



The Suffering of Palestinian Children in Qishash Athfal Najaw Min Bayni Fakkay Al-Mawt Fi Ghazah by Yusra Al-Aklouk: Literary Sociology of Ian Watt

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Abstract

This study examines the various forms of suffering experienced by Palestinian children as portrayed in Qishash Athfal Najaw min Bayni Fakkay al-Mawt fi Ghazah. This approach explores the close relationship between the socio-political conditions of Gaza, the humanitarian impact of the ongoing conflict, and the trauma and violence reflected in children's narratives. Using a descriptive qualitative analysis, the study interprets data contextually through close reading without manipulating variables, emphasizing the understanding of textual phenomena and narrative elements. The research applies Ian Watt's sociology of literature in combination with the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman to examine eighteen story fragments selected through purposive sampling. The findings reveal that Al-Aklouk's narrative depicts children's suffering through wounded bodies, profound trauma, forced maturity, and the persistent threat of war. Ultimately, the text serves as a moral witness to global injustice and affirms literature's role as a medium of resistance and humanitarian advocacy.

Keywords: *Suffering; Sociology of Literature; Ian Watt; Palestinian*

Introduction

The ongoing conflict in Gaza has had the greatest impact on Palestinian children, who are the primary victims of attacks and violence that have devastated their living spaces. Many have been forced to flee, become homeless, and live in fear and uncertainty. The ongoing attacks have damaged vital infrastructure such as hospitals and schools, spaces that should protect them, while depriving children of their basic rights to education, healthcare, and a decent life (Ziberi et al. 2024).

In this humanitarian context, Yusra Al-Aklouk's *Qishas Athfal Najaw min Bayni Fakkay al-Mawt fi Ghazah* (Stories of Children Who Survived Between the Jaws of Death in Gaza) presents a portrait of the suffering of Gaza's children through a human interest feature journalistic narrative. This work presents a series of stories that chronologically follow the experiences of several child survivors, from the moment of the attack, through their physical and psychological conditions afterward, and through to their families' emotional responses. By combining interviews, field observations, and direct quotes from survivors, Al-Aklouk constructs a powerful humanitarian picture that serves as both a social reflection and a moral call to action for the world to address the tragedy experienced by Gaza's children (Al-Aklouk, 2025).

Various humanitarian agencies have also highlighted this suffering through visual and narrative strategies on social media to evoke global empathy and encourage international solidarity. The suffering of Gazans is multidimensional, encompassing physical, social, and psychological aspects, leaving profound trauma due to the loss of family and the destruction of life structures (Ziberi et al., 2024). Theoretically, suffering should be understood not only as an emotional feeling, but as a multidimensional framework encompassing six categories: environmental, physical, social, mental, cultural, and resource. The situation in Gaza has also been exacerbated by the massive attacks since October 2023, which have resulted in mass deaths, damage to public facilities, and the loss of meaning and hope for the community (Thacker et al., 2025).

The mental health crisis is one of the most serious impacts. The psychological services infrastructure has nearly collapsed, rendering it unable to address the collective trauma of Gazans. They note that the social structure and mental health system are no longer functioning due to the blockade and military aggression. In this context, suffering can be viewed from two perspectives: subjective, encompassing personal experiences, values, and identities; and objective, in the form of physical and social manifestations such as trauma, PTSD, and social disintegration. This situation also violates international humanitarian law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which stipulates the protection of children in armed conflict (Jabr & Berger, 2024).

Although numerous studies highlight the plight of the Palestinian people, most of these studies focus on political dimensions, international law, or victim statistics. The representation of children's suffering in narrative texts, particularly through a sociological approach to literature, has received little attention. This gap is further highlighted by the lack of studies on Yusra Al-Aklouk's work as a social document that records trauma and violence through the direct testimony of child survivors. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap in interdisciplinary studies that connect literature, sociology, and child trauma studies through narrative analysis based on the lived experiences of victims (Lederman et al., 2025).

Theoretically, this research is grounded in Ian Watt's sociology of literature, which views literary works as both a mirror and a product of social phenomena. Ian Watt (1964) views literary works not only as a reflection of reality but also as a tool for shaping social values and awareness. Watt's approach emphasizes the relationship between the author, the text, and society. Three main aspects serve as the foundation. First, the author's social context, including the political and moral environment surrounding him; second, the text as a representation of social conditions; and third, the social function of literary works, which can serve as a means of social criticism and reflection on the collective experiences of society. In the context of Gaza, this approach allows for an understanding of how Al-Aklouk represents the suffering of children, how that social experience shapes the narrative, and how the text functions as a critique of injustice and structural violence (Syawaluddin et al., 2025).

Although research on Gaza is quite abundant, most previous studies have generally focused on analyzing fictional works such as drama, short stories, poetry, novels, and films, including (Antika et al., 2025; Putriani et al., 2025; Waluyo et al., 2025). However, these studies have not yet touched on the analysis of non-fiction discourse, especially testimony-based texts and humanitarian reports that record socio-political realities directly. This gap becomes increasingly apparent when compared with other studies on suffering and violence in Palestine, such as (Kennedy, 2024; McDoom, 2024; King, et al., 2025; Burawoy, 2024; Shalghin, 2025), which focus more on political aspects, structural violence, or humanitarianism, but have not yet examined these representations in the form of narrative discourse written by survivors or direct witnesses.

Based on this background, this gap indicates the need for research that examines how the suffering of Palestinian children is represented in direct, personal, and testimony-based nonfiction texts. Such a study allows for an in-depth understanding of the relationship between social experience, narrative form, and the political context surrounding the text's production process. Within this framework, this study utilizes Ian Watt's sociological theory of literature. This research is novel in two main aspects. First, the analysis is conducted on nonfiction texts based on the testimony of Gaza children, a genre rarely studied in literary research. Second, this study combines Ian Watt's sociological perspective of literature with narrative analysis of representations of children's suffering, resulting in an interdisciplinary reading that connects literature, collective trauma, and the socio-political conditions of Gaza.

This study reveals how the suffering of Palestinian children is manifested in Qisash Athfal Najaw min Bayni Fakkay al-Mawt fi Ghazah, particularly through depictions of the physical wounds, psychological trauma, and social death experienced by survivors. Furthermore, this study investigates how Gaza's socio-political context, including military aggression, blockade, and humanitarian crisis, shapes Yusra Al-Aklouk's presentation of her testimony in personal, emotional, and

political terms. Furthermore, this study examines the artwork's function as a social critique that highlights the structural violence and injustice experienced by the people of Gaza, while simultaneously calling for a moral response from readers and the international community to the plight of Palestinian children.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the representation of the suffering of Palestinian children in the works of Yusra Al-Aklouk, explain how the socio-political context of Gaza shapes the narrative of this testimony, and assess the social function of the text as a form of criticism of the injustice and structural violence experienced by the people of Gaza.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach (Adhi & Ahmad, 2019) by combining Ian Watt's sociology of literature theory and Miles, Huberman's interactive analysis model as an analytical framework. This approach was chosen because literary works are seen as reflections of social conditions that contain messages, collective experiences, and criticism of societal realities. Primary data comes from the text *Qishash athfal najaw min bayni fakkay al mawt fi Ghazah* by Yusra Al-Aklouk which was obtained through a digital version, then prepared through a process of numbering paragraphs and segmenting story fragments to facilitate the analysis process.

Secondary data includes scientific books, journal articles, international media coverage related to the Gaza situation, previous research on qishah as an emotional expression of the Gaza community, and publications containing biographies and interviews with Yusra Al-Aklouk. The data collection technique was carried out through a systematic literature study, by collecting academic documents, reports from international institutions, and relevant news articles that support the study of the social context and Ian Watt's sociology of literature theory. The selection of story fragments was carried out through purposive sampling, namely by selecting parts of the text that explicitly display the forms of physical, psychological, and social suffering experienced by Gaza children. The units of analysis in this study include the themes of suffering, narrative fragments, and social representations that emerge in the story.

The data analysis method uses an interactive model for qualitative data (Miles et al., 2014), which consists of three stages. First, data reduction, which is the process of selecting, simplifying, and grouping information from texts and secondary sources to sharpen the research focus. Second, data presentation is carried out in the form of tables, narrative descriptions, and thematic categories directly linked to Ian Watt's three main concepts: (1) the author's social context, (2) the text as a social representation, and (3) the social function of literary works. Third, conclusion drawing/verification, which is the development of a final interpretation of the forms of suffering and violence against Gaza children in the text, which are then compared and tested for consistency based on Ian Watt's theory. The analysis process also

involved two stages of coding: descriptive coding and in vivo coding in the initial stage to capture the literal meaning and key phrases in the text, followed by pattern coding to develop thematic categories regarding children's suffering. Research validity was maintained through source triangulation and recording the analysis process using an audit trail. Ethical considerations were taken into account, avoiding exploitation or over-representation of children's traumatic experiences and maintaining sensitivity to survivors' narratives. Information on Yusra Al-Aklouk's social and biographical background was gathered through publications, media interviews, and other online sources to strengthen the interpretation of the author's social position within Ian Watt's theoretical framework. The entire research was conducted between October and November 2025.

Results

Before analyzing *Qishash Athfal Najaw Min Bayni Fakkay Al-Mawt Fi Ghazah* (Stories of Children Who Survived Between the Jaws of Death in Gaza), this study presents a brief biography of Yusra Al-Aklouk in accordance with Ian Watt's view that emphasizes the importance of the author's background in understanding literary works. As a Palestinian journalist living in the midst of the Gaza conflict, Al-Aklouk brings firsthand experiences of war, loss, and trauma into her writing. Her closeness to survivors, especially children, makes her narratives authentic, empathetic, and full of humanity, as seen in *Then the Flames Engulfed Me* and other personal stories. Through her experience of witnessing violence firsthand, she not only reports facts but also depicts the emotional and social impacts of war, so that her work becomes a space of testimony that presents the human side of the conflict and the resilience of Palestinian society.

Next, we present data taken from the text *Qishash athfal najaw min bayni fakkay al mawt fi Ghazah* by Yusra Al-Aklouk, which shows various forms of suffering experienced by Gaza children, including physical suffering (PF), psychological suffering (PSY), social suffering (SOC), and situational suffering (ENV) related to their environmental conditions.

Code	Category	Form Suffering	Arabic text	Brief Context
PF01	Physique	Bloody eyes, both legs broken	بعين واحدة نازفة وقدمين مكسورتين	The child experiences wound heavy consequence attack air that hits the area where he lives.
PF02	Physique	Buried under sand/rubble	دُفِنَ رأسها ونصف جسدها العلوي في رمال الحديقة	Buried child ruins page House after explosion big destroy environment surrounding area.

Code	Category	Form Suffering	Arabic text	Brief Context
PF03	Physique	Burns & fractures bones throughout body	كانت تعاني حروقا وكسورا في مختلف أنحاء جسدها	The victim was found in condition body full wound burnt and broken consequence explosion missiles.
PF04	Physique	Burns critical consequence attack	إصابة أخيه عدي إصابة خطيرة	The victim's brother experienced wound burn Serious after caught fractions projectile.
PSY01	Psychological	Shock and grief deep	غارقا في حزنه... صدمتي فقدته لعائلته وما تعرض له	The child experiences downturn emotional after lost all over his family.
PSY02	Psychological	Afraid deep to death	أشعر أنني يمكن أن ألتحق بعائلتي... أنا أنتظر دوري	Living child in afraid constant and feeling death can pick up When just.
PSY03	Psychological	Prolonged trauma	ما زلت أبكي على فقدهم كأنه حدث اليوم	Lost family Keep going haunt child as if incident happen return every day
PSY04	Psychological	Emotional trauma heavier from wound physique	ألمه أكبر من حرق الجسد	The child feels suffering more emotional torture than wound physique.
PSY05	Psychological	Anger extreme, internalization feud	والله، لو رأيت جنديا لأقتلته	Children express themselves anger deep after witness violence war.
PSY06	Psychological	Loss of childhood	أطفال غزة... كبروا قبل أو انهم	War force adult Gaza children before it's time.
SOC01	Social	Maturity force consequence war	كبروا قبل أو انهم أعواما بالإدراك والوعي	Children must carry not quite enough answer big that is not in accordance age they.
SOC02	Social	Shift identity become fighter	أتمنى أن أحارب مع المقاومين	The child does not Again see self as child small, but as part from resistance.
SOC03	Social	Inability return to normal life	مكثت شهورا حتى استوعبت ما حدث	Need time months for child For accept the reality that occurs.
SOC04	Social	War as threat	إسرائيل... تزرع الرعب	Afraid become condition

Code	Category	Form Suffering	Arabic text	Brief Context
		collective	في قلوب أطفال غزة	social common among Gaza children.
ENV01	Situational war	Thrown consequence explosion	فzفتها الغارة بعيدا أكثر من 20 مترا	Explosion hit home and make child bounced Far from location beginning.
ENV02	Situational war	Thrown by a missile	قذفه الصاروخ بعيدا عنهم	Missile cause body child bounced from family who are with him.
ENV03	Situational war	Environment No safe, attack repetitive	قصف المسجد... بعد خروجه بـ 5 دقائق	Attack regarding several mosques minute after the victim came out from the area.
ENV04	Situational war	Place take shelter follow attacked	استهداف خيمتهم التي نصبوها بجوار منزلهم المدمر	Emergency tents that become place protection No escape from attack.

The narrative structure of the children of Gaza is constructed through an episodic narrative of testimony, where each story stands as a separate unit yet complements each other in depicting the shared suffering faced by children during the war. The story begins with a tragic depiction of Inam's severe injuries, demonstrating that the narrative deliberately begins with the physical reality of the victims as concrete evidence of the violence. The plot then continues with the stories of Mohammed and Elias, each presenting details about the attacks, injuries, trauma, and losses they experienced. Each episode follows a similar pattern, beginning with the attack, followed by the physical impact, emotional effects, and personal meanings of the characters. Through this structure, readers are invited to see suffering not merely as information, but as a profoundly human experience.

Discussion

The data in the table shows that Gaza's children experience a very complex suffering, encompassing four main categories with a total of 18 findings. From the physical aspect, 4 data indicate they face serious injuries such as broken bones, burns, and being trapped under rubble. In the psychological realm, 6 data indicate deep emotional shocks in the form of prolonged trauma, fear of death, loss of childhood, and extreme anger. Socially, 4 data indicate that the war forced them to mature prematurely, shifting their identities, and hindering their ability to live normally amid collective threats. Meanwhile, situational suffering due to the war environment, 4 data indicate events such as being thrown by explosions, repeated attacks, and the destruction of places that should have provided protection. All of this data illustrates the comprehensive impact of the war on the bodies, souls, social lives, and living

spaces of Gaza's children. The following is a presentation of several texts from Yusra Al-Aklouk's book, *Qishash athfal najaw min bayni fakkay al mawt fi Ghazah*, which interpret the forms of suffering experienced by Gaza's children.

1. Fracture & Bloody Eyes

The suffering of Gaza's children, who have suffered physical and emotional wounds from the violence of war, one of which is broken bones, is a symbol of the destruction of their bodies and futures. The cries and screams of fear of Palestinian children reflect the extraordinary pain, not only from the loss of family and homes, but also from their bodies severely injured by the merciless attacks. They live in conditions of deprivation, sheltering under makeshift tents, enduring hunger, thirst, and pain that continues to haunt them. Meanwhile, children in various parts of the world can enjoy normal lives, playing, and celebrating in the lead-up to Eid. This shows how unfair the world is to the children of Gaza who have to endure physical suffering such as broken bones, bleeding eyes, while many countries and major powers choose to remain silent. This becomes a symbol of humanity's cry, reminding us that behind the number of war victims are small, fragile bodies, broken bones, and a future destroyed by the barbarity of war and the world's negligence.

بعين واحدة نازفة وقدمين مكسورتين، كان غسان دردونة يزحف متجاهلا إصابته، باحثا عن ابنته الصغيرة إنعام التي قذفتها الغارة بعيدا عن المنزل أكثر من 20 مترا.

With one eye bleeding and both legs broken, Ghassan Dardouna crawled, ignoring his wounds, searching for his little daughter, Inam, who was thrown more than 20 meters from her house in the attack.

ثم راح يكمل انتشال والديه المصابين من تحت أنقاض منزلهم المستهدف، بعدما نقل الإسعاف طفلته لتتلقى العلاج في المستشفى الإندونيسي في جباليا شمال قطاع غزة، حيث كانت تعاني حروقا وكسورا في مختلف أنحاء جسدها.

Later, he continued his efforts to rescue his injured parents from the rubble of their home that was targeted by the attack, after an ambulance took his daughter for treatment at the Indonesian Hospital in Jabalia, north of the Gaza Strip, because she suffered burns and fractures in various parts of her body.

Socially, this story is born from the political and social structure of Gaza, which has long been under the shadow of war and occupation. The social setting is the suffering of the Palestinian people, especially children. The suffering of the Palestinian people, especially young people, has reached a devastating level due to the ongoing conflict. These traumas have permeated their psyches, accompanied by disruptions in formal education, the devastating loss of family members, and the threat of starvation, disease, and death due to Israeli military attacks.

Children in Gaza and the West Bank have suffered the most, with many facilities, including schools, completely destroyed. This situation threatens their survival in a state of constant fear, having witnessed the loss of parents and peers,

and displaying signs of trauma through incessant crying or screaming. Thousands of Palestinian men, women, and especially children have died in this violence, including hundreds who have died from starvation and disease. Children are the most vulnerable group in this conflict, deprived of their right to education and forced to survive amidst the ruins. This becomes a focal point depicting the dire humanitarian conditions resulting from military violence and global injustice. This aligns with Watt's view that the author is never free from the social environment and power structures that influence his perspective and ideology.

From a literary perspective, the detailed depictions of children's broken bodies, burns, and terrified screams hold powerful symbolic significance. Broken bones not only depict physical damage but also symbolize the destruction of the future and the fragility of hope for the young Palestinian generation. The descriptions of fractured bones and shattered bodies. This condition of children causes deformation and loss of structural integrity. The broken bones and terrified screams experienced by children in the Gaza Strip profoundly illustrate how war has destroyed their future and hopes (Rania et al., 2025). Meanwhile, the shattered bodies depict a much more severe level of damage, with bones shattered into tiny pieces until completely crushed. This is an empirical experience of the effects of brutal war on innocent children.

Despite the world's silence and leaders in Muslim countries ignoring their suffering, while facing genocide and total occupation by the occupiers, the children of Gaza continue to demonstrate courage and hope, facing the future with courage. The ongoing conflict has had a tremendous impact on children's lives, evident in various physical and psychological aspects. According to research, more than a third of pediatric surgeries in the region are caused by injuries arising from the humanitarian crisis, indicating the extent of their physical injuries (Muthumani, 2024). Injuries such as ankle fractures are an expression of the diverse fracture patterns that arise from increased traumatic energy, ranging from mild avulsion fractures to severe comminuted fractures with multiple fragments.

This illustrates the extraordinary emotional power of the Gaza narrative, as it depicts the lives of ordinary people shattered by war. (Lloyd, 2025) explains that the moral power of a narrative emerges when everyday life is presented alongside extreme destruction. On the same basis (Lea, 2023) emphasizes that through emotional and visual diction, the author creates an empathetic effect that can arouse readers' awareness of global humanitarian inequality, when children in Gaza must struggle to survive, while children in other parts of the world enjoy a sense of security.

Furthermore, it emphasizes that emotional responses to suffering should not be considered subjective or unscientific, because it is precisely through empathy and sympathy that humans can understand the moral dimension of tragedy. This view shows that in the framework of literary understanding or humanitarian narrative, emotional language functions not only as an aesthetic element, but also as a form of empathetic ethics that transcends social and political boundaries. Thus, literary

works have a social function as a medium for moral and humanitarian awareness that can broaden the horizon of empathy of readers across cultures and geographies.

Previous research supports this view, highlighting the suffering caused by the conflict in Palestine, demonstrating that the physical and psychological trauma experienced by children in Gaza is a tangible reflection of the brutality of war. As explained by Muthumani (2024), severe injuries such as broken bones with various fracture patterns reflect the high level of violence and the significant impact of the humanitarian crisis. Another study by Hardwicke et al., (2025) also emphasized that this suffering not only affects children's bodies but also destroys their social and mental well-being, threatening their educational prospects and future. Therefore, the story of the children of Gaza simultaneously exposes the global power imbalance and forms of international injustice that are often ignored by major powers.

2. Burns

Burns in Palestinian children are a serious chronic health problem, with a disproportionately high proportion of children being victims. According to data from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), more than 70% of severe burn patients in Gaza are children, most of whom are under five years old. The burns are typically very severe, requiring complex treatment that includes repeated surgeries, daily dressing changes, physiotherapy, pain management, and psychological support. However, due to the prolonged attacks, health facilities and medical supplies in Gaza are severely limited, leaving many children without adequate follow-up care and at risk of long-term disability (Idrus, 2025).

علم إيلياء باستشهاد أخيه إلياس، وبإصابة أخيه عدي إصابة خطيرة، وهو الأمر الذي يبكيه على الدوام،
وآلمه أكبر من حرق الجسد.

Elijah learned about the death of his brother, Elias, and the serious injury suffered by his brother, Uday, which made him cry constantly, and the pain was greater than the burns on his body.

وتسلل الدمع إلى وجنتي إيلياء الذائبين من الحرق، وبدت عيناه كجمرتين مشتعلتين وهو يقول بانفعال "والله،
لورأيت جندياً لأقتلنه.

Tears streamed down Ilya's cheeks, which were melting from the burns, and his eyes looked like two burning embers as he said with emotion, By Allah, if I see a soldier, I will kill him with my own hands.

A case illustrating this situation is that of Abdallah, a child who suffered burns covering 50 percent of his body since the age of 11 months. He underwent skin transplantation, months of intensive hospitalization, and currently requires follow-up therapy, including the use of pressure garments to prevent scars from worsening as they grow. Furthermore, the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip has resulted in numerous burns resulting from weapon explosions and bombings, with children being the primary victims (Yamina et al., 2024). A 2025 study noted that explosive weapons accounted for approximately two-thirds of all extreme burn injuries in Palestinian children, with severe impacts on the head, chest, and limbs. Limited medical resources often result in amputation as the only treatment option in many

cases.

Data from the Palestinian Ministry of Health for 2024-2025 indicates that thousands of children were injured as a result of the conflict, with burns being one of the leading causes of serious injuries among Palestinian children. This raises an urgent need for adequate medical assistance, child protection, and long-term rehabilitation care for child victims. Burns in Palestinian children are not only a medical issue, but also a humanitarian crisis that demands immediate global attention and intervention to alleviate the suffering of millions of children affected in Gaza.

Based on Ian Watt's theory, literary works function as a reflection of the social, cultural, and moral conditions of a particular period, as well as a tool for shaping social awareness. This serves as the basis for analyzing the suffering of Palestinian children through three main aspects, according to Watt. First, in terms of meaning, it depicts the social situation of the Gazan people living in conflict and with limited medical care. Second, literary texts convey the emotional experiences of war victims. Third, their social function is as a means of building empathy and global awareness of humanitarian suffering (Pourya & Hanafiah 2025).

Contextually, the description of burns in Palestinian children stems from the tragic external, factual circumstances of the war that has affected the Gazan people, destroying not only the physical but also the social fabric of society. The war and blockade have weakened the global humanitarian system that is supposed to protect vulnerable groups such as children. Textually, the emotional expressions of young Palestinians, such as Ilya's statement in "By Allah," which expresses profound trauma and collective anger against violence, illustrate the accumulated suffering caused by war. The story of Abdallah, who suffered 50% burns as an infant, demonstrates the extraordinary physical suffering and limited access to healthcare in Gaza.

The social function of literary works that portray stories like these is crucial in building global moral and humanitarian awareness. Palestinian literature, particularly that born from the struggle and suffering of conflict, serves as a social and moral critique that challenges the global political order that allows such suffering to continue without justice. In line with the views of (Azizah & Ardiyanti 2024), literature in conflict situations functions as a tool of resistance, not only documenting tragedy but also fueling the spirit of resistance and inspiring a sense of humanity. Palestinian writers use their works to express the identity, suffering, and hopes of their people amidst oppression and exile.

Data from the Palestinian Ministry of Health in 2024-2025 shows that thousands of children were injured as a result of the conflict, with burns being one of the leading causes of serious injuries among Palestinian children. This raises an urgent need for adequate medical assistance, child protection, and long-term rehabilitation care for child victims. Burns in Palestinian children are not only a medical issue, but also a humanitarian crisis that demands immediate global attention and intervention to alleviate the suffering of millions of children affected in

Gaza.

Based on Ian Watt's theory, literary works function as a reflection of social, cultural, and moral conditions at a particular time, as well as a tool for shaping social awareness. In the context of the description above, the story of the suffering of Palestinian children can be analyzed through three main aspects according to Watt. First, the social context that describes the situation of the Gazan people living in conflict and medical limitations. Second, the literary text that expresses the emotional experiences of war victims. Third, its social function as a means of building empathy and global awareness of human suffering (Pourya & Hanafiah 2025).

Contextually, the description of burns on Palestinian children stems from the tragic reality of the war that has ravaged Gaza society, destroying not only the physical but also the social fabric of society. The war and blockade have weakened the global humanitarian system that is supposed to protect vulnerable groups like children. Textually, the emotional expressions of Palestinian youth, such as Ilya Demi Allah's statement reflecting deep trauma and collective anger at the violence, illustrate the accumulated suffering caused by war. The story of Abdallah, who suffered 50% burns since infancy, demonstrates the extraordinary physical suffering and limited access to healthcare in Gaza.

The social function of literary works that portray stories like these is crucial in building global moral and humanitarian awareness. Palestinian literature, particularly that born from the context of struggle and suffering resulting from conflict, serves as a social and moral critique that challenges the global political order that allows such suffering to continue without justice. In line with the views of (Azizah & Ardiyanti 2024), literature in the context of conflict functions as a tool of resistance that not only records tragedy but also ignites the spirit of resistance and awakens a sense of humanity. Palestinian writers use their works to express the identity, suffering, and hopes of their people amidst oppression and exile.

In terms of medical data, (Yamina et al. 2024), noted that two-thirds of extreme burns in Palestinian children were caused by explosive weapons with severe impacts on the head, chest, and limbs. Data from the Palestinian Ministry of Health (2025) confirmed thousands of children injured due to the conflict, making burns one of the main causes of disability and death in children. This confirms that burns in Palestinian children are not only a medical problem, but a global humanitarian crisis that requires international intervention to protect this vulnerable group.

3. Fear and trauma

Palestinian children endure profound fear and psychological trauma due to the ongoing conflict and war in their region. They often experience various mental health issues such as anxiety, nightmares, insomnia, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and an excessive fear of explosions and dangerous situations around them. This is also the case for a child named Muhammad, who experiences similar conditions, as described below.

لم تعط النجاة مرتين متتاليتين لمحمد شعورا بالأمان من تهديد الاستهداف، بل عززت لديه فكرة ملاحقة الموت، مما جعل خوفه من احتمال استشهاده في أي لحظة كبيرا.

Being saved twice in a row did not make Muhammad feel safe from the threat of death, but instead strengthened the idea that death would pursue him, so that his fear of the possibility of martyrdom at any time became very great.

الصددمات التي تلقاها محمد وآلاف الأطفال مثله، صنعت منهم رجالا صغارا، حيث كبر الأطفال في غزة قبل أوانهم أعواما بالإدراك والوعي.

The trauma experienced by Muhammad and thousands of other children has turned them into little men, where children in Gaza grow up prematurely in terms of understanding and awareness.

This story not only depicts personal experiences but also represents the collective suffering of Palestinian children living amidst violence and loss. Fear and loss illustrate Muhammad's life experiences growing up in a Palestinian society fraught with pressure due to prolonged war and violence. This situation, characterized by constant threat and uncertainty, shapes the psychological state of children, as experienced by Muhammad, who loses a sense of security despite surviving various dangers.

From the perspective of Ian Watt's theory, which highlights the close relationship between the author and his social environment, it appears that the author attempts to depict the suffering, fear, and trauma of children living in conflict zones. Children who experience trauma and prolonged abuse risk disrupting their brain development, limiting their ability to learn and grow normally (Berzenski & Yates, 2022). Meanwhile, damaged health facilities make medical care, including for children with missing limbs, difficult to obtain. The depictions in the text reflect social realism. Textually, this depiction demonstrates a strong form of social realism. The story of Muhammad, who twice escaped death but remained consumed by fear, illustrates the psychological plight of Palestinian children, who face constant exposure to violence, military attacks, and the loss of loved ones. This situation triggers extremely high levels of acute trauma among them.

Psychological symptoms such as PTSD and anxiety often appear, evident in nightmares, excessive fear, seizures, stress-induced bedwetting, and a tendency toward aggressive behavior. A 2022 Save the Children report revealed that four out of five children in Gaza live with deep depression, sadness, and anxiety. The author attempts to portray real experiences filled with pain and anxiety, making this text a concrete representation of the reality of life in a society amidst war. In line with Ian Watt's view, literary works serve as a reflection of social experience and a platform for authors to express moral perspectives and critique the inequality and suffering experienced by their people.

Socially, the story of Muhammad has high humanitarian value because it evokes empathy, moral awareness, and concern for the suffering of children affected by conflict. Through a life story filled with fear and trauma, this text conveys a critique of the injustice and violence that rob the young generation of Palestine of their right to life and a future. In line with Ian Watt's theory, such literary works serve not only as a depiction of social conditions but also as a means of fostering awareness and fostering human values within society. Muhammad's story also serves as a powerful form of social criticism, calling for an end to violence, emphasizing the importance of humanity over political interests, and inviting readers to reflect on the importance of protecting human rights and the future of children in conflict areas.

Previous research findings also reinforce this perspective. Studies by Shalghin (2025) and Vermeulen (2025) present an in-depth analysis of the suffering and violence in Palestine, as well as a sharp critique of the international community's silence. They highlight the stories of Palestinian children struggling with trauma and the threat of death in the Gaza conflict. In line with moral sociology theory and settler colonialism perspectives, this work highlights humanitarian aspects and social critiques through socio-political and academic ethical perspectives that challenge ethnocentric bias. This research not only depicts the emotional reality of Palestinian society but also serves as a critique of global injustice and an urgent call for international attention to their plight.

Conclusion

This study shows that *Qishash Athfal Najaw min Bayni Fakkay al-Mawt fi Ghazah* by Yusra Al-Aklouk represents the suffering of Palestinian children through four main forms: physical, psychological, social, and situational suffering. Findings from eighteen analyzed data reveal that Gazan children experience serious bodily injuries such as broken bones and burns, deep trauma in the form of fear of death and loss of family, forced adulthood that shifts their identity, and the threat of a war environment that destroys their living space and sense of security. These narratives show how the structural violence of war and blockade shapes the lives of children and robs them of their basic rights. This work not only depicts the social reality of Gaza, but also shows how the author's social position and direct experience shape the moral perspective in the text. These narratives function as a form of social criticism against structural violence, the humanitarian blockade, and global injustice that continues to plague the Palestinian people.

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that future research focus more on Palestinian literature. This will provide a more complete picture of how children's suffering is depicted during conflict. This research can also integrate concepts from other fields such as trauma psychology, peace studies, or how we discuss these issues. This can help us better understand how conflict affects children.

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