



The Impact of the Blockade on Families in Qatar



THE IMPACT OF THE BLOCKADE ON FAMILIES IN QATAR



DIFI

معهد الدوحة الدولي للأسرة
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DOHA INTERNATIONAL FAMILY INSTITUTE

The Doha International Family Institute (DIFI), a member of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, was established in 2006 as a global policy and advocacy institute working to advance knowledge on Arab families and promote evidence-based policies, to foster healthy, educated societies underpinned by strong cohesive families in Qatar and the region. DIFI's flagship initiatives include the annual Family Research and Policy Conference, and the annual OSRA Research Grant on the Arab family and family policy-related issues, in collaboration with the Qatar National Research Fund. DIFI enjoys a special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to present this important report, “The Impact of the Blockade on Families in Qatar”, published more than a year after a blockade was imposed on the State of Qatar, during which the country has faced an unprecedented experience. The dimensions of the blockade have exceeded the boundaries of politics and diplomacy and have impacted the lives of entire families.

As an institute conducting evidence-based research for the development of knowledge structures on families and related policy responses, we are keen to attach special importance to this urgent research at the national level to probe and assess the vulnerability of families in Qatar to the blockade, especially mixed families who have one or more members that are from one of the GCC countries participating in the blockade (e.g. the blockading countries).

Many may be familiar with the fact that Gulf families have historically maintained close ties of kinship and blood relations among them in addition to their shared cultural, religious, and moral values that transcend geographical and political boundaries. For this reason, the blockade represents an unprecedented crisis for the brotherly Gulf States; one that has caused a rift in this structure with huge implications for families and their social, psychological, educational, and physical well-being as is established in this report.

We extend our gratitude to all those who participated in this important research project, especially researchers from Qatar University who have spared no effort to contribute to this study with their systematic documentation of the effects of the blockade on families; and my colleagues at DIFI, who have undertaken this endeavor as both an academic and national duty. I would also like to thank all the respondents without whom this work would not have been possible as they contributed valuable information by sharing their life’s experiences as a result of the blockade.

Last but not least, the report is not only important due to the empirical knowledge it provides regarding the effects of the blockade on families in Qatar, but also because of the evidence that it offers to inform stakeholders and service providers during the design and development of policies, programs, and interventions that strengthen family cohesion and well-being in the State of Qatar.



Noor Al Malki Al Jehani
Executive Director
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study was conducted by the Doha International Family Institute (DIFI), member of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development in collaboration with researchers from Qatar University. The study received approval from the Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) at Qatar University.

The study is aimed at assessing the impact of the blockade imposed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt on June 5th, 2017 on families in Qatar. This study was conducted by corresponding with a group of mixed Qatari families in which one of the spouses is a national of one of the blockading Gulf nations in addition to on a group of families who have relatives living in one of those countries.

This crisis has been a traumatic experience for families: one that has been hitherto unheard of in the history of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). It has had unprecedented consequences not only for Qatari families, but also for families living in Qatar that include nationals from one of the blockading countries. In many cases, the relationship between these families and their relatives who are citizens of the blockading countries has been negatively affected. Moreover, these families face different challenges under the blockade that sometimes led to their separation, which this study has sought to understand and document.

Research on this type of crisis and its impact on the individual, family, and society within Arab countries is limited, as many such research projects on Arab countries focus on refugees and armed conflicts (e.g. in Syria, Yemen, and Libya). Therefore, this study provides a new approach by focusing on the unique experiences of the families that include nationals of the blockading GCC countries living in Qatar who are affected by the blockade.

The Qatari National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) has made efforts to assist affected families and help them communicate with their relatives despite facing many challenges in the process. The painful experiences of deportation, family separation, interrupted education, loss of property, loss of social status, and revocation of citizenship have had profound negative implications for families, their well-being, and quality of life. These experiences have been shown to affect family relations and engagement and increase the vulnerability of affected families to individual and collective trauma along with mental health disorders.

We have applied a qualitative methodology in this study by interviewing 22 adults that are members of mixed Qatari families that include GCC nationals from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, or the Kingdom of Bahrain (11 males and 11 females). The participants included both married and unmarried individuals as well as those with and without children. During the interviews, participants were asked to reflect in detail on the impact that the blockade has had on their families and its individual members, their children, property, education, and health.

The interviews were conducted in Arabic and were audio recorded and transcribed. Two focus groups were conducted, the first consisting of single women aged 25–35, and the second consisting of married women within mixed marriages aged 30–60. Each group consisted of four to eight women. Per the research methodology, a focus group discussion was also planned for men. However, it was not possible to convene the session so the focus group was replaced by personal interviews with male respondents conducted individually.

The study relied on the basic principles of narrative interviews to guide the questions and a thematic analysis of the responses was conducted in addition to the output of the focus group discussions.

The thematic analysis identified the following topics:

- Family separation, insecurity, and fragmented family relations
- The role of social media in promoting family conflict
- The role of the blockade in causing suffering for families, and conversely, coping mechanisms
- Marital disputes
- The psychological impact of the blockade on the health of family members as manifested in the fear, anxiety, depression, anger, and stress faced by families
- The ability of children and youth to receive education and the effect of the blockade on the continuity of their studies
- Financial loss
- Gaps in the services available to families affected by the blockade
- Main aspects of interventions for affected families in order to restore well-being and family relations.

The study demonstrates how family relations were negatively affected by separation and cutting ties due to the blockade, leading to a lack of stability and security for the family. The struggles that arose for families were clear, especially for those Qatari women with spouses from the Kingdom of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, or the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. These women have suffered the most as they attempted to maintain a safe, secure life in Qatar with children who are not Qatari nationals. In particular, they face problems when it comes to education, passport renewal, job security, and financial investments.

Additionally, media and social networking sites have had a negative impact on family relations, having played a major role in fomenting conflict and increasing antagonism within families since the beginning of the blockade. Families in Qatar and the blockading countries have interpreted the news negatively, leading to conflicts and disagreements within such families, affecting both adults and youth alike.

Our results have also shown the emergence of psychological symptoms resulting from the blockade. Some of the interviewees have sought out psychiatrists seeking mental health assistance, while others have felt stressed, anxious, insecure, and even

depressed. This may have a long-term impact on the mental health of such individuals and could manifest itself in family relationships.

Educational problems in different areas have also emerged because of the blockade. Students who had been studying in one of the blockading countries saw their education interrupted when they were ordered to leave those countries and return to Qatar. While in Qatar, non-Qatari children may face issues at school when enrolling because they need official passports to complete their registration. Some respondents who are nationals of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates or the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, however, were unable to renew their passports due to the blockade. This constitutes a threat to the continuation of children's education that has caused stress and anxiety among parents who fear they may be unable to renew such paperwork in time for the upcoming school year.

Bullying in schools has also started to emerge as a prominent phenomenon that is associated to some extent with the blockade. It could lead to discrimination among children and feelings of insecurity among them. It may also negatively affect children's academic performance, achievement, and sense of security within the learning environment.

Marital relations were not spared from the impact of the blockade. Some respondents were forcibly separated from their spouses. Thus, their marital relations were adversely affected. Although most of the respondents who were interviewed affirmed they continued to receive support from their spouses, others indicated that their spouses' attitudes and behaviors changed following the blockade, which could lead to divorce or legal separation. They also indicated that their marital relations had become marked by hostility, confrontation, and even violence, which no doubt carries negative implications for children and other family members and may lead to the estrangement of the family.

It is not easy to follow up on financial matters when assets and properties are in the blockading countries. Some interviewees reported losing their investments and rental incomes while others lost vehicles and other assets. As well, transferring money whether from or to Qatar became a complex process that takes longer to reach beneficiaries.

These findings highlight the importance of taking into consideration the interlinked nature of the fallout of the blockade in light of complex and generational family linkages within the Gulf. Families may need a long period of time to adjust to and cope with the current situation. It was revealed that many participants said they felt anxious about visiting their families in the blockading countries to the extent that many said they would not travel to any of those countries until the blockade was lifted due to their feelings of insecurity, humiliation, and denial of access.

However, these families expressed hope for a better future for their children. Despite the fact that families listed numerous ways they were suffering as a result of the blockade, they also recognized the potential opportunities to promote the preservation of cultural and religious values and beliefs as well as loyalty to Qatar. Actually, some participants said the blockade opened up new avenues for investments and provided

opportunities in various fields such as commerce, agriculture, health, and education in Qatar.

In reaction to the blockade, service providers in Qatar, such as the National Human Rights Committee, have created dedicated sections for families suffering from the effects of the blockade to handle complaints, financial losses, educational problems, and other issues. However, in light of the current situation, interventions are needed to provide adequate and qualified resources at all levels of government to respond to the requirements of such families.

Interventions are particularly important in the context of responding to the needs of families affected by the blockade as there is a need for psychosocial interventions to address the trauma at the level of both the family and the individual. With regards to training, social workers could play an important role in implementing health and educational interventions for both families and individuals.

In the light of these findings, we recommend well-coordinated complementary interventions and programs be increased to provide both formal and informal support to families affected by the blockade. In addition, future research on the impact of crisis on families, crisis planning, and crisis interventions will contribute to our understanding of best practices. The conclusions of this study on the impact of the blockade on families constitute a foundation for future research that could expand the scope of our understanding of family relations, family pressures during and post-blockade, marital relations, the impact of the blockade on children and parents, and gender roles during and post-crisis.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.1. Preface

The decision to impose a blockade on the State of Qatar by the three Gulf States of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Kingdom of Bahrain along with the Arab Republic of Egypt is considered a serious escalation with major political, economic, and social implications, especially during this period when the region is surrounded by heightened tension. To this day, the crisis continues to deepen tensions in Gulf relations because of the various pressure techniques employed by the blockading countries to influence the State of Qatar, its government, and its people.

The depth and cohesion of Gulf family relations is well known given the tribal ties, and their shared history, origins, culture, and religion. For these reasons, tribes and families have fanned out across the Gulf region, paving the way for strong political, social, religious, cultural, and economic relations among them. Many families across the Gulf are linked either by blood or kinship or long years of friendship and neighborliness. This, naturally, has fostered strong ties, closeness, and cohesion among the peoples of the Gulf for decades.

But June 5th, 2017 was a major turning point for Gulf relations at all levels. The Qatar News Agency (QNA) was hacked and false statements attributed to His Highness the Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani were broadcasted. Some of these false statements included references to Qatar's relations with Iran, condemnation of alleged conspiracies from sister countries within the Gulf against Qatar, and the role of the US base in Qatar that cited the reason for its existence was to allegedly protect Qatar from the nefarious ambitions of neighboring countries. Based on this, these three Gulf states and the Arab Republic of Egypt moved to sever political, diplomatic, economic, and trade relations with the State of Qatar – a decision later endorsed by the government of Yemen, Libya, the Maldives, and Comoros. Other countries such as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan downgraded their diplomatic relations with the State of Qatar. Shortly after, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates issued a joint statement published in all of their official media that gave Qatari diplomats three days to leave their respective countries while all residents who were Qatari nationals were allowed fourteen days. These countries also issued decrees that penalized their citizens who sympathize with Qatar, its government, or its people with the likes of long prison sentences and large fines. Pursuant to an arbitrary decision, these governments forced their nationals who were residing within Qatari territory to return to their homelands as soon as possible, regardless of their living situation in Qatar where many of them study or work or have a spouse and children.

Looking at some similar international precedents, we have found that scenarios involving imposing blockades on countries have occurred throughout history with varying degrees of severity and damage inflicted upon the blockaded populations.

These include the blockade of Cuba in 1960 and the Berlin Blockade after World War II between 1948 and 1949. Such people suffered as a result of the many effects that had significant impacts at all levels and aspects of community and individual life. The Soviet Red Army had imposed a military siege on West Berlin, which was one of the first signs of the Cold War. The Soviet Union prevented food supplies, medicine, and fuel from entering West Berlin, prompting the United States to launch an airlift to supply West Berliners with food and basic necessities.

Also, during the Cold War, the United States imposed an embargo on Cuba beginning in 1961. The embargo lasted decades, gradually escalating to include economic measures including sanctions and fines on foreign companies and banks that maintained commercial relations with Cuba (Taylor, 2009). This caused a major disruption of the country's economic development and of the welfare of the Cuban people, which represents a violation of the human rights of the Cuban people who have been under siege for the past 56 years. The sanctions and arbitrary measures against Cuba continue to this day in various forms including restrictions on the freedom of movement of Cubans between the United States and Cuba. The Cuban people continue to struggle for their freedom, safety, right to free movement, education, and medical treatment in order to ensure a peaceful and dignified life.

Studies on similar blockades including Peksen (2011) indicate that there has not been any empirical research at the national level that examines the human cost of these measures despite the abundance of country-specific evidence on the humanitarian effects of sanctions. In his study, Peksen offered a quantitative analysis of the effect that economic sanctions have on public health conditions in target countries, using child mortality rate for those under-five as a health indicator and utilizing cross-generational data for the period between 1970 and 2000. According to his results, the effect of sanctions on public health is largely conditional on the extent that the economy is continuously affected and targeted. The economic wealth of target countries is unlikely to play any significant mitigating role on the effects of economic sanctions on public health. Similarly, the imposition of sanctions has no discernable impact on child mortality.

A study by Marks (1999) indicates that the impact of economic sanctions on civilians and public health constitute human rights violations. The deprivation, stress, and other issues faced by civilian populations under sanctioned regimes often represent violations of economic, social, and cultural human rights as the effects of sanctions target ordinary people more so than political regimes.

Meanwhile, the study by Shagabutdinova and Berejikian (2007) supports what both the female sample participants from our focus groups and interviews and human rights defenders have reported, which is that those most affected by conventional trade embargoes are the general population. Therefore, sanctions and embargoes are ineffective political tactics that, at their worst, amount to a violation of human rights, which leave governments with the bargaining power over people's lives and livelihoods.

Despite the differences between the aforementioned events and the situation of the blockade of Qatar, many similarities remain. After the imposition of the blockade, the blockading countries sought to coerce the State of Qatar at all levels, attacking the State of Qatar politically, economically, and socially. They launched an international defamation campaign against Qatar and coordinated media and electronic attacks against the government and people of Qatar, using their own media outlets and social media accounts to spread biased rumors and lies in addition to closing the only land border crossing linking Qatar with the Gulf States and closing their airspaces to Qatari air traffic.

Despite the great impact of this assault on the people of Qatar, the people of Qatar have taken the blockading countries and the world by surprise with their resolve to weather this political storm in the Gulf, which sought to use the people of Qatar as a tool to coerce the Qatari government into meeting the demands of the blockading countries. Instead, the Qatari people stood by their government, supported its position, and strengthened their cohesion and national unity.

The blockade of Qatar represents a unique case not previously witnessed by any Gulf state. However, it is similar in some ways in terms of its social and psychological impact and its effect on family cohesion to the 1990 invasion of Kuwait (Al-Dhafiri, 1992). The negative repercussions of the war on Kuwaiti families during the Iraqi aggression with the capture of family members, martyrdom, or displacement of many families contributed to many instances of psychological trauma. Wars and conflicts often have a strong impact on individuals in affected communities, albeit by varying degrees on children and adults.

Linguistically, a blockade means an instance where a person is surrounded and pinched from many sides. However, an embargo is a measure meant to economically restrict a country by various means. The restrictions imposed by the blockading countries have affected many important aspects of the lives of the citizens and residents in Qatar. These countries blocked all food supplies, pharmaceutical, and industrial products from entering the Qatari market, which was heavily dependent on them. Also, Qatari investors were prevented from accessing, disposing of, and managing their investments, deliberately causing huge economic losses.

This study sheds light on the impact of the blockade on mixed Qatari families that have members who are nationals of the Gulf blockading countries, taking into consideration the social, psychological, economic, health, and educational implications and the effects of the blockade on the welfare of children. It includes interviews with some of the families affected by the blockade identified by the National Human Rights Committee in Qatar in its first report published on June 13th, 2017. The report recorded a number of complaints about the effects on the various aspects of the everyday life of Qatari citizens residing in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Kingdom of Bahrain – a group with a total combined population of 1,927. There were also 11,387 citizens from the blockading countries living in Qatar affected by the blockade. In its report, the National Human Rights Committee called on international human rights institutions to document all affected cases and work to lift the blockade (Al-Jazeera Center, 2017).

1.2. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to identify the impact of the blockade on mixed families in Qatar, which are those families that include one or more members who are nationals of the GCC countries of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, or the Kingdom of Bahrain. The specific objectives of this study include:

- 1. Exploring the effects of the blockade on affected families and their cohesion.**
- 2. Exploring the financial and psychological implications on families affected by the blockade.**
- 3. Exploring the effects of the blockade on the well-being and education of children.**

The following chapters elaborate on the social, psychological, economic, and educational aspects of the study.

1.3. Social Issues

Olson (1993) defines family cohesion as “the emotional bonding that members of a single family have toward one another”. According to Hampson and Beavers (1993), members of a single family are expected to be sympathetic to each other’s feelings, wishes, and expectations (p. 83). Hampson and Beavers (1993) explain that cohesion is measured by the degree to which family members are committed to providing assistance and support to one another. As the nucleus of society, the family must be an extension of society’s own character and its available potential as well as reflecting the mode of thinking and common aspirations of its members (Abdul Khaleq and Al-Mishaan, 1994). The family is the most important pillar of society and its cohesion is important for creating a healthy environment in which individuals can grow.

With the discovery of oil in the region, the Gulf states prospered immensely both socially and economically, attracting a great deal of attention. Because of the cultural and social affinity between the Gulf states, we find that much of the ancestry of the people of Qatar and the people of the other Gulf states is shared. And as a result of mixed marriages, movement from any Gulf country to the State of Qatar has never been difficult. Living and working in the State of Qatar has attracted people from other Gulf countries given the ease of travel back and forth and the abundance of job opportunities and high quality services offered to Gulf nationals. As a result, many Gulf families settled in Qatar, which became their second homeland where they felt safe and secure.

However, this familial solidarity between Qatar and the Gulf states has been subject to a social shock caused by the blockade, as it included severing ties and the forced separation of members from within the same family. The statement issued by the three blockading countries that demanded the immediate return of their citizens to their home countries and the expulsion of Qatari citizens from within their borders was deliberately aimed at tearing the social fabric and negatively impacting Gulf

families with Qatari members. This led to the disintegration and fragmentation of these families, as a result of the absence of a parent who is a national of a blockading country. The blockade even led to divorce within some mixed families and the estrangement of families with members from those Gulf states and their relatives in Qatar – either because they feared penalties imposed by their country in the event of that they showed sympathy with the State of Qatar or because they believed the claims of their country against the State of Qatar. The blockading countries paid no consideration to the religious and social norms and bonds that bring together the people of the Gulf and that urge benevolent associations between relatives and discourage estrangement.

The first report of the National Human Rights Committee after the imposition of the blockade confirmed the extent of the damage inflicted on these families as well as the human rights violations against them. This was based on monitoring complaints and documenting violations that affected families in varying degrees following the diplomatic boycott and blockade of Qatar (Al-Jazeera Media Network, 2017).

The spread of rumors among people along with the fear and anxiety (Mukhtar et al., 1992) experienced by Gulf citizens and residents in these countries has contributed to collapse of the family entity as a unit. These families who attempted to reunite with their families through social media networks were then further shocked to find a hurtful climate that was quickly spreading throughout this environment. Rumors, defamation, insults, and false accusations against Qatar, its government, and its people were circulated on social media. In some cases, relatives of these families from these countries promoted or shared this content, which led to the increase in the rifts between families since the Gulf crisis began further causing feelings of fear, anxiety, and suspicion to infiltrate family relationships.

1.4. Psychological Issues

Wars and political conflicts cause a range of psychological problems for many individuals, families, and communities. They are among the most perilous threats to human life, threatening one's life, peace, safety, and security (Rashidi, 1994). The devastation caused by wars and conflicts is not limited to infrastructure and economic devastation, but also produces strong psychological trauma that affect individuals in both the short and long term in ways that may be difficult to treat and heal.

Many studies have dealt with the impact of wars and conflicts on the mental health of both individuals and families. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the psychological, mental, and behavioral health of 80 per cent of the population exposed to such conflicts is usually negatively affected (Murthy and Lakshminarayana, 2006) with the impact particularly felt among children, adolescents, and women. Shore (1986) reported that at least 25% of the population may experience Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) while a number of studies have noted that this may decrease over time, depending on the nature and severity of the ordeal (Al-Sarraf, 1992). One of the most important effects of trauma caused by displacement and forced migration is family fragmentation and the accompanying psychological disorders that affect the family and its individual members.

Sudden change in the structure and circumstances of families has a significant impact on its members. Stress theory explains that such pressures are generated by the many changes that may occur in family dynamics, organization, and tasks entrusted to family members, which leads to the modification and adaptation of the behavior of children and adults within this family system (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001). Some circumstances and events experienced by families directly increase the level of stress and anxiety among children such as disputes between parents, changes in family structure as a result of parental separation, or relocation of residence. In response to these difficulties faced by children at home, they may withdraw from the home environment, receive less parental care, and engage in fewer social interaction with their surroundings, and thus become more vulnerable to negative peer effects (Carlson & Corcoran, 2001).

Qatari families, mixed Qatari-Gulf families, and families from Gulf and Arab countries living in Qatar experienced their fair share of psychological damage as a result of the blockade. We attribute these psychological effects to several factors including fear and anxiety about possibility of war and military intervention; family estrangement due to in the inability to visit or communicate freely with parents and relatives; negative reactions from relatives who are nationals of the blockading countries; and the continuous media attacks against the State of Qatar undertaken by the conventional media of the three Gulf blockading countries as well as through social media networks which are highly accessed by all members of society regardless of age and that otherwise function as the main form of communication between these families. In the First and Second World War, nuclear technology was used to devastate countries. However, during the Gulf crisis, modern communication technology and social media are being used to influence local and international public opinion as well as to destabilize Qatari society and inflict psychological harm on its members.

Psychological studies have confirmed that traumatic experiences cannot be easily overcome, especially those resulting from wars and ongoing or armed conflicts (Al-Sarraf, 1992). Mixed Qatari families are experiencing many psychological side effects resulting from the blockade including feelings of fear, frustration, and anxiety. After having lived in Qatar with a sense of safety and security as cohesive families, the crisis initiated the forced separation and displacement of many of these families – an event that has had a major impact on the mental health of individuals in these families (Murthy and Lakshminarayana, 2006).

According to Slaikeu (1990), a crisis such as this is **“a temporary state of upset and disorientation that is characterized chiefly by an individual’s inability to cope with a particular situation using customary methods of problem-solving”**. These crises are divided into different levels that affect an individual’s life expectations (Al-Sarraf, 1992, p. 18). This Gulf crisis has generated emotional problems that emerged in the form of insecurity after these families were separated as well as a breakdown in their ability to communicate with one another because of penalties and fines. These problems were magnified by the spread of malicious rumors that stoked feelings of anger and frustration, not to mention those of sadness and grief.

1.5. Economic Issues

The blockade has included several economic dimensions aimed at coercing the State of Qatar. The blockading countries blocked all food, pharmaceutical, industrial, and other imports from entering the State of Qatar. But thanks to wise leadership, the state has been able to ensure that it still meets the various needs of the Qatari people by shoring up the local market and encouraging more individuals and companies to expand their businesses or start new projects that can help Qatar achieve self-sufficiency. As well, Qatar opened its commerce to new international markets to offset the gap in products from blockading countries and moved to strengthen bilateral relations with other countries.

The economic damage was not merely confined to inside the State of Qatar, but also included the trade and investments of Qataris both with and within the blockading countries. As a result of the closure of all border terminals, the prevention of Qataris from entering these countries, and the directives issued by these countries to prevent any dealing with Qataris and keep them from withdrawing their funds or disposing of their investments, hundreds of traders and property owners suffered great financial losses (Al Jazeera Media, 2017). This itself constitutes a flagrant violation of universal and Arab rights conventions that affirm respect for economic, political, and human rights.

Thus, it is clear to us that the aim of the blockade was not only to coerce the Qatari government but also its people (Al Jazeera Media Network, 2017). Indeed, these countries did not stop at imposing punishments and fines on those who express sympathy with the people of Qatar, but also banned the circulation of Qatari riyals and blocked all banking transactions with Qatar. This made it immediately difficult for many to support their families in these countries and to continue to send them regular remittances. In many cases, this effectively isolated the sole breadwinner and source of income from such families, and we can only imagine the damage this has caused to beneficiaries, who need the money for their livelihoods, education, medical treatment and so on. This also meant falling into arrears or even defaulting on the payment of these urgent and important fees.

Undoubtedly, these arbitrary measures of the blockading countries have affected not only Qataris, but also their own citizens to a considerable degree, given the large number of Gulf residents living in Qatar. Many were forced to resign from their jobs and thereby forfeit their (sometimes sole) sources of income in Qatar and return to their home countries on very short notice – without the slightest concern for their needs and those of their families. Even those who remained in their jobs after receiving permits to travel to Qatar (e.g. Bahrainis) were not spared the fallout from the politicized measures as travel costs and travel time increased exponentially due to the blockading countries closing their airspace to Qatar's civilian aircrafts as well as the suspension of flights to and from Qatar. Traveling home or to meet relatives and family members became problematic, longer, and costlier as citizens were forced to transit in Kuwait or Oman in order to reach Qatar. This resulted in many families invariably facing economic challenges to be able to support themselves and find new ways to provide family members with a decent life.

1.6. Educational Issues

Studies conducted by Kuwaiti researchers on issues facing university students in Kuwait during the period following the Iraqi invasion (Al-Ghanim, 1994) indicate that while the success of students at any educational stage depends on the degree to which they comprehend the subject matter being taught to them, the academic achievement of students who are under pressure or dealing with problems may be affected, even leading to failure. This, in turn, has an effect on some aspects of the student's behavior and leads to emotional issues over time.

Before the severing of ties between the three blockading countries and Qatar and the imposition of the blockade, the total number of Saudi students in Qatar at all levels made up 59% of the total number of foreign students, while Bahraini students represented 33% (Al Jazeera Media Network, 2017). However, when the blockading countries demanded that their citizens return home, many students were forced to leave one of their parents and discontinue their studies for the academic year, thereby experiencing a delay in their education. In addition, the blockading countries did not allow these students to return to Qatar to complete their education at the beginning of the 2017–2018 academic year.

The impact of the arbitrary blockade also affected Qatari students studying at universities within the blockading countries. Their educational rights have been violated, for example, by being denied the ability to submit their tests and obtain certificates of completion for assignments, coursework, and graduation. As a result, their educational achievements during their period of study abroad have been wasted, forcing them to start over at other universities. Being denied an education in such a manner inevitably generates feelings of anger and disappointment among students with some perhaps becoming depressed and choosing not to continue their studies due to a lack of trust in their future or a loss of motivation to continue.

The simplest human rights that any society owes to individuals is to provide them with the opportunity for a decent life in a safe environment with access to an education, enabling them to establish their lives. However, some Gulf peoples have fallen victim to the effects of politicized decisions that have created a true crisis for them, giving rise to many social, economic, and psychological problems whose resolution may be difficult or prolonged. However, by providing adequate services and psychological counseling for those affected and meeting their various needs, hope remains that everyone will be able to overcome this crisis and emerge from it stronger and more determined to succeed and live a better life.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research project has received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) at Qatar University. The snowball sampling technique was used in the selection of subjects whereby these subjects each brought in two other respondents to increase the size of the sample. The sample included respondents from mixed families with members from both Qatar and the blockading Gulf countries.

We applied the basic principles of constructivist theory (Charmaz, 2006) to guide interviews. The thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the interview data was also guided by the principles of constructivist theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006). We employed manual qualitative data analysis to help identify and synthesize the key codes and themes in the recorded interviews. Similarly, the main themes identified in the focus groups were used in this report to enrich the thematic analysis of individual interview data.

2.1. Sample

The research team was assembled by the Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) and Qatar University to conduct focus group discussions in August 2017 with members of families affected by the blockade in Qatar. Two focus groups were formed with women in cooperation with the National Human Rights Committee, which assisted in the organization of these discussion groups.

The first group consisted either of married women from Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, or the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The second group consisted of unmarried women, who were either Qatari, Emirati, Bahraini, or Saudi nationals but living in Qatar with family members in the blockading countries. The groups were comprised of five to eight people. The focus groups were asked to respond to a range of questions aimed at obtaining varied responses. Although a convergence of responses was expected, rich data was obtained from participant responses as they shared their experiences and important viewpoints regarding the impact of the blockade on families.

The main questions pertained to how the blockade affected families as an institution and individual family members in particular, as well as the impact of the blockade on children's education, health, financial matters, and future plans to visit the blockading countries.

Data was analyzed by the researchers by grouping related topics. In addition to focus groups, 22 in-depth interviews were conducted with 11 males and 11 females between the ages of 22 and 55. The interviews were based on snowball sampling and started in September 2017, continuing until January 2018 due to the difficulty of finding interviewees.

2.2. Analysis

Interviews were conducted in Arabic. Interviews and outcomes of focus group discussions were recorded. Data analysis began with the linear coding of interviews. In addition to this coding, demographic data was analyzed for each interview based on its contents. This was followed by a meeting of the research group to discuss outstanding issues arising from the review of these codes. Based on this discussion, the team developed sets of codes reflecting the main themes related to understanding the impact of the blockade on families.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

3.1. Social Challenges

This study is based on qualitative data obtained in two focus groups: one with seven mothers and one with four young women without children. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 affected families – ten husbands and ten wives were interviewed.

Here we address the social effects that the blockade of the State of Qatar had on mixed families by exploring the following elements:

3.1.1. Family separation

Many Gulf families were affected by the arbitrary measures taken by the blockading countries to restrict travel and other freedoms. **“I used to go to Bahrain every Thursday and come back every Saturday night or sometimes Sunday morning. Now, I can’t because the cost of the trip has increased threefold and the trip now takes five hours each way,”** said Abu Abdullah, a Bahraini husband and resident of Qatar in reference to the difficulty of seeing his family (e.g. his son and wife) in Bahrain.

A Qatari woman married to an Emirati said that the measures applied by the blockading countries led to the separation of her family members and forced the family to live apart for more than five months. The absence of their father has had a negative impact on her children as his long absence caused them to develop anxiety. She said: **“They were strongly affected by their father’s five-month absence. My small daughter became very worried about her father’s absence.”**

Fatima, a Saudi-born wife of a Qatari man, said she could no longer go see and visit her parents whom she had previously visited every holiday and who visited her regularly in turn. She said her father was stunned by what was happening and couldn’t believe it, quoting him as saying: **“I feel like it’s all fiction.”**

Abu Al-Mahra, a Qatari who is married to a Bahraini woman, recalled that he used to accompany his wife to visit her family once or twice a month. But at the time of her interview she had not visited her family for four months due to the fear that the children would not be able to return home after their visit. This fear was rooted in his previous experience bringing his family back to Doha after the blockade was announced. When he went to bring them to Qatar, the Bahraini authorities refused to allow his wife to travel. After some difficulty, he brought his marriage certificate, and was allowed to accompany his wife and children back to Qatar. He said: **“Before the blockade, I used to take my wife and children and come back every month, sometimes twice a month. Now, it has been four months since we last went. They went but I had to bring them back because they are always asking about who the husband is. So, I was afraid that they would detain the children.”**

Another mixed family experienced a hardship similar to that of Abu Al-Mahra. Um Jassem, a Qatari woman married to a Bahraini man, has faced difficulty visiting her husband's family as a result of her concerns about the dire consequences of such travel. The most prominent being that her husband and children may not be allowed to return to Qatar along with her fear that she would end up living without them. She said: **“We used to visit each other two to four times a month. Now we can't, which has affected me along with the entire family as being unable to see them is a big problem for us. We are afraid to go. If we went, they could detain us and we may not be able to return. If my husband and children went, they may not be able to come back to Qatar, which would be a disaster because I can't live without them.”**

The above accounts of the very dire situations for these families demonstrate some of the consequences of the blockade, which has led to the separation of families and prevented them from easily visiting their family members. This was the result of the measures taken by the blockading countries with regards to the freedom of movement and presence of Qataris within their territories. The length of travel, the procedures imposed at airports by the blockading countries, the deliberate complications as well as the increased cost of such trips has contributed to the separation of families and harmed them in numerous ways.

3.1.2. Conflict between family members

Many problems and conflicts arose between members of Qatari or mixed families and their relatives in the blockading countries. The media of the blockading countries played a major role in provoking antagonism and triggering tensions. Indeed, the grievances with the blockading countries were not merely confined to the political level, rather the countries of the blockade – in an unprecedented move unseen in the history of political disputes between Gulf states – sought to drag their local civilians into the dispute, deliberately undermining the social fabric of Gulf families. The results of the study show how the younger generation was the most affected. A 21-year-old Qatari student with relatives in Saudi Arabia said that the blockade has affected relationships among her generation with her relationship with her cousins and friends deteriorating due to their insulting comments against the State of Qatar, which compelled her to remove herself from their shared social media groups.

For her part, Fatima, a Saudi-born woman married to a Qatari with four children, said that this situation and the deterioration of her relations with relatives from the blockading countries has forced her to withdraw from social media networks. She said: **“Relationships were affected significantly because their media outlets feed them defamatory information about Qatar. Imagine, I am part of a group of 17 or 20, maybe 30 ladies, including cousins and aunts and you find them to be anti-Qatar; I had to delete all groups.”**

Such hostilities and quarrels among family members negatively affect the cohesion of the family, especially if the parties act impulsively. Therefore, older members of some families have been forced to intervene to contain matters and ensure that they did not escalate among members of the same family.

This is what Abu Ahmed, a Bahraini husband, pointed out by saying: **“The blockade has affected family cohesion. In the beginning, there were rows with my cousins and relatives through WhatsApp and Twitter. After that, elders intervened and said, ‘We did not want any disputes’. There should be rules on these groups and people should respect one another. In the beginning, I had a fierce row with my brother-in-law until the elders intervened and contained the situation.”**

One of the female respondents in the focus group pointed out that the attitudes of the blockading countries could lead to the disintegration of Gulf families, saying: **“The blockading countries have caused Gulf families to fall apart against their will.”**

This sentiment was echoed by a Qatari woman married to an Emirati man; her marriage with whom has deteriorated since the blockade. She said: **“Before the blockade, my life was very stable and we had shared goals and a sincere love. Whenever there were any problems, compromise with our full conviction would follow. But after the blockade, my relationship with my husband was greatly affected and he began to bring up the word divorce repeatedly.”**

Thus, some marital relations have deteriorated because of the blockade, which undoubtedly affects the stability and cohesion of the family.

3.1.3. Weak communication between family members

family communication has taken a hit under the blockade against Qatar. Many male and female respondents spoke about limited contact with their relatives after the blockade, saying it was now limited to WhatsApp or short phone calls for fear of the laws introduced by the blockading countries against sympathizers with the State of Qatar. Some respondents pointed out that some relatives in these Gulf countries stopped responding to phone calls from their family members in Qatar. Also, some left shared WhatsApp groups, further limiting communication. One respondent in the focus groups said that this greatly reduced her communication with her relatives in Bahrain, noting: **“Relatives in Bahrain are now afraid to speak to us and we have started avoiding talking to them and vice versa.”**

In the in-depth interviews, the respondents echoed the results of the focus groups, namely stating communication had decreased after the blockade to only what was necessary. This was to avoid antagonism between family members and to spare relatives having to face any punishment under the laws enacted by the blockading countries. In this regard, a Qatari female respondent who is married to a Saudi man and has six children said: **“Communication has become limited. We only call when it is necessary and to greet them, because we had disagreed with family members and problems ensued. When we do call them, we will only ask how they are doing and briefly about their health because they are also worried the phone lines are being monitored.”**

In the aftermath of the blockade, some relatives from the blockading countries were forced to communicate with their families in Qatar using phone numbers from third countries. A Saudi female respondent who is married to a Qatari man reported that an uncle of hers has been communicating with her using a British number because he

could not call her using his Saudi number. The main fear regarding this is about the laws and measures of these governments against those found to be sympathizing with Qatar.

A case highlighting this suffering is that of Abu al-Anoud, who now finds it difficult to communicate with his children who live with ex-wife in Bahrain. He said that his level of communication with them is insufficient for him as their interactions are limited to phone and Skype calls, which he said does not comfort him or reassure him as he is a father who wants to check in on all aspects of his children's well-being. He said: **"I communicate with them via phone and Skype calls, but of course this is not enough because I can't see them or touch them and I don't know what they eat or drink."**

Many affected families have been unable to communicate with their elderly relatives in the blockading countries whom they used to visit and for whom they used to provide care at least once a month. This is because they are unable to come to Qatar due to health issues. Families have been unable to travel to them because of the obstacles imposed by the blockading countries including the need for travel permits and the long hours of travel. Um Maryam, who is married to a Bahraini man, explained: **"The problem is that for my elderly maternal grandparents in Bahrain, we have to go at least once a month but now we have no way to do so. This has really affected us because they are elderly people and require care and attention."**

The blockade has also prevented families and relatives from attending social events and observing social obligations and duties towards their kin in the countries of the blockade. This is because they fear the consequences of measures that could be enforced upon them by the blockading countries. A Bahraini female respondent in the focus groups said: **"There were occasions we could not attend like weddings and funerals. We avoided going there because we did not know what kind of problems we might face."** A Saudi woman married to a Qatari man confirmed this, saying that she was used to visiting her family on social occasions and holidays before the blockade, but that she no longer does so. She said: **"I used to always visit my relatives on holidays but after the blockade I could no longer travel. My relatives used to always come visit me in Qatar and vice versa but I have not been able to go to Saudi Arabia since March."**

Therefore, the blockade has produced a number of negative social effects, which have had a great impact on family relations between citizens of the Gulf countries, who otherwise have strong social bonds and blood relations. The blockade has caused a disruption in the social fabric and thus, fragmented families due to the unfair measures enforced by the blockading countries both on Qataris and their citizens who sympathize with Qatar.

Family relations were also affected by the media discourse of blockading countries and their attitudes towards Qatar, which has fomented problems between spouses, families, and relatives. This has resulted in their estrangement and caused rifts to form between them as well as damaging communication between family members from the blockading countries and the State of Qatar respectively. As the peoples of the Gulf were dragged into a political dispute based on false allegations, it may take a long time to mend and restore such relations, a process that could further drain and damage family relationships.

3.2. Psychological Challenges

There are several facets to the psychological effects felt by the families affected by the blockade, impacting family members in varying degrees that include the following:

3.2.1. Psychological trauma

Some families expressed psychological shock when hearing about the declaration of the blockade and the subsequent expulsion of Qatari citizens from the three blockading Gulf states. One mother from the focus groups spoke about this trauma, saying: **“I’m in shock and I do not believe what has happened. I feel like I’m in a dream that will end and I will be able to see my family again.”** Another respondent spoke about her child’s shock about the blockade, saying: **“My son was traumatized. He cannot sleep. He watches the news all the time and what is being said about Qatar and is constantly monitoring social media. He has been badly affected by what his uncle is saying about Qatar.”**

3.2.2. Fear and anxiety

Many families expressed fear and concern about the deterioration of relationships with and among families. Some expressed fear and concern for their future and the future of their children as a result of this political crisis and “fear about their family”. One female respondent said: **“We are always afraid of the family breaking up.”** Another said: **“We are constantly afraid and worried.”** A third one said: **“Because of the threats, we are afraid for ourselves.”** A fourth woman said: **“We have fear and constant worry that we may not be able to see our relatives in the blockading countries, especially with the threats these countries have issued.”** And another female respondent said: **“My mother has been suffering from anxiety and cannot sleep. She has high blood pressure and is in a difficult state. She tells us that no matter what happens, she will not abandon us.”**

A number of female respondents expressed fear and concern about the future and about their situation and the condition of their children. One of them asked: **“What will happen tomorrow?”** Another said: **“I don’t know how the situation will develop. Will the our children pay the price with their future? (Her son studies in Bahrain and is in his last academic year). Will he be allowed each time to return and be given a permit?”**

Another respondent expressed fear and anxiety over the possibility of not being able to return to Qatar. She said: **“I feel worried and afraid that I will not be able to return to Qatar.”** Another female respondent said: **“I am in a difficult psychological state. I am afraid that if I return to Saudi Arabia, I will not be allowed to return to Qatar.”** Another, explaining her situation, said: **“I have experienced a difficult situation. I felt like I was torn between two people, my mother and my father, and that if I left my mother in Qatar, I don’t know when I can see her (again).”**

One thing that is triggering fear among some families living in Qatar are the issues arising from bearing the nationality of one of the Gulf blockading countries. One

female respondent in the focus groups said: **“We were concerned because they told us our citizenship would be revoked if we did not return to Bahrain. To the point that I don’t feel like I belong to Bahrain.”** Another said: **“I am tired. I want to obtain a permit. I lived throughout Ramadan with a lot of anxiety as my passport had expired.”** Another respondent stated: **“I was panicked after the blockade. I was afraid of being fired from work because I am Bahraini by nationality.”**

This anxiety and stress has affected sleep and even dream patterns for some. A female respondent said: **“I dreamt that my uncle and his children were in our house, but we were not. Can you imagine that we have reached such a point?”**

Some expressed fear and anxiety regarding their resulting addiction to social media news. One respondent said: **“I have become addicted to social media. The first thing I do is look for news.”** Another said: **“We are exhausted. We do not know sleep.”** Yet another respondent said that the oppression she has felt has made it all seem like a dream, far from being real.

A large number of families pointed out that they avoid talking with relatives in the blockading countries or have only participated in limited conversations or short exchanges with them. One family said: **“We only ask our relatives if they are okay, and officially do not touch on any specific subject – just general questions about their condition.”** One respondent said: **“My family in Bahrain is reserved. They do not engage in political conversations because they fear retaliation from their government.”**

Some respondents mentioned that they are afraid to talk to their relatives in the blockading countries or that they avoid talking to their relatives in Qatar, fearing the consequences of the law criminalizing sympathy with Qatar that is being enforced by the blockading countries against citizens.

Some families indicated that their relatives were also afraid and avoided talking to them. One family said: **“Communication between us has become infrequent as they avoid talking to us.”** A female respondent said: **“I do not talk to my sisters as openly as I used to during our previous conversations.”** Another said: **“My family in Bahrain sympathize with Qatar but they are afraid of the security decisions. So we are scared to talk to each other now.”** Other families affirmed the extent of the psychological impact of not being able to express their true feelings to each other due to fear of punishment under the law prohibiting sympathy with Qatar.

3.2.3. Sadness and anguish

Some female respondents described feelings of sadness and anguish because of how the situation has unfolded. One woman said: **“We feel saddened. The blockade has caused my son to lose his job in Gulf Airlines.”** Another said: **“Although he has matured, my son cries because he cannot visit us in Qatar.”** A wife from Saudi Arabia said: **“I cry over and over because I can’t attend my sister’s wedding. They postponed the wedding to the winter hoping the crisis would be resolved, but I still don’t know what to do.”**

3.2.4. Conflicting feelings

One of the most prominent issues mentioned by some of these families was the contradiction/conflict in their emotions towards their relatives. An Emirati woman married to a Qatari spoke about her relationship with her brother in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. She described the extent of harm inflicted upon herself and her children as a result of his verbal abuse and cried bitterly during the interview. She spoke about the consequences of this hostile action with regards to her children. She spoke to them about his behavior and asked them to ignore any abuse from her brother and refrain from responding. Some families also talked about the impact of children being separated from one of their parents; one mother said she has not seen her daughter in Bahrain, who has special needs, since the start of the crisis, while her son, who holds Qatari nationality, is no longer able to visit his father in Bahrain.

Another family said their children's feelings towards their uncles in the United Arab Emirates have taken a negative turn, **"...which affected us psychologically."** A respondent said: **"I feel ashamed to meet my Qatari friends because of my Saudi nationality and because of the way Saudis have been talking about Qatar."** At the same time, the blockade has become a foregone conclusion for some families. One female respondent said: **"I have grown accustomed to the blockade."** However, regarding feelings of oppression and frustration, one female respondent said: **"We feel oppressed and frustrated. The suffering has become unbearable."**

3.2.5. Loss of the sense of security and safety

many families in this crisis feel insecure and unsafe. One female interviewee said: **"I have become a prisoner. I do not feel safe in Bahrain. I feel that at they will ban me from returning to Qatar at any moment."** Another said: **"My husband is heartbroken because I have not visited Bahrain since the start of the blockade on Qatar. I am drained emotionally because I have missed many family occasions such as the weddings of my sister and cousin. I was accustomed to attending all family occasions, but now I have to sacrifice this for the sake of my husband."**

A female respondent said: **"I feel safer here than in Saudi Arabia. My family in Saudi Arabia are asking whether I am still safe and secure after the blockade, and I always tell them that I am fine."** Another female respondent, expressing her feeling of being imprisoned as a result of the blockade, said: **"I feel like I am in prison. We had intended to travel to these countries [to see] our relatives. Now it is difficult for us to travel there as they have become unsafe."** Another said: **"There is a lot of psychological stress. I am in a difficult psychological state. I am afraid to leave and never be able to return to Qatar."**

3.2.6. Psychological suffering

Families explained the hassle and hardships that they experienced when attempting to see or visit their relatives in the blockading countries. One female interviewee said: **“They provided us with a hotline to call in order to obtain permission to visit family there. You do not know who answers this line. In addition, there is the [problem of] indirect travel because Qatar Airways was banned from flying there. We have to use other airlines via an indirect route.”** Another family described its experience traveling to Bahrain to see relatives, saying: **“It was not a bad experience despite the indirect travel.”** On the other hand, one family describing their own experience traveling to Bahrain to see relatives said: **“It was a bad experience. Officers at the airport treated us badly and we felt unsafe.”**

Some discussed the effects of the blockade on the elderly. One of the female respondents recounted an incident that took place at the land border between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. When the mother of her sister-in-law, a Saudi, came to visit her sick daughter, the Saudi authorities asked the elderly woman to disembark from the car and leave it with customs. However, the woman’s son-in-law intervened to allow the car to enter Qatar and kept them from forcing her out of the car.

Another elderly woman said: **“I am an elderly woman. It has been very exhausting. My daughters are afraid to come. They are unable to do so. I have an only child who is sick and in intensive care. His residence expired and has not been renewed.”**

One female interviewee, describing her hardship, said: **“We are psychologically exhausted. I have not been able to see my son except once and he cannot come. He needs a permit and he has not been given a response to this date.”**

Another woman reported: **“I am the mother of four children and a girl with disabilities. In the first week of the blockade during the holy month of Ramadan, we were asked to leave Bahrain within two weeks.”** Another interviewee said: **“My children were born in Doha and only know Bahrain when they need to renew their passports.”**

It appears from this last quote that some families may hold the nationalities of the blockading countries, but have spent their lives in Qatar and feel a stronger sense of belonging to Qatar than to their home countries – considering their nationalities mere travel documents. What they fear most is being summoned to live in a country to which they are not accustomed.

3.2.7. Psychological abuse via social media

Some of the interviewees in the focus groups reported psychological abuse at the hands of their relatives from the blockading countries. One of them said: **“My brother sends my children messages that are offensive to the State of Qatar.”**

Another interviewee pointed out that because of the psychological abuse and sensitivities that had arisen, **“My children left some social media groups they had been using not just because of psychological abuse on those platforms, but also because of provocation caused by what is written on them.”** Abu Nasser, a Qatari respondent,

said: **“My children faced some problems and heard about the actions of the Kingdom and the UAE towards Qatar, which I liken to electronic games, all of which affect children and the family.”**

3.3. Educational Challenges

Analysis of the content of the interviews indicated that mixed families or nationals of the blockading countries generally feel safe in the State of Qatar when it comes to their children’s access to education and their ability to continue their studies across all levels of education. They stressed that the Department of Education within the Ministry of Education and Higher Education did not subject them to any measures mirroring those of the blockading countries or sought to exclude their children from the educational system. Instead, they confirmed that their children are receiving the standard, quality treatment without any change, and that educators in schools have not subjected them to any conditions that could be considered a form of abuse or that could affect their children’s education.

Although students in Qatar from all nationalities continue to enjoy a safe learning environment, university students who had been studying in any one of the blockading countries are facing major challenges and difficulties. Indeed, the authorities in the blockading countries forced these students to return to Qatar, resulting in an interruption of their education and forcing them into a difficult situation. These students that were forced out of their schools are now unable to obtain proof of completion for their completed courses for accreditation in other universities, causing the interruption in their education to lengthen and become more complicated, which ultimately places their future in peril.

3.3.1. Feeling of safety in qatar schools

A number of female respondents echoed the same assertions about feeling a sense of security in Qatar and its schools, saying that their children were not exposed to any impediments or problems in their schools. Um Fahad, a Bahraini wife and mother, and Um Hala, a Qatari woman married to a Bahraini, said the blockade did not affect their children who are studying in Qatar, stating that it is because they are still young. Another interviewee, a student named Hayya, said: **“My education and my brothers’ education has not been affected because we are Qataris.”** Um Abdullah, a Saudi woman married to a Qatari, agreed with them: **“With regards to education, my daughter has not been affected because she is Qatari.”** Another Qatari woman married to a Bahraini said: **“The blockade did not affect my children’s education because the state is taking care of them, and nothing has changed on the part of the State of Qatar.”**

But Abu Nasser, a Qatari, said he was worried about his children learning lies and inappropriate language at school: **“We teach children not to lie, and that if they hear something (bad) in school, they should not respond to anyone. I believe that the blockade had a positive role regarding how to address rumors, but it is also negative because our children are exposed to things like this lack of communication**

and estrangement.” Fahad, a Saudi from a Qatari mother, said: **“My son’s passport is expired but no one in Qatar has caused me any problems. They didn’t say anything to me at school or from any other authority because the school fully understands our situation.”**

3.4. Health Challenges

In this section we examine the health effects of the blockade on several fronts.

3.4.1. Shock

Feeling anxiety and fear may affect the health of individuals and can trigger psychological conditions. These feelings are expected especially upon hearing shocking news such as the imposition of a blockade on one’s country, which would prevent them from seeing their families as demonstrated above. A wife of Bahraini nationality said: **“I was shocked. I couldn’t think. I was always tense and worrying about how I could see my family.”** Hessa, a Qatari woman, said: **“I was shocked because it was unexpected. It caused a deep wound in the heart of every Qatari.”** Um Abdullah, a Saudi woman married to a Qatari, said: **“I am shocked, tense, and afraid. I don’t know what is happening. I am constantly crying.”**

3.4.2. Financial impact on healthcare costs

The financial impact on healthcare costs was part of the ramifications of the blockade. Abu al-Anoud, a Qatari respondent married to a Bahraini woman, said: **“The blockade has affected me financially. I paid a lot of money for my children. Before, the embassy used to cover health costs but not anymore. Now I have to pay for everything. I paid for everything in the UAE, but now I left. I have been hurt a lot by [the blockade]. I have to restart my PhD program. I still have not been accepted into university. In other words, I lost my studies and suffered financially.”**

No doubt, all these factors that trigger fear, anxiety, and sadness negatively affect both the physical and mental health of individuals and increase the pressure on them. This forced mixed families to seek professional help. Some individuals visited psychiatrists to help them overcome this. In this regard, a Qatari man married to a Bahraini woman said: **“I did not visit a psychiatrist, but my sister has.”** A female interviewee reported that her husband was following up on his condition with a psychiatrist.

3.4.3. Elderly care

a Qatari woman reported that her family was hurt by their inability to communicate with their elderly grandparents who live in Saudi Arabia. She said her family is gravely concerned for their health and have questions about who will care for them. Previously, they visited them frequently and assisted them. The problem of finding care for the elderly is a major problem for families.

The most frequent descriptions spoke about a lack of communication with elderly relatives and the fear of losing them and not being able to visit them. This theme was repeated in all interviews.

For example, one female interviewee reported: **“We are terrified; especially as my grandfather and grandmother are old. My mother is in a state of permanent worry. She wants to see them and check in on them, and she doesn’t know what to do.”**

A Saudi woman married to a Qatari reported: **“My family is all in Saudi Arabia. My father and mother are elderly. I have no relatives in Qatar. I feel that I am withering away with concern for my parents.”**

A Qatari woman married to a Bahraini man reported: **“If death or sickness were to take place, we would not be able visit. The children’s grandmother is old, and cannot travel because of her ill health. We said we would see her in Muscat.”**

Fahad, a Saudi man with a Qatari mother, reported: **“The blockade has affected my physical and mental health. I feel uneasy. I always think about my parents and my elderly father. If something were to happen to him, how would I be able to see or visit him?”**

It is clear that the blockade has become an obstacle to providing family care for elderly members who live in the blockading countries. This situation puts psychological pressure on the children who provide such care and negatively affects the physical and psychological health of the elderly.

3.5. Implications for the Welfare of Children

With regard to the challenges facing children’s welfare and well-being, we have identified the following topics: travel risk, school education, the impact of social media networks, educational achievement and continuing studies, as well as the marital relations of their parents.

3.5.1. Travel risks

In areas of war or conflict, children face several risks during travel related to safety, protection, fear, and vulnerability to trauma. Although the siege of Qatar is not a military conflict, Qatari citizens and the citizens of the blockading countries living in Qatar – including children – are afraid to travel to these countries. In the interviews, most parents with children reported that their children still wanted to travel to visit their relatives in the blockading countries, but some did not want to travel to any of these countries. This was the case even if they had first-degree relatives there because they were afraid of facing problems at the border that would prevent them from returning to Qatar. Others said their children were beginning to resent the actions of the blockading countries against Qatar and no longer wanted to travel there.

This happened to a number of people including Um Rashed, a Qatari woman, who said: **“The UAE caused us problems for Qatar and Sheikh Tamim,”** and then repeated the words **“We are all Tamim, the Glorious”**. A Qatari woman formerly married to a Bahraini said that passports used to be the official document allowing anyone to travel but that now it has become a prison. The freedom of movement that had been guaranteed them has been nullified by the blockade.

For her part, Um Jassim listed a number of concerns and issues she faced with regards to her children, their education, and their need for identification documents. She said: **“The blockade has affected my children a great deal, because they are afraid since their passports expired. They don’t have new passports and cannot travel to Saudi Arabia to renew them. This is a big problem for my children, especially the young ones who are in school. This year, they managed to register but next year they will need passports because the school requires identification papers.”**

Um Jassim expressed deep fears over the prospect of the forced deportation of her children. She said: **“The problem that I am facing is very serious. I am always worried about my children and fear that their father may take them to Saudi Arabia without my knowledge. Their father is in Qatar and has said he would not go to Saudi Arabia without them. He has the right to travel and take the children but I always tell the children not to listen to him and tell them, ‘He is lying to you, he may tell you I’m taking you on a trip or for a stroll but then he might take you without my knowledge. You must tell me before you do anything.’ I always check on them. Of course, this has affected them a lot. They are emotionally drained and always anxious and tense, and I am always concerned for them. Even my children’s friends received messages from Saudi Arabia telling them they must return to Saudi Arabia, but my children have not yet received this message. I always ask them, ‘Did you get a message or not?’ and this is causing a lot of fear but we don’t know what to do. I always tell my children, ‘Don’t be afraid. Qatar is here and Godwilling having no identification papers will not cause a problem. The most important thing is that you must not return to Saudi Arabia.’ I always call them to check and see if anything happened with them.”**

Conditions such as those described above place children under immense psychological pressure as they feel torn between the wishes of their mother, father, and their own decisions, forcing them to face difficult choices to please others.

Another issue raised was the long waiting period at the airport because of the length and complexity of procedures there, causing added travel fatigue and exhaustion for the children and their families.

Abu Mahra, a Qatari married to a Bahraini woman, described such a case involving his children. He told us: **“When I arrived in Bahrain, they told me to stand aside. I did and stood waiting. They searched me and interrogated me about my work, and the reason for the visit. I told them my wife and children were in Bahrain. In the end, they let me in. I stayed in Bahrain for four days then returned. But the return leg of the trip was also troublesome. The day we were traveling back, my Bahraini wife and I, they told me at the airport to leave with my children but not my wife, and asked me for proof of our marriage. The officer made things difficult and there was only two hours left before departure. I did not have my marriage certificate on me because I had never thought they would ask me for it. I called my mother-in-law and asked her if she had a copy of the marriage certificate or any document, because she always kept documents. She found the document and sent me a copy via WhatsApp. I took it to the officer and told him this is my marriage document. Thank God, we then boarded the plane, but it was very exhausting and took nearly 9 hours.”**

Such complications has forced many families to reconsider travel to blockading countries to avoid hardship.

A Qatari respondent married to a Bahraini woman reported the following: **“Before the blockade, I used to take my wife and children and return every month, sometimes twice a month. Now it has been four months since we last went. They went and I brought them back because they always ask who is the husband and I am afraid they would detain my children.”**

Um Hala, a Qatari married to a Bahraini man, said: **“I am trying to make my daughters understand that one day the blockade will be lifted and we will be able to travel to Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. But in their hearts they are deeply afraid that if they travel they would not be able to return. If the blockade is lifted I am thinking about traveling, but I will go alone, I will not send my daughters because I fear they would not be able to return with me.”**

The inability to travel when their children have become used to visiting their relatives regularly has had a negative effect on them.

Abu Abdullah, a Qatari man married to a Bahraini woman, said that his children always ask him, **“Why can’t we travel to Bahrain? We miss our grandparents and we want to see them.”** He added: **“I did not know what to tell them. The impact of the blockade on the children was huge. Each holiday, we used to travel to Bahrain but since the imposition of the blockade we have not traveled there. In the early days, the children would ask, ‘Why can’t we go to Bahrain?’. They wanted to see their relatives and their grandmother but we could not travel. I took the children to Muscat for a change of scenery because I wanted to preoccupy them so they would not think about Bahrain and about how they would not see their relatives anytime soon.”**

A Saudi interviewee living in Qatar with his Omani wife, whose mother is Qatari and father and paternal family is Saudi Arabian, said: **“My children have been affected. When they hear Saudi Arabia, they say they don’t want to go. This unfortunately affects the child’s thinking and his impression of the country and its people.”**

In one of the discussions held in the focus group consisting of mothers, a Qatari woman married to an Emirati man said: **“They were saying it would be impossible for us to go to these countries or to our relatives, or even to marry someone we love if they are from the blockading countries.”**

A Qatari woman married to a Bahraini speaking about her children said: **“My children are here. We are used to living in Doha; we don’t want to leave it.”**

It is clear that children’s travel is a risky venture, especially if the children are non-Qatari nationals and bear the passport of one of the blockading countries. It is possible for them to get detained in the event they travel to these countries and to be barred from returning to Qatar.

Um Hala, echoing this fear, said: **“If my children traveled to Bahrain, they would not return.”**

In addition, there is the fatigue associated with travel and fear that one family member on the trip would be detained because they bear the nationality of one of the blockading countries, or are traveling to a blockading country as a Qatari, which was reflected in Abu Mahra's experience in Bahrain.

3.5.2. Bullying in schools

Children may sometimes be bullied by their peers at school because of their affiliation or association to one of the blockading countries, whatever it may be.

A Bahraini woman married to a Qatari man reported telling her children: **“Don't let anything affect you or your studies.”**

For his part, Abu Nasser said his children have been affected by comments they heard about the blockade. Hessa, a Qatari woman, confirmed that her nephews who study in foreign schools in Qatar had some negative reactions when they spotted the flag of one of the blockading countries. The interviewees expressed concerns that the school environment would turn into an unhealthy one as a result of these events and over the impact that these and other associated discourses are having on children.

These issues affect the educational development of children and conditions in schools. The interviews have revealed that the blockade has triggered new problems and issues for children in schools that may have an impact on their academic performance and development in the long run. These constitute new challenges that have to be dealt with by parents and educators.

3.5.3. Effect of social media networks

Today, social media plays a major role as it has become easily accessible to most people including children and makes it easy for them to be affected by what they hear and see. Having access and being exposed to social media networks can lead to the development of negative impressions about the blockading countries.

Abu Ibrahim confirmed this. He reported: **“Some members of the family have been influenced by the media outlets of the blockading countries, believing some of what they publish. Following discussions via WhatsApp, we stopped raising any issues related to politics in general to maintain cordial relations.”**

Abu Nasser said: **“Things have changed a lot for the family, especially the children. The children sit with the adults, and sometimes the adults say some things and misspeak, which affects the children's personalities. This is the result of what they hear on social media. A child may say some things like, ‘We will not go to Saudi Arabia and the UAE,’ and this affects the psyche of the child. This problem has happened in our family. Our role is to educate children and tell them not to misspeak and misbehave, because things will be resolved one day. In school, they also face this problem and hear about the actions of Saudi Arabia and the UAE like the electronic warfare. There is a quasi-war between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and all these things affect children and families.”**

Um Abdullah, a Saudi woman married to a Qatari, indicated that her daughter had been greatly affected by the blockade. She had been accustomed to seeing her grandparents regularly and wanted to attend her uncle's wedding, which was scheduled to take place in a few months. Her daughter had also started to take stock of the blockade and the actions of Saudi Arabia towards Qatar. Sometimes, her daughter would play Qatari songs and sing along, but would stop when she spotted her mother. Um Abdullah would tell her: **“Don't be sad, God willing, things will be okay.”**

A Qatari woman married to an Emirati said that her husband had to leave his family after the imposition of the blockade. He remained in the UAE for five months, triggering negative emotions among her children, which she described, saying: **“They were greatly affected because of the five-month absence of their father. My young daughter became very anxious during her father's absence, saying ‘The UAE has caused us problems for Qatar and Sheikh Tamim’ and would say ‘We are all Tamim, the Glorious’ and became more attached to me.”**

It is clear that social media has affected the views, perceptions, and emotions of children towards the blockading countries, triggering negative emotions and hostility as a result of what is being disseminated about Qatar and the impact of the blockade on their families.

3.5.4. Education and its continuation

One main concern in the forefront of the minds of the parents affected by the blockade is the issue of educational enrollment for their children in the upcoming academic year, especially for Qatari women married to citizens of one of the blockading countries.

One mother stated that the passports of her children, aged between 15 and 17, will expire this year. She said she did not know what course of action to take although educational authorities at present are not asking for identification documents. However, she is concerned this could change next year, especially as her child will have to sit for general high school exams.

Another mother said she did not care if her children's passports were withdrawn, saying: **“Bahrainis, Saudis, and Emiratis who do not want to return face the prospect of having their citizenship revoked and being required to hand over their passports. We don't want to go and let them take the passports.”**

A Saudi man married and living in Qatar said: **“My son's passport has expired, but no one has asked me about anything or told me anything at school or anywhere else. The school is aware of our situation and has not made any inquiries. In Qatar, they are very understanding of the situation.”**

It is likely that they have turned a blind eye to this issue in schools this year, but it is possible that the children's passports and identity cards will be requested next year, which justifies the concerns felt by the parents about the risk to their children's education.

Um Hala, a Qatari woman married to a Bahraini with seven daughters and a son, whose passports have all expired, said: **“The children were affected because they cannot travel to renew their passports or visit their relatives in Saudi Arabia. But they always assert that Qatar is their country and that they will not leave. Of course, this affects them because my daughters love Qatar and they were born here. Even my husband was born here and has been in Qatar for a long time.”**

Um Jassim faces the same problem with her children. She is a Qatari woman married to a Saudi. Her children cannot travel to renew their passports in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This did not cause them problems at school this year, but it may be a problem for them in the upcoming academic year. She said: **“The blockade has affected my children a lot. They are afraid because their passports have expired and they don’t have new ones. They cannot travel to Saudi Arabia to renew them. This is a big problem for my children, especially the young ones in school. This year, it was fine but for next year they need passports because schools ask for identification documents.”**

This issue has caused a lot of anxiety for Qatari mothers married to citizens of the blockading countries. The situation is even worse for their children over the age of 18 who study in one of the blockading countries and who have been forced to stop their education and return to Qatar.

During the discussion with the focus group dedicated to mothers, one of them said that she feared the prospect of her daughter returning to the UAE where she had a scholarship because there were no guarantees for her safety and well-being.

Another mother said her son had been expelled from university in the UAE as a result of the blockade.

This situation threatens young people studying in one of the blockading countries. After returning to Qatar, they often do not know how to move forward and continue their education, as many leave without proof of their accomplishments. This is an important issue that should be of interest to stakeholders, especially as many of these students had completed half of their undergraduate requirements or were about to graduate.

3.6. Marital Relationships

The blockade has had an impact on all matters related to the family, including marital relationships, which in turn has direct implications for children. In most interviews and focus group discussions, marriages were characterized by support, mutual kindness, and understanding. However, some marriages and bonds were affected negatively and some almost ended with divorce.

A Qatari interviewee married to an Emirati man said: **“Yes, my husband became very nervous and distracted. Whenever he spoke to me, my husband would tell me that many families had been affected, and he would repeatedly bring up divorce. When discussing any issue related to the blockade, my husband would get upset. During my husband’s five-month absence, I did not expect there would be estrangement, but he stopped calling me during that time, and when he did, he would provoke me.”**

However, she added: **“I always asked God for forgiveness and believed that what God ordained was a good thing, and was certain that we would be victorious over the blockading countries. My vision was towards the future and my personality became stronger.”**

Thus, despite the damage inflicted by the blockade on marital relations, some couples have been able to overcome it and started to see things in a more positive light.

In other instances, marital relations were further stressed, as described by Abu al-Anoud, a Qatari man formerly married to a Bahraini woman, who has two girls who live with his ex-wife in Bahrain. He used to be on good terms with her, but since the blockade, the nature of communication between them changed and is no longer as it was. He said he feared he could no longer see his daughters due to the closure of the Embassy of Qatar in Bahrain.

He said: **“My relationship with my ex-wife is good, but she has become distant and I can no longer communicate with her in the same way as when she was in Qatar. She is an educated and understanding woman, but after the blockade, there is no longer an embassy in Bahrain that can protect me and that can vouch that my daughters would not travel with me to Qatar. In this case, there is no one to protect me and this is a problem that emerged after the blockade.”**

Others said that their relationships with their spouses remained good and supportive.

One example of this is Shaikha, a Saudi woman married to a Qatari, who said: **“My husband stood by me during this crisis and would often tell me it would be resolved soon. I have had no quarrels with my husband.”**

Um Mariam, a Qatari woman married to a Bahraini, said her husband has been supportive. Abu Abdullah, a Qatari man married to a Bahraini woman, said: **“With my wife, our relationship is good and things are okay, but she is pining for her family.”**

Most respondents said their spouses supported them when they felt depressed and fearful because they do not know when they will see their families again. Indeed, the mere idea that one may not be allowed to see their family is disturbing and leads to feelings of entrapment and isolation. Being denied the right to the freedom of movement, no doubt, affects children and may have a negative impact on their health and education in the long term.

3.7. Financial Impact

The financial impact of the blockade has primarily included rising travel costs, the difficulty of financial transfers with the blockading countries, and the disruption of Qatari investments and the lack of ability to deal with assets in blockading countries. In actuality, the cost of travel increased since the beginning of the blockade because many low-cost airlines stopped flying to and from Qatar, forcing families that travel to and from Qatar to use airlines that transit via Kuwait and Oman to reach Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain – increasing fares and journey times.

Money transfers to any of the blockading countries also now take longer than before.

Abu Abdullah reported: **“The blockade has had a financial effect in terms of remittances. Difficulties have emerged with transfers that now take longer, unlike the time before the blockade when bank transfers were simple and would be received on the same day.”**

Abu Mahra, who has to make regular transfers to his family in Bahrain, said: **“The blockade has had a financial impact on remittances to Bahrain. There is difficulty transferring funds because Bahraini banks do not receive transfers from Qatar. They don’t even accept Qatari currency in Bahrain and using Qatari money is not allowed.”**

Um Fahad said that her father used to send her money from Bahrain, but that now it takes a long time to receive it in Qatar. She explained: **“The blockade has affected me financially because my father used to send me money when I needed something. Now transferring funds has become difficult. They used to also send me money and gifts by post but now things are more complicated.”**

Some respondents indicated that they had lost their properties and/or investments located within the blockading countries, incurring serious financial losses as a result.

Um Jassem said: **“The blockade has not affected me financially, but someone in the UAE had held some funds for me, as I was seeking to buy a plot of land. But after the blockade, I lost the money. He did not return anything and it was a large sum.”**

Some people with assets in the blockading countries have faced difficulty following up on them or acting freely with regards to them. Some had finished paying installments to acquire assets and do not know what happened to them or whether they would be able to recover the properties or funds. Liquidating funds, investments, and assets is a complex process difficult to complete in the current situation amid the blockade and in light of the inability of Qatari investors to complete such transactions within the blockading countries.

This chapter has provided an overview of the perspectives and opinions of those affected by the blockade and its impact on families. The interviews and focus group discussions highlighted several issues that detailed this impact. The results showed that families face new, unprecedented obstacles as a result. It is a terrifying and worrying experience for families, many of whom don’t know how to deal with the challenges resulting from the blockade. This is an issue that could potentially undermine family relations and potentially cause family dysfunction and disintegration in the long term.

The next chapter will discuss the future impacts and trends associated with the blockade and the possible services that can be provided to support affected families and individuals.

CHAPTER FOUR: FUTURE IMPACTS AND TRENDS

The blockade of Qatar is considered an example of the crises that beleaguer many countries. From a sociological perspective, the crisis can be understood as one major event or a series of events that trigger fundamental shifts in the lives of those affected. The term crisis can be used to describe natural disasters (e.g. floods, earthquakes, typhoons, etc.) and human-caused events (e.g. conflicts, displacements, large-scale accidents, etc.) A disaster is defined as a “serious disruption environmental and psychological, that exceeds the individual’s ability to cope” (WHO, 2018).

The origin of crisis theory from Lindemann’s classical study was attributed to reactions to grief. Lindemann (1944) established the basic framework for crisis identification; he noted that grief was a natural response to a state or event that leads to heartache, and noted that these responses had some characteristics that appeared to constitute a distinct and prominent syndrome.

Subsequent scientists, such as Gerald Caplan, used Lindemann’s theory as a basis for developing crisis intervention practices. Caplan (1964) provided several definitions of what constitute crises, defining “that a crisis occurs when individuals are confronted with problems that cannot be solved immediately, and cannot be overcome through customary choices and behaviors. A period of disorganization ensues, a period of upset, during which many abortive attempts at a solution are made. At the end, a kind of adjustment and balance is achieved that could leave an individual either in a better or worse condition than before the crisis.” (Poal, 1990: pp. 123-124; Caplan, 1964).

With the blockade of Qatar, it has been demonstrated that the family unit has been the most affected by the current crisis. The results discussed in the preceding chapters have shown that, as a result of the blockade, a large number of families are experiencing states of crisis that may be of a social, health-related, educational, or financial nature. This situation needs to be addressed through intervention programs to rehabilitate families and improve the quality of life of those affected by the blockade.

4.1. Application of Intervention Programs

The research put forth an extensive examination of the importance of individual, family, and community level interventions in crisis situations. The forms of interventions can be classified into two broad categories: psychological and psychosocial.

The psychological approach focuses on individuals rather than the community, focusing on how people can be placed in a diagnostic category. With this category, different types of interventions are used, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, but these approaches prove more effective for adults than for children. This can be applied individually and on participants affected by psychological problems referred to in the section on health and psychological challenges.

Psychosocial interventions emphasize the restoration of as many pre-crisis situations and behaviors as possible, and the rebuilding of community networks that enhance bonds between people and their sense of security and stability. Three factors need to be linked to the development of the adaptive capacity of participants: individual characteristics, family characteristics, and general characteristics of the social system or the local community. All these factors play an important role in designing a program that can meet the needs of those affected (Analayti, 2012, p. 9).

The concept of intervention related to the adaptive capacity of the family is linked to family roles and the need to challenge family disintegration. This intervention is based on social science theory and research on stress, acclimation, and adaptation. Lazarus & Folkman (1984) developed a model of cognitive assessment of individual-based stress and acclimation, a multi-level and multidisciplinary adaptation model that is widely influential. Stress is treated as an interactive concept, describing adaptive behaviors between people and their environments, and involves assessing needs and opportunities. Interventions aim to reduce stress levels and seek to achieve the best level of adaptation for a particular individual in a particular environment (Lazarus, 1968; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The family's ability to adapt includes processes such as cohesion, flexibility, open communication, problem-solving abilities, and confirmation of the belief system. The availability of community resources and communication with the family are also necessary to help the family adapt, in addition to financial security, practical assistance, social support, and a basic sense of cohesion through networks of relatives, friends, and religious communities.

Research has indicated that the family has been a neglected resource in interventions seeking to enhance adaptive capacity among children and adults. It is important to recognize that successful interventions depend equally on family resources and on the skills of the consultants who provide support (Walsh, 1996). Treatment efforts are adapted to the specific challenges of each family with family members and the unique resources they provide enlisted to address them (Walsh, 1996). The approach of tailoring treatment to family therapy encourages collaboration among family members, so that they can build and renew their skills of mutual support and enhance mutual confidence in their ability to cope with stress (Walsh, 1996).

The most important interventions would include:

- Empowering families to manage stressful situations
- Developing support networks
- Providing more systems that enhance the community ties lost by most households
- Creating psychosocial and self-help groups for families to enhance their adaptability and provide useful information, adaptive strategies, and social support to families in crisis

- The application of creative social practices such as group counseling and art therapy for children
- Providing telephone, hotline, or online counseling that provides customers with greater control over the treatment process, access to immediate assistance, and privacy.

In addition, intervention programs for families and individuals should include:

- Programs to reduce stress, re-emphasize their culture and traditions, help them regain hope in the future, rebuild their social network, develop their self-esteem and self-confidence, and establish a network of psychotherapy and psychological education.

- Specialized programs, including group therapy and individual psychotherapy. The participation of individuals in the rehabilitation process in society is important because it gives individuals the feeling that they are no longer victims, but proactive actors in society. The tasks assigned to children and adolescents help them develop a healthy sense of physical and psychological completeness and encourage them to undertake roles in the community that increase their confidence and self-esteem and promote their rehabilitation (Walsh, 1996).

Such intervention programs will greatly help people overcome the social and psychological health challenges facing many families because of the blockade as adequate support is put in place from various institutions, which hopefully will help them promptly overcome the crisis.

4.2. Interventions for Children

Due to the specific nature and sensitivity of the situation of children, it is necessary to design intervention programs specifically tailored to them, commensurate with their age-related and psychological needs. The following are some of the proposed interventions based on a family-centered approach that can reduce the impact of the blockade and help affected children regain their quality of life.

4.2.1. Safe Spaces for Children: Safe spaces provide a combination of child protection, psychosocial support, and emergency education for groups of children. They may include activities for children of different age groups and aim to serve as platforms for the mobilization and involvement of communities and families.

4.2.2. Community Mechanisms for Child Protection: Involving NGOs to facilitate the creation of child care committees, monitoring responses, and raising awareness on risks from crises such as the blockade.

4.2.3. School Support: Includes support for mental health and psychosocial support. It may include child support classes, teacher engagement, expressive activities, non-violent disciplining, conflict resolution, and referrals for children in need of additional assistance from support providers.

Other forms of interventions may be more relevant to children involved, such as therapeutic play, art therapy, information-extraction therapy, and role-playing and storytelling therapy.

4.3. Family Support

Family support includes steps to develop parenting skills, such as communication skills, nonviolent discipline, and self-control to increase parents' understanding of child growth and stress management.

4.4. Psychological First Aid

Support services must be provided during and after crises, such as listening and providing support, providing information, assisting people to access necessary services, managing reactions to trauma, self-care, self-control, and psychotherapy that may include cognitive behavioral therapy, and interpersonal psychotherapy.

The above interventions need further study for implementation not covered by the scope of this research. Further research is needed to investigate and plan intervention programs in relation to effects of the blockade against Qatar.

CONCLUSION

This study provided a closer look at the daily challenges and conflicts that have arisen as a result of the blockade and its impact on families living in Qatar. We find that the effects of this siege on families are countless and complex. The social, psychological, medical, and educational aspects of families' lives have all been tested by challenges to which these families must now confront and adapt. Yet, families remain in a state of shock and are still suffering when it comes to adapting and co-existing with the new situation imposed by the blockade. Adaptation may take time while appropriate strategies to achieve this are developed.

Among its direct negative effects are family fragmentation, loss of access to relatives, and estrangement from relatives. Addressing this requires psychosocial counseling and treatment tailored for the sensitivity of the situation, which may not always be available without adequate cultural training for the providers of these services.

While families face these challenges, we also have seen many of them demonstrating wisdom and resilience, working hard to adapt and rely on each other. Some institutions have provided extensive support, such as the National Human Rights Committee or the hotline provided by the Aman Protection and Social Rehabilitation Center, which provides expert opinions on what is necessary and what can be done to move forward.

While some families face health/psychological problems as a result of not being able to see their relatives, others face financial or educational challenges that are difficult to address. However, families have said they remain hopeful and patient despite everything. Some questions remain unanswered as there are no immediate signs that the blockade against Qatar will end soon. The long-term impact of the blockade remains difficult to assess, requiring further research and investigation.

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