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Local Authorities in Palestine in Light of the Corona Pandemic (COVID-19)

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Abstract- *The research seeks to give a detailed description of the current state of affairs within the local authorities in Palestine. Notably, the issues that are explicitly addressed are how the pandemic has affected the local authorities' capacity to offer essential services to the citizens. A conceptual frame is extensively used to facilitate a proper understanding of the extent to which the pandemic has negatively impacted the local authorities' abilities. Also, the crucial roles, such as environmental services, water services, solid waste elimination, among others, are equally mentioned to ensure that one understands how the pandemic has limited the delivery of these services. Additionally, the challenges facing the local authorities in the face of this pandemic are equally highlighted. Finally, a recommendation section is included to address some of the measures that the local authorities can implement to prevent the effects associated with the occurrence of the pandemic.*

Keywords- *Local Authorities; Palestine; Corona Pandemic; challenges.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The local authorities in Palestine are facing a myriad of challenges at the moment. Some of these challenges arise from the occurrence of the global pandemic (COVID-19) while others arise from the poor management systems adopted by these local authorities. The local authorities are tasked with the strict responsibility of ensuring that high levels of environmental health standards are adhered to by the citizens. Also, the local authorities are supposed to ensure that high levels of cleanliness are maintained. However, at the moment the capacity of these local governments has been extensively impaired leading to a lot of challenges. However, the implementation of strategic action can restore normalcy in major cities within Palestine.

The functioning of the local authority is one of the significant issues that have been adversely affected by the existence of the global pandemic COVID-19. The local authorities in Palestine are tasked with the vital responsibility of ensuring that certain essential services meant to make the environment safe are expertly carried out (Muller & Zahda, 2018)[15]. These services entail the proper disposal of waste, regular supply of water, among others (Atia & Herrold, 2018)[2]. However, since the onset of the pandemic, the local authorities in the country have faced severe challenges that have limited their capacity to carry out these services. The underlying reason behind the change is because the pandemic has limited the proper work of people and the staff members who are required to delegate different roles aimed at enhancing the environmental aspects of individual communities. Additionally, concerning the measures aimed at mitigating the effects of the pandemic, the local

authorities in Palestine are tasked with crucial responsibilities regarding the implementation of the measures aimed at reducing the consequences of COVID-19. Additionally, the local authorities act as a link between the government and the members of the community to facilitate proper delivery of the essential services aimed at reducing the spread of the pandemic. Notably, the government of Palestine has initiated a strategic framework aimed at enhancing the levels of sanitation, provision of essential services, and other health promotive activities to enable the citizens to attain their optimal health potential.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Roles of Local Authorities

The local authorities are tasked with the provision of essential environmental services. These environmental services aim at enhancing the levels of sanitation to reduce the levels at which the pandemic can spread. These services include a proper collection of different kinds of waste that can deteriorate the status of the environment. The local authorities are equally supposed to facilitate the transportation of the waste products to their appropriate locations to ensure that the members of the population are exempted from any adverse harm (Farsoun, 2018)[7]. Additionally, the proper distribution of wastewater is a crucial responsibility of the local authority as it relieves the citizens from the health implications associated with poor management of waste. Moreover, the local authority has a crucial responsibility of ensuring that there is a continuous supply of electricity. A constant amount of power is expected to ensure that the services offered in the various health facilities are carried

out without any form of disruption. Notably, a disruption of the electricity supply can make prevent health facilities from providing the medical interventions meant to treat the affected individuals. Also, the supply of electricity would promote proper communication, thus ensuring that the citizens receive the right information that they can use in the prevention of the pandemic.

The local authorities also have a supervisory role of ensuring that the citizens adhere to the government regulations that are aimed at preventing the spread of the pandemic. These measures include adherence to the food safety precautions that enhances the levels of sanitation. Thus, the local authority is supposed to ensure that entities selling food outlets use the correct storage facilities (Liu & Ma, 2016)[12]. Also, the local authority is required to ensure that the citizens adhere to the social distancing measures aimed at preventing the spread of the pandemic. A whole body of knowledge exists, which describes the crucial roles that local authorities need to do in the face of a global pandemic. Notably, the local authorities are supposed to promote community participation by integrating the members of the community in the government interventions aimed at protecting the citizens from the effects of a pandemic. Community involvement and participation is known to enhance the effectiveness of public health interventions as it increases peoples' levels of acceptance.

The local authorities are equally supposed to ensure that the solid wastes are adequately discarded in the right location. The proper management of solid wastes is expected to promote safety in the environment (Salem et al., 2020)[20]. Consequently, safety in the environment would ensure that other services, such as the movement of essential health services and other interventions aimed at preventing the spread of the pandemic.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Conceptual Framework Illustrating the Challenges Affecting the Local Authorities

There are specific challenges that affect the local authority's capacity to provide the essential services aimed at preventing the spread of the pandemic. These challenges create different kinds of barriers that may limit the local authorities from effectively delivering their essential services to the population. The issues range from inappropriate financial planning, allocation, and management (Carter & Martin, 2016)[6]. Also, there are issues involved in the transportation of the wastes that can limit the attainment of the right environmental conditions. Limited community participation also poses a considerable challenge since the lack of community involvement may limit the achievement of government objectives meant to reduce the spread of the pandemic.

3.2. Financial Problems

Limited financial capacities are a severe threat affecting the implementation of the services that the local authorities are required to do. Notably, essential services

such as the transportation of different kinds of waste require financial allocation. Also, the securing of lands where the waste materials can be placed equally requires a large amount of case (Asfour & Zourob, 2017)[1]. However, since citizens have opted not to pay taxes since the onset of the pandemic, the local authorities have not been able to have the financial resources needed to carry out some of these activities. The financial incapacitation has also prevented the local authorities from paying their workers who conduct inspections, cleaning, among other essential services. As a result, financial incapacitation has put the local authorities in a situation where they cannot adequately meet the needs of the community as far as the management of the pandemic is concerned. Notably, in public health promotion, limited financial capacity, among the local authorities, can profoundly limit the attainment of the intended objectives since the local authorities are required to implement the government strategies at the grassroots levels.

Additionally, the national government has not provided any form of financial support to facilitate the implementation of some of the strategies meant to disrupt the spread of the pandemic. According to the provisions of the government directives, the local authorities are required to use their money to provide curative, preventive, and promotive services meant to protect the people from the effects of the global pandemic (Michel & Rouot, 2018)[14]. Notably, the money that the local authorities have at their disposal cannot facilitate the implementation of some of the measures that the government has put in place to prevent the spread of the pandemic. For instance, the money is needed to conduct some of the health educational forums where the citizens are sensitized about what they are required to do to curb the spread of the pandemic. In an ideal situation, the national government is expected to provide the financial resources needed to support the advisory measures aimed to prevent the spread of the pandemic. Also, since the pandemic is a threat to the national health system, the national government is required to fund the initiatives that they put in place to enhance their levels of effectiveness. Ideally, in disaster mitigation, the appropriate allocation of funds usually corresponds to an increase in the effectiveness of individual interventions. For that reason, it is apparent that the government's inability to support the local authorities financially causes a significant challenge as it limits the implementation of the strategies put in place to reduce the impact of the pandemic.

Moreover, inappropriate management of the funds among the local authorities has equally posed a significant challenge. A large section of the officials has been reported to use the funds for purposes that they are not meant for implementing the government directives a considerable challenge (Kirschenbaum, 2019)[11]. The wrong utilization of these funds is expected to pose a challenge, especially when the local authorities attempt to implement the measures aimed at enhancing the levels of sanitation. For instance, the embezzlement of funds may

make the local authorities lack the money that is needed to transport different kinds of waste within the community.

3.3. The Challenge of Transporting Waste in Light of the Closure

The closure of certain services within major cities in Palestine has limited the transportation of waste across major cities in the country. The shutdown has equally led to the accumulation of garbage in various sites, making it tough for the local authorities to transport these wastes adequately (Barak, 2016)[3]. Notably, since the onset of the pandemic, the workers who are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that the cities are clean have not been able to do their duties for fear of being infected. Consequently, the few who are there cannot effectively transport the waste leading to their accumulation. These accumulations have created ugly scenes around the cities since the trash takes an extended period before being transported to the appropriate sites. Therefore, the closure associated with the existence of the pandemic has extensively limited the transport and management of different kinds of waste in most of the cities.

3.4. The Limited Capacity of the Health Department Staff

The occurrence of the pandemic has also affected the functioning of the health department within the local authorities. The health department extensions are tasked with the responsibility to ensure that the public health measures are entirely adhered to by all the members of the community (Giacaman, 2019)[8]. These public health measures are meant to promote the levels of sanitation, thus ensuring that high levels of health standards are maintained within the country. However, after the onset of the global pandemic, the health sectors within the local authorities have not been able to operate effectively, leading to the disruption of some of their services. Several factors can explain the reasons behind the disruption of these services. For instance, as a result of the interruption of the movements, some staff members responsible for the administration of public health services may find it hard to access their offices (Giacaman, 2019)[8]. Also, because of the fear associated with the high infection rates among the people, some staff working in the health department may opt not to show up at work, thus limiting the local authority's capacity to offer the essential health services meant to promote the lives of the citizens. The absence of these workers makes waste management, sterilization, and cleaning a challenge making the cities to be in the wrong states. Therefore, based on the argument above, it is apparent that the onset of the global pandemic has limited the local authority's capacity to promote the attainment of the highest health potential.

3.5. Citizens Dissatisfaction with the Services Offered by the Local Authority

A large section of the citizens has shown a lot of dissatisfaction concerning the services offered by the

local authorities. These levels of dissatisfaction have made the local authorities lose their confidence in the work that they do to improve the lives of the citizens (Qaddummi & Almahoud, 2019)[18]. Notably, in public administration, high levels of satisfaction among the citizens are expected to make the service providers appreciate the crucial role that they play in the lives of the citizens. However, as far as the local administration in Palestine is concerned, the limited satisfaction has disrupted the morale of the local authorities as some staff members believe that they have lost the trust of the citizens.

3.6. Citizen's Dissatisfaction with the Aids Provided by the Local Authorities

The ministry of the local government has partnered with community members by forming different committees to facilitate the identification and distribution of different kinds of help to the members of the community. The people who are prioritized in this program are the vulnerable members of the community who cannot correctly sustain themselves in the face of this pandemic (Mustafa, 2018)[16]. Ideally, the existence of disaster is expected to disrupt economic progress, thus affecting people's financial incomes. As a result, the local authority has resorted to the provision of certain essential items to the needy citizen to protect them from the adverse effect of the pandemic on the economy. However, the citizens in various communities have cited that the help they get from the local authorities is not sufficient as it cannot meet all their needs (Machado et al., 2019). This level of dissatisfaction regarding the aids offered by the local authorities has made the local authorities lose their confidence regarding the essential services that they provide to the needy members of the society.

3.7. Absence of Real Municipal Strategies

The local government has not been able to formulate new strategies that can enhance its duties in the face of the global pandemic. Notably, in the event of disasters, the local authority is expected to make some necessary adjustments regarding the services it does to the citizens to reduce the impacts of the pandemic (Imperiale & Vanclay, 2020)[10]. For instance, the implementation of the existing policies regarding the administration of essential functions is not as effective as they would be should if the pandemic was non-existent. However, the local government has not developed the right measures that would enable itself to maintain the provision of these services. Additionally, the local authorities mainly depend on the strategies issued by the national government even if some may not be applicable in their situation. Therefore, the local authorities' inability to formulate their approach to enable them to delegate their roles effectively has been a significant challenge since the onset of the pandemic.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Depending on the type of your research paper, data analysis instruments and operations limited to SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) which is a form of a qualitative data analysis.

5. RESULTS

There is a need to formulate the right measures that can enhance the capacity of the local authorities to deliver essential services meant to improve the living standards of the citizens. These strategies will effectively address some of the challenges that these local authorities have faced since the onset of the pandemic. Notably, in public administration, capacity building is known to enhance the abilities of the local authorities hence making them deliver their services efficiently. Therefore, specific measures will have to be adhered to to ensure that these services are provided in such a way that they meet all the needs of the citizens.

Adoption of the Right Strategies

The local authorities need to formulate clear strategies that would make them maintain their services even in the existence of the pandemic. There is a need to form a robust strategy that can facilitate proper collection and disposal of wastes to prevent them from accumulating in significant cities (Blackman, 2016)[4]. Also, the staff members working in the local authorities should be exempted from some of the restrictions put in place to minimize human movement. Consequently, these staff members will have the capacity to do their duties effectively, thus promoting the levels of sanitation and safety in the cities.

Strengthening the Roles of Public Relation and Media

The local authorities need to strengthen the roles of public relations and media personnel to promote the distribution of the right information regarding the maintenance of the environment. These media platforms should educate the citizens on the need to keep their cities clean as a method of preventing the spread of infectious diseases (Goh & Pang, 2016)[9]. Also, the citizens should be taught the recommended techniques of handling waste to prevent them from accumulating along the roads and other sections of the city. These forms of communication can be useful if the public relations and the media is sufficiently empowered.

Provision of Financial Support

The national government should provide the local authorities with a sufficient amount of capital to enhance their capacity to delegate the duties assigned to them. The provision of enough financial support would enable them to fund the transportation of the waste from the cities to the designated sites, thus promoting the levels of hygiene.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The national government needs to formulate a team that can strictly monitor whether the local authorities are working in line with government strategies. Proper monitoring and evaluation are expected to ensure that the

government directives are appropriately implemented (Saadeh & Khatib, 2019)[19]. Consequently, the local authorities are likely to meet the needs of the citizens leading to higher levels of satisfaction.

Documenting the Bilateral Coordination between the Local Authorities and the Ministry of Local Government
There is a need to document the relationship that exists between the local authorities and the ministry of local government to promote the capacity of the local government. Arguably, a proper relationship between the two parties would enable the local authorities to gain sufficient support that would allow them to attain some of their objectives much easily.

Opening Doors for Loans

The national government needs to create avenues where the local government can secure loans to facilitate the smooth running of their objectives. At the moment, limited financial capacity is a significant challenge as it prevents the local authorities from financing different kinds of activities, such as the movement of waste, among others. Therefore, the national government needs to collaborate with money lending institutions to facilitate the transfer of those funds.

Expansion of the Powers of the Local Authorities

The powers bestowed to the local authorities should be expanded to ensure that their jurisdiction covers an extended area. For instance, the local authorities should be given powers to initiate strict measures should certain entities fail to pay their taxes. As a result, an improvement in revenue is likely to be assured, making the local authorities gain the ability to finance their objectives. The objectives, in this case, refers to the environmental services that they are tasked to provide to ensure safe coexistence of the citizens.

Provision of Financial Support

The local authorities are supposed to be provided with sufficient capital to enhance their self-reliance. Increased self-reliance is likely to enable them to delegate their roles in ways that can yield greater satisfaction among the citizens (Bondaruk, 2017)[5]. Consequently, the local authorities will gain the trust of the citizens leading to elevated levels of confidence.

Active Role in Public Policy and Planning

The local authorities should be given an active role in policymaking, planning, and decision making regarding the issues to do with economic development. The problems that should extensively be addressed in these discussions are political, social, and economic factors affecting people in various community setups (Peterson & Heurken, 2018)[17]. As a result, the local authorities are expected to charter their agendas in ways that can lead to some improvements in their sectors. chosen methodology.

6. DISCUSSION

This is where you will be discussing more of the results of your research, its implications on other fields as well as the possible improvements that can be made in order to

further develop the concerns of your research. This is also the section where you need to present the importance of your study and how it will be able to contribute to the field.

7. CONCLUSION

Conclusively, the local authorities in Palestine are facing severe challenges that are affecting their capacity to deliver their services appropriately. The services offered by the local administrations include the supply of water, environmental services, waste disposal, among others. At the moment, limited financial capacity, lack of support from the national government, the onset of the pandemic, among other factors, have posed severe challenges to the local authorities, thus disrupting their capacity to offer proper services. However, there are a series of actions that can be applied to reduce the impact of some of these challenges on local authorities. These actions, if properly implemented, can enhance the capacity of the local authority to offer proper services to the people despite the existence of the pandemic.

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