loud boom. This happened both during the day and at night. Sometimes we remained asleep in our rooms, and it was also impossible to go outside and play with our friends (Bibi, 2018, p. 14).

The remnants of fear and the "sounds of war" are replaced by a feeling of anxiety:

Every time there is an alarm, I pray that it will be the last, but it is usually a "barrage"; the world continues to spin and nothing happens. and the media publishes documentation of injured, trembling children—and all of this only serves to raise my level of panic and concern ... The first thing I will always do in any new place is to look for a shelter. ... I am not ready to move a single step from the protected space. I heard my mother and the counselor whispering that I was a traumatized child with severe psychological damage (Atlas, 2023, p. 228).

The result of fear is more than a cultural trauma that affects group members when they "feel that they have been subjected to a terrible event that has left indelible marks on their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identities in fundamental and irreversible ways" (Alexander et al., 2004, p. 1).

As part of dealing with fear, it was found that the protagonists of the story offered tools for managing fear, which are described in the following section.

Practice Voices and Situations Typical of Times of Conflict

One way to prevent fear, which in turn increases anxiety, is to be as prepared as possible. While practicing the situation with adults, the children see the shelter as a place where their lives are safe. Therefore, when they hear the alarm, they must run there to protect themselves, with the role of adults being to strengthen their children's sense of safety.

I sit by myself for hours and try to relax, try to practice the sound of the alarm, and try not to be surprised. I'm mature, and positive thoughts come into my mind. (Baron, ,2014, p. 18)

I've already learned to calm down, breathe, and exhale; I imagine myself resting in a hammock on the beach (Cohen, 2021, p. 44).

The children fantasize about a dream that could magically change the situation:

I can make rockets stop in mid-air, turn them into colorful fireworks, and surprise all the onlookers. After spending a few hours alone, trying to relax, practicing the sound of the alarm, and not being surprised, I tell myself I'm a hero and conjure up positive thoughts in my mind (Baron, 2014, pp. 15-18).

Together, we will be united and continue to cope. As a graduate, I want to find a global solution, even if it seems a little dreamy. I will draw the solution on the page with a brush, and whoever looks at the drawing will know that I am all-powerful (Baron, 2014 p. 23).

Some children have a practical dream that has significance, such as building a resilience center:

One day, when I become a rich contractor, I will build the resilience center, the most luxurious in the city. There will be ponds stocked with fish ... and chocolates at the front desk ... and unlimited ice cream. ... There will be no psychologists waiting for you to speak first (Cohen, 2021, p. 26).

In addition to the suggestions made by the children as part of the plot, the adults also offer ways to deal with their fears. Organizing an activity in the shelter; arranging it in an inviting way; creating an atmosphere for it that gives off a sense of calm; preparing sweets based on the understanding that they help people to calm down; bringing a toy into the room to serve as a transitional object; and ensuring that a pet is brought in—these are all practical actions in addition to conducting activities that have a spiritual dimension, such as talking about scary things, hugging, and kissing.

Mother took out a box of soap bubbles and told her daughter to inhale lots of air and forcefully blow out our dreams and desires. The room became a magical place for dreams, ... up to the point that I didn't want to leave it at all (Cohen-Biton, 2019, pp. 17-19).

Drawing a Monster

Literary monsters remain present inside children's imagination and represent a well-rounded package of imagination and fear. It is when individuals find themselves in this state of existence that the literary monster must be combined with positive qualities in order to help the individual rediscover their lost imagination and sense of positivity (Christie, 2020).

The child draws a "superhero" on the monster that will drive the monster away; this is a sublimated action designed to reinforce it:

I started drawing a monster. It had the shape of a rocket, with fire on its tail, and it was chasing children ... The monster will not come back; it is afraid of you, me, and the heroes. The ability to defeat the war monster—Daniel, the hero of the story, managed to deal with the monster that had returned to his dreams, and Gobi, who accompanied him, told him: "You see Daniel, we really defeated the monster. The monster will be afraid to come back" (Nahman & Nahman, 2009, pp. 30-34).

He sang: "Never, ever come here, boom-boom monster. I'll drive you out; get out there" (Nahman & Nahman, 2009, p. 14).

Singing a well-known song on a specific subject or composing songs are also a sublime way of coping. Saying a prayer also has the power to bring calm:

The color red is the color of an anemone. It calls us all to enter the shelter. When you hear the red alert, and your heart starts to tremble, three breaths will help you a great deal. ... Those with no need for fear can help everyone else. ... When fear brings tears to your eyes, you don't need to feel ashamed, as it sometimes calms you down (Ailon, 2013, p. 16).

And sometimes, while waiting at the shelter, ... they like to say a prayer—a prayer for you to protect them and their families and all the people of Israel. But most of all, they pray that the conflict with the Arabs will end; instead of hatred, love will come to pass, and Jews and Arabs will live together in peace (Ofri, 2009, no page number)

Peaceful cooking is a future fantasy of the children—But as in any fantasy, the adult tries to explain to the child that he should lower his expectations, since because of the political situation, it is not certain that things will come true. Children who often experience routine emergencies and fears are exposed to a whirlwind of emotions. At the same time, the stories reveal their dynamic, creative, and adaptive nature alongside their mental and emotional burdens. The children manage to adapt themselves to this reality, harnessing every available tool at their disposal to restore a sense of self-control and to keep normal life going as much as possible.

Discussion

This article describes how fear and anxiety appear in children's books written during the years of conflict in the Israeli *Otef Gaza*—books whose aesthetic plots cover war scenarios containing violent experiences that leave behind trauma and even post-trauma. The use of words from the battlefield serves as a catalyst for the plots that are described and for the emotional deprivation and trauma present in the children's world following the “voices” of combat. There are two points of view that are reflected throughout the plots: One is of the adult, and the other is of the child. Every point of view expresses a different aspect of a given situation. The adult author is working through a traumatic experience (LaCapra, 2006). The importance of this process may “act to reduce the power of the ‘acting out’”, in which the post-traumatic subject is “pursued by the past or infected by it and caught performatively for compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes—scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or condemned to imprisonment in a melancholic loop” (LaCapra, 2006, p. 49). It not only describes threats and frightful experiences but is instrumental in overcoming fear and anxiety via introspection in a verbal examination and evaluation of our experiences, and ultimately in fear-management. Psychiatric treatment conducted with the aid of language (conversations, explanations, and advice) often has a better outcome than medical treatment for fear/anxiety that targets the symptoms but not the cognitive sources of these emotions (LeDoux, 2015).

The effective implementation of mental health and psychosocial support programs during wartime helps to provide the necessary services to reduce suffering and provide decent support to help develop recovery, self-healing, and survival skills. Therefore, an extremely urgent task not only for medical, psychological, or social professionals but also for society as a whole is the timeliness, accessibility, and professionalism of providing the necessary assistance to each person affected by the traumatic consequences of hostilities. Mental health and psychosocial interventions for war-affected children should be multileveled, specifically target the child's needs, be trauma-informed, and be strength- and

resilience-oriented (Bürgin et al., 2022).

To deal with this reality, the psychological services and the welfare department in Israel provide position papers to parents and educators that contain information about what is happening, explaining how questions that arise on the subject should be answered by the child so that they overcome the war days. This explains why one must be careful not to be overwhelmed by unnecessary information and the importance of giving appropriate answers to children's questions, even if they are difficult (Israeli, 2021). It is necessary to moderate information that comes from the media so that children do not receive false and frightening messages. It is worthwhile to encourage children to realize that even adults may not always have the answers to all questions, although this is difficult for adults. With regard to formal activities, children's books about the military conflict in the Israeli *Otef Gaza*, which have been published since 2009, should be consulted, as these books have therapeutic children's texts that become a means of expressing feelings of discomfort associated with traumatic events while empowering imaginative possibilities to create positive change both within the self and in the environment. Thus, children's texts provide an experience that enhances children's inner vision and insight into themselves, and the narrative scenario bypasses resistance barriers, making it possible to absorb the messages conveyed in the stories (Kobobi, 1992). It helps to establish personal resilience, especially after experiencing trauma (Keselman, 2019). Books are an important therapeutic tool (Baratz & Kass, 2011). Textbooks are important because they create a "reflective space" that helps the participants reflect on sensitive topics—in this case, fear and anxiety as a result of war. They occupy a "narrative space", or as Zoran called it, the "third text"—that is, the voice of the text, through which the therapeutic discourse takes place. It is an area that Winnicott (1953) called a "transitional object", which is an area in between the preciousness of the cultural experience. The third text allows the inner reality of the person and the outer reality to be separate and yet interconnected (Zoran, 2009, p. 21).

The text helps to build political literacy, which is supposed to provide young people with tools for language development and a dictionary of terms for engaging in discourse about politics. These will be used to promote a cultural polemic, to analyze and explain the political situation, and to formulate a personal position. Using political literacy through literature written about war makes it possible to understand political reality, develop social awareness, discover involvement in what is happening in the environment, cultivate critical thinking, and stimulate a desire to act for change. The acquisition of positive thought processes through children's books allows children to build a sense of personal, community, and national resilience. Children's literature and storytelling can be helpful in promoting students' global development and well-being when they are included in school curricular activities. Children's books are places of endless possibilities, where young people can open their minds to broad horizons, create new perspectives, find possible alternatives or solutions to problems, and develop their strengths, including self-confidence and resilience (Pulimeno et al., 2020), through the implicit meanings embodied in stories, children indirectly acquire pedagogical messages that influence their

personality and stimulate a social sense of duty (Baratz & Kass, 2011), Consequently, books can serve as powerful coping tools because they help children deal with real-life problems and explore uncertainties, depict them as active agents and shapers of their own destinies, and ultimately promote well-being. That way, children create their own strategies for resilience and develop the capacity to recover from difficult life events and crises (Susemihl, 2021).

Stress disorders persist beyond the time-limited stress event and become a post-traumatic stress disorder. Therefore, a suitable solution is to return to one routine in order to rehabilitate. These incessant occurrences frequently and radically undermine the daily routines of the residents of the area who experience severe stress and anxiety over their personal safety and that of their children (Elran et al., 2015). Lazarus (1999) included cognitive and behavioral efforts made in order to change the situation, which is influenced by a variety of personal and context-dependent factors, such as desiring to overcome fear, making friends with those who are afraid, and trying to imagine and find tools.

Immediate supportive interventions should focus on providing basic physical and emotional resources and care to children to help them regain both external safety and inner security (Bürgin et al., 2022). To deal with fear, all these were observed in the children's ways of coping in the stories. Strengthening positive emotions has a restorative role in adaptation processes both during normal days and in emergency routine days, since the situation cannot be changed except to create feelings of self-satisfaction and thus reduce the stress dimension (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Lazarus, 1999). From the findings, it becomes clear that treatment focusing on emotions (the cognitive-behavioral approach) or using books as a bibliotherapy tool that reinforces optimistic messages (Kobobi, 1992) embedded in the story strengthen the mental well-being of both the story's protagonist and the reader and instill self-confidence in the ability to succeed, give new hope and optimism, and indicate new and better directions for dealing with anxieties. They also help shape thinking patterns and cognitive consciousness and help connect to emotions in order to keep negative patterns away (Greenberg, 2015). In conclusion, children's books play a role in strengthening positive feelings both on normal days and in emergencies. We may not be able to change the political situation, but it is possible to strengthen the sense of resilience and self-control, thereby reducing the dimension of stress.

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